



MAKING THE CASE: PROSTITUTION

by André Schutten

THERE IS MORE TO THE WORLD'S OLDEST
PROFESSION THAN MOST PEOPLE REALIZE

Commonly referred to as “the oldest profession”, prostitution is a vice that just won’t go away. Or so we are told. Even some Christians suggest that there’s no sense in trying to “legislate morality”. After all, if we don’t have laws against adultery, why should there be laws against prostitution? Why should we care just because money changes hands?

But a case can and should be made for using the law to combat prostitution. There are clear biblical principles involved, and a pretty convincing practical case to be made as well. So I am going to begin biblically, and conclude with six arguments for criminalizing prostitution that even non-Christians should appreciate and understand.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT PROSTITUTION?

It takes only a cursory reading of Scripture to discover that God condemns prostitution (Leviticus 21:9, Deut. 23:17-18, Prov. 29:3, 2 Kings 23:7, etc.). And just as quickly we will learn that God will as readily forgive these sinners as any others (Joshua 2, Matthew 21:31, & the book of Hosea).

But there are other passages in Scripture, equally relevant, that we will only apply to prostitution if we properly

understand what prostitution actually is. As you will see later in this article, not all prostitutes are willing and consensual partners. In fact, the social-scientific evidence suggests that the vast majority of prostitutes are actually *prostituted* women and children. That means that others are prostituting them out against their will in order to make incredible sums of money.

Who are these prostituted women? There are a few characteristics that are common to most:

1. Typically they are fatherless. This does not mean they are orphaned, but simply that the father is not present in their lives and homes.
2. These prostituted women more often than not are first prostituted while still legally children (under the age of 18).
3. These women usually have very little money, if any at all. Any money they make goes to their controller (known as a “pimp”). Any food or clothes they get is from the pimp.
4. And finally, these girls are often from another place, having been taken away from the city (or country) where their friends or

relatives live in order to ensure they don’t try return home. The criminal law calls this human trafficking. The RCMP suggests that 600 women and children are trafficked into Canada each year for the sex trade, and untold numbers are trafficked from remote communities in Canada (often aboriginal communities) into cities across the country.

In the Old Testament, there is a group of vulnerable people that come up again and again, often clumped together: the sojourner, the widow and the fatherless. That trio (sometimes joined by “the needy”) is repeated at least 26 times in the Old Testament. Do you see the remarkable connection between that phrase and the four characteristics of prostituted women in the modern day sex trade?

It is also clear from scripture that God has a special place for the vulnerable. Consider Deuteronomy 10:

For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. *He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. Love*

Prostitution is not the oldest profession; it's the oldest oppression.

the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt (Deut. 10:17-19).

Not only must we love them by caring for them with food and clothing, we must also defend them within our justice system:

Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.

Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked (Psalm 82:3-4).

We could also turn to Isaiah 1:17, Deut. 24:17-18, Isaiah 10:1-3, Jeremiah 22:3, Ezekiel 22:6-7, Zechariah 7:9-11, and Malachi 3:5, where this message is repeated again and again.

God also sends this very clear warning to anyone who exploits vulnerable human beings (especially, in this context, pimps and johns but also those who turn a blind eye to this evil):

“Cursed be anyone who perverts the justice due to the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow.” And all the people shall say, “Amen” (Deut. 27:19).

A glance through the book of Job, the Psalms (see especially Psalm 10, 68, 82 and 94) and the Old Testament prophets reveals the same harsh punishment for those who take advantage of the vulnerable. Paul picks up this line in his warning against those who live ungodly lives, stating that the law is made for those who are lawless including (among others) “slave traders” or “kidnappers” (1 Timothy 1:10).

I think it is clear then that the Bible states persuasively that Christians ought to be on guard against adultery in their own lives and ought to speak out and defend those who are forced into

prostitution. Likewise, our laws need to defend these vulnerable people. The law ought to target the pimps and the johns – the *victimizers* – however, prostituted women who are typically *victims* should not be punished by the law.

