

done to stop over-population of the state. Most ancient cultures practiced abortion. The early church's opposition to abortion, infanticide and child abandonment distinguished Christian from pagan societies. And their opposition was a major factor in giving the Western world its high regard for human life (at all stages in its development). Emperor Valentinian outlawed abortion in the Roman empire in 374AD.



**Gladiators** fought not only other men but beasts also. Thousands upon thousands of them were slaughtered during the seven centuries of the “games”. These games were held throughout the Roman empire. The emperor Trajan (98-117AD) celebrated his conquest of Dacia by hosting games that lasted four months and included 10,000 gladiators with 10,000 beasts. Half of the gladiators died during the games, while many more died afterwards, from their wounds. Emperor Titus inaugurated the Roman Coliseum in 80AD with 5,000 thousand animals being killed in one day, plus hundreds of gladiators who lost their lives that day.

Christians condemned and boycotted these games as murder (**Exodus 20:13**). Their opposition didn't go unnoticed, as Romans thought the Christians were being unpatriotic. A Roman pagan is quoted as saying, “You do not go to our shows, you take no part in our processions... you shrink in horror from our sacred (gladiatorial) games.”

The historian W.E.H. Leakey (no friend to Christianity) states: “**There is scarcely any single reform so important in the moral history of mankind as the suppression of the gladiatorial shows, a feat that must be almost exclusively ascribed to the Christian church.**” The games were outlawed in the Roman empire in 404AD.

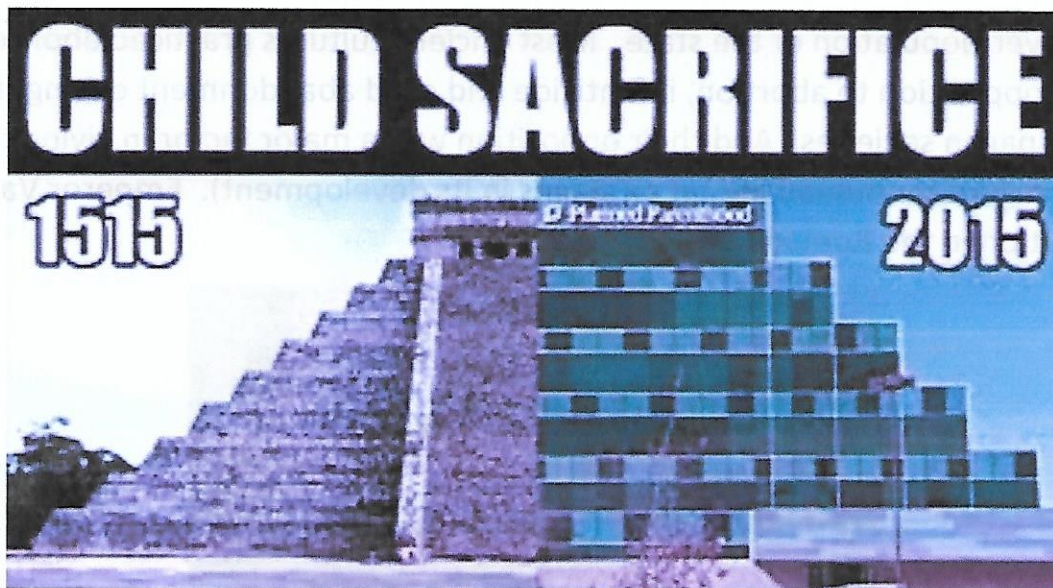
## **How Christianity Stopped Child Sacrifice:**

Where paganism rules, it was not uncommon to see human beings, especially children, sacrificed to pagan gods. Child sacrifices were common in places like Canaan (Palestine).

**1<sup>st</sup> Kings 18:16-40, 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 16:3, 21:6 and Jeremiah 7:31**

The pre-St. Patrick Irishmen sacrificed prisoners of war and newborns to the harvest gods. It was also common among the pagan Prussians and Lithuanians until the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The Aztecs and Mayans of South America also practiced child sacrifice and didn't stop until conquered by the Spanish.





Whether the human life was a fetus, an infant, or an adult, early Christians saw God as the creator of all human life (**Job 1:21**); only He could give and take human life.

