

HUMANIST VOICES AGAINST THE GENITAL MUTILATION OF CHILDREN

Felix Adler, Ph.D., Founder of the Ethical Culture Society, New York (1876).

The following statement attributed to Felix Adler is taken from: Schwarz, Leo W. (Ed) (1956). *Great Ages and Ideas of The Jewish People*. The Modern Library. Random House. p. 366. Attributed to Felix Adler in 1877.

The extent of Reform varied. Extreme reformers like the members of the Frankfort Reform Society in the 1840s and later Felix Adler in New York, rejected even circumcision. To Adler, at that time a professor of philosophy at Columbia University and soon thereafter founder of the Ethical Culture movement, this ritual appeared as 'simply barbarous in itself and utterly barbarous and contemptible in its origin.' Coming from a former rabbinical student and son of the leading Reform rabbi, Samuel Adler, this declaration called forth sharp condemnation even from Isaac Mayer Wise, one of the recognized leaders of the Reform movement, who dismissed Adler as an 'unknown little Professor of Semitic languages'. The issue was debated time and again in both Germany and America. Yet circumcision has remained the accepted form of admission to the Covenant of Abraham among the overwhelming majority of Reform Jews."

Francis H.C. Crick, Ph.D., Humanist Distinguished Service Award (1986).

Nobel Laureate in Physiology or Medicine (1962) and President, The Salk Institute for Biological Studies, stated in a personal letter to Dr. Prescott, April 8, 1995:

I am very reluctant to lend my name, but in this case you may add my name to those opposed to the genital mutilations of children worldwide and supportive of the Montagu Resolution."

John Hardebeck, M.D., President of the First San Diego Chapter of the AHA (1954)

Former Vice-President, AHA; stated in his Resolution submitted to the California Medical Association (1989):

Newborn male circumcision is a procedure without factual, demonstrable, supportable medical indications in the overwhelming majority of cases.

Lester A. Kirkendall, Ph.D., Humanist of The Year (1983).

Co-author/signer of Humanist Manifesto II (1973) and Co-author/signer, "A New Bill of Sexual Rights and Responsibilities" (1976); Educator in Human Sexuality and Family Life, stated in "The Case Against Circumcision", The Best of Sexology Today, May 1986, Vol.1, No.3:

I now think that a full-scale campaign should be waged to eliminate circumcision, whether of the male or the female.

Gerald A. Larue, Ph.D., Humanist of The Year (1989).

Biblical Scholar, USC Professor-Emeritus; Leader Emeritus, Los Angeles Ethical Culture Society; Member, The Academy of Humanism and distinguished author opposed genital mutilations in "Religious Traditions and Circumcision" (Truth Seeker July/August 1989). In a personal communication to Dr. Prescott, dated April 6, 1995, Dr. Larue provided the following statement:

The practice of male and female circumcision is based on mindless adherence to outmoded folk customs and questionable religious and medical dogma. It is not enough simply to protest this barbaric maltreatment of children; it is necessary to exercise control to protect children. Only world-wide legislation outlawing circumcision (except in extreme cases of medical necessity) and providing fines and punishment for those who continue to mutilate children's sexual organs whether in the name of religion or tradition will provide the needed protection.

I heartily support The Ashley Montagu Commemorative Resolution to End the Genital Mutilation of Children Worldwide which will be passed when this outstanding ethicist and scholar is honored as the 1995 Humanist of the Year by the American Humanist Association.

Joseph Lewis, Biblical Scholar.

Author of many atheist classics. Stated in his essay, "In The Name of Humanity" (1947):

It is almost impossible to believe that parents who love their children could stand by and see them so unmercifully tortured for a religious purpose.

Ashley Montagu, Ph.D., Sc.D., Lit.D., Humanist of the Year (1995).

Internationally renowned author of over fifty books, stated in his distinguished address at The Aldous Huxley Celebration, 1994:

Circumcision is a brutal ritual rooted in superstition and should be abandoned.

and from: Mutilated Humanity, Distinguished Address: Second International Symposium on Circumcision, San Francisco, 1991, stated:

What is called for is a well thought out approach to the eradication of antiquated beliefs and practices which cause so much needless suffering, mutilation, tragedy, and death; an approach which takes into consideration all those factors I have mentioned, and more. We can begin with carefully designed programs, possibly under the auspices of the united nations, or a similar body, with the purpose of rendering obsolescent the practice of circumcision, an archaic ritual mutilation which has no justification whatever, and no place in a civilized society.

James W. Prescott, Ph.D., Director, Institute of Humanistic Science.

Past President, Humanist Fellowship of San Diego and Humanist Association of the National Capital Area; past AHA Board Member; co-author/signer of "Humanist Manifesto II" and "A New Bill of Sexual Rights and Responsibilities"; stated at the First International Symposium on Circumcision (1989):

"...forms of male and female genital mutilation that are conducted as a matter of social and religious custom...constitute "Acts of torture (and) cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment" within the language and intent of Article 5 of the "United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights" ;

and From: Genital Pain vs. Genital Pleasure: Why The One and Not The Other, Truth Seeker (July/August 1989), stated:

"....the confounding of pain and pleasure in the developing brain provides the neuropsychological foundation for individuals who must experience pain to experience pleasure, or who derive pleasure from the experience of pain (sado-masochism)...these developmental experiences of genital pain and affectional deprivation precludes the possibility of realizing the spiritual dimensions of human sexuality.

Jonas Salk, M.D. Humanist of The Year (1976).

Discovered vaccine for poliomyelitis (1954); and Founder, The Salk Institute for Biological Studies, stated in a personal letter to Dr. Prescott, April 19, 1985:

You may add my name to those in support of the Montagu Resolution expressing opposition to the genital mutilation of children.

Benjamin Spock, M.D., Humanist of The Year (1968).

Internationally renowned pediatrician and author of "Baby and Child Care", stated in its Sixth Edition (1985):

There is no excuse for the operation--except as a religious rite. So, I strongly recommend leaving the foreskin alone. Parents should insist on convincing reasons for circumcision--and there are no convincing reasons that I know of.

Thomas Szasz, M.D., Humanist of The Year (1973).

Internationally renowned psychiatrist; defender of the people against abuses from the medical profession, particularly psychiatry, stated in his distinguished address before the Third International Symposium On Circumcision (1984):

When slavery was a custom, every right-minded person supported it. Nothing is as powerful a legitimizer as social custom, even more powerful than law... Circumcision is a kind of sublimation or improvement over child sacrifice (i.e., it's better to sacrifice the foreskin than the whole child). It's a ritual...Both (MGM and FGM--Male/Female Genital Mutilation) alter the normal anatomy of the genital organs without the consent of the individual. Saying anything more is overkill!..

(Thanks to Frank Mortyn for suggesting the listing of Humanist Illuminates in their opposition to the genital mutilation of children. Failure to pass the "Montagu Commemorative Resolution To End The Genital Mutilation of Children World Wide" would repudiate our Humanist Traditions and many of the Humanist principles enumerated in the AHA's "A New Bill of Sexual Rights and Responsibilities, highlighted below--JWP).