

The Northwest Center for Bioethics

Commentary

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Facing Molech Anew: a god of fertility shows his face again ©

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In a world where the rate of infertility is on the rise, it is not surprising to find infertile couples falling prey to questionable practices done in some of our modern fertility clinics. These clinics promise the infertile couple relief from the distress and pain of childlessness yet it is relief at the price of numerous deaths. Let me explain. In order to increase the potential success baby delivery rate to the current standard of 35%, eight or more eggs are usually fertilized. Two to four embryos are then implanted in hope of a successful pregnancy. If all implant successfully, some may be dissolved to give the couple a better “product.” The other embryos not implanted are set aside for future implantation, for experimentation, or are sacrificed in a way not so different from the practices of old, practices suggesting the reappearance of an ancient fertility God in modern-day apparel. Although this practice is not surprising, what astounds me is the prevalence of an unquestioned acceptance of the promise with the price of sacrifice required to assuage the distress and pain of childlessness. Even more surprising is that the influence of this unquestioned acceptance has become part of conventional ritual in many Christian communities of faith. Who, then, is this ancient God and can we put a face to the name?

Facing Molech of Old

His name is Molech, a god of the ancient cosmopolitan people of commerce, the Phoenicians. Molech purportedly promised future blessing to those praying to him in distress, particularly those praying for the gift of pregnancy. His price was the sacrifice of a previously requested child returned to him as a symbolic gift.

The child was offered by the priest in the heated roaster, a bronze statue with outstretched arms and hands. Accompanying the sacrifice were ceremonies of lament and petition. So influential was the heathen practice of that it encroached upon the Israelites of that period. They “mingled” themselves with the Ammonite worship of Molech taking on the syncretistic worship under a strongly pagan influence. The Israelites “learned their works and sacrificed their sons and daughters” to this demon of darkness (2 Kings 17:27-31; Psalm 106:35-37).

Facing Molech Anew

I suggest that the Molech has reappeared with the same features of old but in new cultural garb. He appears in the familiar context of our advanced cosmopolitan civilization of commerce. He purportedly promises future blessing for those who come to

him in distress, particularly the blessing of pregnancy. His price is the children offered, as spare embryos, “in the roaster” of tissue disposal furnaces after stem cell or cloning research, or embryos deemed weak and flawed, or as embryos disposed of as excess. His disposal agents are the “new priests” so aptly called by Auguste Comte, the doctors of fertility science. They with self-assured conscience return the sacrifice to this deity even for experimentation as a gift of thanks back to science that future blessing may be visited on others.

Young couples often consider the sacrifice with vexed over creating their own embryonic children only to destroy some that others might live. Commonplace is the distress arising from the storage or disposal of excess embryos accompanied by quiet confessions of lament and petitions of forgiveness for the destruction of these little lives. Although this modern day syncretism of artificial reproduction technology (ART) is not a regular practice of the Christian faith community, it encroaches upon the community by the strong pagan influence in which it is immersed. Conscience is often soothed by pastors who have uncritically accepted the fertility practice from the culture about them. Words of the blessing of *in vitro* fertilization are fragranced with the name of the Lord without ‘facing’ the lessons of infertile suffering from Sarah, Rachael, Hannah, and the chosen suffering of Christ even unto death.

Conclusion

Perhaps you as a pastor find this reflection farfetched even disingenuous in the face of many whom you know that have benefited from such technological advances. My challenge to you as ‘pastors of integrity’ is to “search the Scripture” before placing that rosebud on your church piano as symbol of new life, a life gained by death. Study the procedure critically and discern if you indeed are not facing Molech anew?” Leviticus 18:21 *'You shall not give any of your offspring to offer them to Molech, nor shall you profane the name of your God; I am the LORD. Selah!*