SIX ARGUMENTS AGAINST LEGALIZING PROSTITUTION

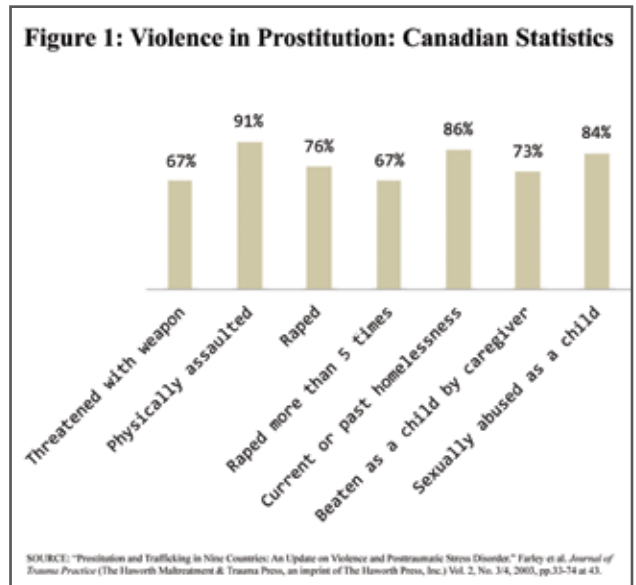
Having set out a Biblical argument for a change in our prostitution laws, how do we engage with non-Christians who are so dismissive of God's laws? Here are some tips on how to make your case against prostitution when debating with a non-Christian acquaintance or audience.

1. THINK TAKEN NOT PRETTY WOMAN

The gritty Liam Neeson thriller *Taken* is a more accurate depiction of modern day prostitution than the Julia Roberts 1990 rom-com, *Pretty Woman*. There are too many people, Christians included, who are informed about social issues through pop culture. *Pretty Woman* is one bad example of it. One prominent national columnist even publically stated her approval for decriminalizing prostitution because she loved the movie *Pretty Woman*. Evidently, she hadn't watched *Taken*. For those who have not watched the movie, read on.

2. PROSTITUTION IS INTIMATELY LINKED WITH CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Prostitution is not the oldest profession; it's the oldest oppression. Some suggest that prostitution is liberation; it is, in fact, exploitation. Statistically speaking, most prostitutes are actually prostituted women



(note the passive voice – something done to them, not something they do). These women and girls are trafficked or coerced into the sex trade.

A social-scientific study from 2003 found that a majority (54%) of women entered the sex trade under the age of 18, some children as young as 12 years old. In the Netherlands, only 5 years after legalizing prostitution, the rate of child prostitution jumped by 300% from 4,000 child prostitutes to 15,000!

Another study estimates that the vast majority (between 80% and 95%) of these prostituted women are controlled by a pimp. The RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police - Canada's federal police force) reports that these *pimps even brand their girls like cattle* – tattooing them or scarring them in order to assert ownership over them.

3. PROSTITUTION IS INTIMATELY LINKED WITH HUMAN TRAFFICKING

In Canada, a relatively progressive and safe country, the RCMP reports that 600 girls are trafficked into the country each year for the purposes of sexual exploitation. That is, young women are either tricked to come to Canada under false pretenses, or are kidnapped and brought to Canada to serve as sex slaves in order to make money for their pimps. Many more are trafficked from within our own borders, usually from vulnerable communities, like Aboriginal

... the vast majority of prostitutes are actually prostituted women and children.

reserves. Some experts speculate that a pimp can make approximately \$250,000-\$300,000 off of each girl they “own.” Similar evidence exists in other countries too: when the Netherlands legalized prostitution in 2003, the number of women trafficked into the country from poor countries in eastern Europe, south-east Asia and Africa rose.

Trafficked women are carefully controlled. Their identity documents are stolen or destroyed, threats are made on their loved ones, or their handlers threaten to expose their activities to their loved ones unless they cooperate.

Sexual exploitation accounts for approximately 80% of the world’s human trafficking. (The other 20% is generally for slave labor in third-world countries.)