If we took a fellow-human life, it was murder. This view that human life was sacred went totally against the prevailing Greco-Roman view. The Roman emperor Tiberius (14-37AD) loved to see tortured humans thrown into the sea. Emperor Caligula (37-41AD) killed all who once served in his palace. He also dragged humans through the streets with their bowels hanging out!

## How Christianity Elevated Sexual Morality:

Roman writers (Juvenal, Catullus, Martial and Ovid) testify that sexual activity between men and women had become depraved before, and during the time that Christians appeared in Roman society. Adultery, fornication, homosexuality, sadism, orgies and bestiality had become common and were even illustrated on household items like oil lamps, bowls, cups and vases. Yes, even their children saw these items, so modesty was nowhere to be found.

**Adultery...** Adultery was exclusively defined in terms of the women's status, not the man's, and was a property violation. So, a man, married or single, couldn't be accused of adultery but a woman could because she was another man's wife and adultery was a property offense punishable by death. Because of this, many married women registered as prostitutes so they were not exclusively seen as their husband's property and could then commit adultery without being punished.

Into this culture, Christians said that sex between a husband and wife was an expression of mutual love and respect, not of self-serving lustful gratification.

**1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 7:3, 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 3:7**

They also believed the sex act made them "one flesh" and required them to be faithful



to each other. Contrary to the GR pagan view, they saw sex outside marriage as wrong and sinful. Per a 2<sup>nd</sup> century document, "They (Christians) have a common table, but not a common bed." Believers also saw marriage as a type of relationship between believers and God. ***Ephesians 5:22-33***

## How Christianity changed the Status of Women:

### A Greek woman:

Wasn't allowed to leave the house without her husband or his escort (usually a male slave)

When her husband's male guests were present in his home, she wasn't allowed to be with them and had to retire to her own part of the house. But the husband's mistress could be there and accompany him to events outside the home. His mistress was his companion and sexual partner.

Girls didn't go to school; throughout their lives they weren't allowed to speak in public.

Greek poets equated women with evil; it was the Greek myth of 'Pandora's Box' that blamed women for introducing evil into the world.

Greek female infanticide (the killing of newborns) far exceeded that of males.

### A Roman woman:

She was under the absolute legal control of her husband, who had ownership of her and all of her possessions. (the Roman law of 'Mannus')

She couldn't divorce him, although he could divorce her at any time.

She even lacked the right to tell her husband's slaves what to do.

A husband could even kill his wife for a non-adulterous offense with the approval of an extended-family tribunal. For his wife's adultery, the husband alone could kill her.

The low regard for women also showed itself in how they were treated sexually. Chastity, in the Christian sense, was almost unknown in heathen societies. Women were slaves to man's lower passions. Greco-Roman women were often temple prostitutes, like in the temple of Aphrodite (Diana). Pagan gods had very low standards with regards to women and sexuality.



Although Greeks and Romans had their mistresses, they weren't allowed to marry more than one woman. Most other ancient societies, especially in the Middle East, allowed and encouraged multiple marriages (one man with several wives, but not the other way around). To a large extent, Christianity stopped this; however it still exists in many non-Christian nations today, especially Muslim countries.

Because of Jesus and his teachings, women - especially in the West - enjoy more privileges and rights than at any other time in world history. Because of Galatians 3:28, women were treated as equals to men. In 374 A.D., the Roman Emperor Valentinian repealed the thousand year old laws against women because of ***Galatians 3:28***.

**Christianity has also had an incredible impact on common words and symbols, expressions and sayings, art and architecture, music, the literary world and political freedom. For specific examples of these, take our class "How Christianity Changed the World".**

#### **Book References:**

**"How Christianity Changed the World" by Dr. Alvin Schmidt**

**"Christianity on Trial" by Carroll & Shiflett**

**"What's So Great About Christianity" by Dinesh D'Souza**

#### **Website References:**

<http://www.faithfacts.org/christ-and-the-culture/the-impact-of-christianity>

<https://billmuehlenberg.com/2009/01/10/christianity%E2%80%99s-positive-contributions-an-atheist-confession/>

<http://erlc.com/resource-library/white-papers/some-positive-benefits-churches-bring-to-communities>

<http://christianapologeticsalliance.com/2016/02/18/americas-blessings-how-religion-benefits-everyone-including-atheists/>