4. PROSTITUTION IS INHERENTLY VIOLENT

Prostitution is violence against women. Let’s not kid ourselves - decriminalizing prostitution will not create an equal playing field for female entrepreneurs who wish to engage in a legitimate business of sexual services. The horrific reality is that the vast majority of prostituted women suffer incredible harm. Prostitution is intrinsically exploitative. Legalizing or decriminalizing a practice that is inherently harmful and dangerous does not reduce the harm, danger or exploitation. As Dr. Melissa Farley states:

If we view prostitution as violence against women, it makes no sense to legalize or decriminalize prostitution. The primary violence in prostitution is not “social stigma” as some maintain. Decriminalizing or legalizing prostitution would normalize and regulate practices which are human rights violations, and which in any other context would be legally actionable (sexual harassment,

physical assault, rape, captivity, economic coercion) or emotionally damaging (verbal abuse).

5. LIKE PORNOGRAPHY, PROSTITUTION FUELS RAPE, AND IS RAPE

The facts above should convince us that prostitution is, in almost every case, rape. And often, prostitution is the rape of a child. That makes prostitution a fundamental violation of human rights. No individual, community or society should ever tolerate prostitution. We have a duty to speak out.

For more on the link between pornography, prostitution and rape culture, listen to the interview section of ARPA Canada’s podcast here: tinyurl.com/ARPARapeCulture

6. THE LAW SHOULD TARGET THOSE WHO DRIVE THE SEX TRADE

Many argue that prostitution should be legalized in order to make it safer. However, legalization and decriminalization only benefit the pimps, traffickers and johns; it normalizes the treatment of the female body as a commodity for men to rent and for “businessmen” to rent out; it degrades the community. Legalizing or decriminalizing prostitution is fundamentally immoral.


From a public policy perspective, the law ought to target the pimps and the johns. The law ought not to target the victims, that is the “sojourners, the widows and the fatherless.” For more on this approach, consider ARPA Canada’s policy report from September 2011 advocating for a change to their prostitution laws: tinyurl.com/ARPAProstitution.

BUT WHAT ABOUT...

It would be misleading to suggest

that absolutely every single woman involved in prostitution is a victim, coerced or trafficked. There are those who willingly engage in prostitution. In fact, the Bible contemplates this reality (see Proverbs 30:20: “This is the way of an adulteress: she eats and wipes her mouth and says, ‘I have done no wrong.’” See also Proverbs 2:16, 5:20, 6:24, 7:5, 23:27). However, these types of people are the minority (and sadly, a very vocal minority). Our laws should serve to protect the vulnerable even if this means inconveniencing, though not criminalizing, this vocal minority. Their inconvenience is a small price to pay since their participation in the sex trade compounds the societal and cultural problem of the objectification of women and girls.

Finally, a word to men: In the book of Proverbs, the teacher warns his son about “the adulteress” (ESV). The teacher focuses his lesson on his son and his son’s actions (Proverbs 2:16-19, 5:1-23, 6:20-35, 7:1-27, 23:26-28). He doesn’t tell his son, “If only the prostitute were locked up somewhere” or, “The king ought to outlaw prostitutes from tempting my son.” No, he warns his son, “keep your father’s commandment,” “walk in the way of the good,” “rejoice in the wife of your youth,” “do not stray into [the adulteress’s] paths.” Although the teacher notices men falling victim to the seduction of the forbidden woman, the teacher doesn’t buy into a victim blame-shifting mentality. That is foolish. Rather, the teacher warns his son to show forethought and to not fall victim. Men must show self-control, man up, take responsibility, and be virtuous. Canada’s new prostitution law best realizes this principle.

By speaking up with your neighbors and co-workers about this important issue, by speaking truth and clarity to an issue that is often misunderstood, you too can defend the oppressed and the fatherless. And perhaps as communities – as churches – we might dare to offer help in a relational, meaningful way to these sojourners, these fatherless, these needy on our city streets. 


A BETTER WAY TO FIGHT PROSTITUTION

by Jon Dykstra

On December 20 last year, the Supreme Court struck down Canada's prostitution laws, but they postponed the implementation of their ruling for one year to give Parliament time to create a new law. In June the government did so with their Bill C-36, which they hope to fast track so that it will be through the Senate by the December deadline.


The bill adopts a new approach to combatting prostitution by targeting the "johns" rather than going after the prostitutes. It will criminalize the buying of sex, rather than the selling of it.

This is known as the "Nordic model" (see the accompanying graphic) because it has already been tried in Sweden, Iceland and Norway with some success. It is also the model favored by ARPA Canada. In a brief they published earlier this year they noted that while a small minority of prostitutes engage in prostitution willingly, most are exploited and coerced: "...in a survey of downtown Vancouver prostitutes an overwhelming 95% said they wanted out of the sex trade!" In recommending the Nordic model they argue it "is the only law that provides escape for the vulnerable and exploited while also punishing those who exploit the vulnerable, the pimps and the johns."

The time to speak out is now, and one very easy way to reach your elected representatives is via ARPA Canada's Easy Mail 3.0, at easy.arpacanada.ca. You can also read their brief by visiting tinyurl.com/ARPACanada. 

SOURCE: Graphic created by, and used with the permission of, Tessa Littlejohn.


PROSTITUTION IN CANADA



Justice
On December 20, 2013, the Supreme Court of Canada struck down the prostitution laws thus affording us a rare opportunity to create just laws that protect the rights and dignity of the vulnerable!


Reality in Canada

Fact




The average age of entry is 13 years

Fact




92% of Prostitutes would quit immediately if they could

Fact



Majority are lured, tricked or trafficked into prostitution.

Fact



85% of prostitutes were sexually abused as children

Vulnerable

Girls are vulnerable due to poverty, childhood sexual abuse, family issues and addiction.

Aboriginal women are grossly overrepresented in prostitution and among the women who have been murdered in prostitution.


The RCMP estimates that 600-800 victims are trafficked into Canada each year, and another 1,500 to 2,200 persons are trafficked through Canada to the United States annually.

Pimp/Trafficker

Pimps and traffickers use deception, coercion, false promises of romantic relationship, better life, false job.

"You can buy a woman for \$10,000 and make your money back in a week if she is young and pretty. Then everything else is profit." Ludwig "Tarzan" Fainberg convicted trafficker.

Human trafficking is \$32 billion / year business. 79% of victims are destined for sex trade. Canada is a source, destination and transit country.



Trafficking of Girls and Women is driven by DEMAND to buy sex

No Demand = No Trafficking/Prostitution

Nordic Model

Sweden, Norway and Iceland have laws that seek to abolish the exploitation of women through prostitution by criminalizing Johns, Pimps and Traffickers while decriminalizing prostitutes.

Seeks to Abolish
Gender equality will remain unattainable as long as men buy, sell and exploit women and children by prostituting them.

Believes:
Large focus on programs to help them leave prostitution

Justice

VS

Legalization/Decriminalization

Jurisdictions such as Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Australia have decriminalized and regulated prostitution.

Believes: Prostitutes and pimps are legal professions.

Prostitutes are required to undergo health checks but not johns

Profession
Regulated
Brothels are registered businesses requiring appropriate licenses

WHAT ARE THE RESULTS OF THESE MODELS??

80% Decrease in number of men buying sex

Radical reduction in brothels and massage parlors

Nordic Model decreases trafficking

2/3 fewer street prostitutes

No Demand = Bad Business for Pimps and Traffickers

Swedish police report having intercepted communications from traffickers declaring that Sweden is a "bad market."

Legalization does not control the sex industry. It expands it. Over the last decade, in the Netherlands the sex industry grew 25 percent. Illegal prostitution also grew exponentially.

25%

Mayor of Amsterdam says it's impossible to protect the girls and closed down large swath of red light district due to organized crime

Organized Crime

More than **75%** of Amsterdam's 8000-11000 prostitutes are from Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia

In the Netherlands child prostitution increased from 4,000 children in 1996 to 15,000 in 2001.