

That quote describing nine year old boys and girls working fifteen hour days in the heat of the summer was written in 1891. This was of course written in reference to Greece and may sound barbaric, but the situation back in the U.S. was not much better.

Children in colonial America and even more recent were often viewed as property. They were simply viewed as laborers as the following quote shows.

"Children were viewed as important economic producers then [Colonial period] and therefore the courts became principally involved in issues of the custody and control of children when they were asked to approve contracts for indentures or to resolve conflicts regarding child labor. The right and obligations of fathers and masters overlapped; both depended upon child labor... ..from 1790 to 1890 ... Slavery was abolished and indentured servitude for children was increasingly frowned upon." ~ From

Father's Property to Children's Rights by Mary Ann Mason

Even the wealthy often sent their children out to be indentured servants.

"The want of affection in the English is strongly manifested towards their children; for after having kept them at home till they arrive at the age of 7 or 9 years at the utmost, they put them out, both males and females, to hard service in the houses of other people, binding them generally for another 7 or 9 years. And these are called apprentices, and during that time they

perform all the most menial offices; and few are born who are exempted from this fate, for every one however rich he may be, sends away his children into the houses of others, whilst he, in return, receives those of strangers into his own." ~ A Relation

translated by Charlotte Augusta Sneyd p.24-25

In antiquity, childhood was seen to end at about age 7. Classical literature is ripe with comments supporting this conclusion. The idea of a seven year old leaving home and being indentured as a servant is so foreign to us today that it is virtually inconceivable.

However this was the norm during the middle ages. And the differences do not end at the notion of young children entering the workforce. The interaction between parent and child during our era would be viewed by the medieval parent as preposterous. For example in the middle ages and before, parents would not engage in "baby talk" with their infants. Baby talk was considered the "language of fools". Children were sometimes not even viewed as fully human. In ancient Rome, newborn babies were placed at the feet of their father. Their father would either accept or reject them. The fathers had absolute authority over the child and could inflict punishments up to and including death. Part of the reason that the focus is on children at Christmas is because in Rome at the Saturnalia, from which many Christmas rituals are derived, there was a traditional role reversal that took place. Masters served their slaves.

Since children were viewed as servants or even subhuman, they were also elevated at the feast of Saturnalia.

There was also another pagan holiday that was part of the saturnalia called the Juvenalis, held in honor of the pagan goddess Juventas. She was said to be the guardian of youth and rejuvenation. The words "juvenile" & "rejuvenation" are derived from the name of this pagan goddess. Celebrations in her honor are still very much alive not only in Christmas, but on the pagan calendar as well. Here is a quote from a modern Wiccan bible printed in 2003 which describes the current rituals used in honor of this pagan deity. It places the day of celebration on the nineteenth of December. *"December 19 Day of Children- Honoring Juventas. This day is known as the Day of the Children or Festival of Youth. ... This is a day to give our children presents and enjoy their youth, realizing it dwindles day by day. The cultural celebrations this time of year fit right into the Wiccan religion and Pagan way of life."* ~A

Wiccan Bible: Exploring the Mysteries of the Craft from Birth to Summerland by A. J. Drew p.199

That last line confirms that the Christmas celebration fits right in with the pagan way of life. It fits in because Christmas rituals originate in paganism. This is another Christmas tradition with roots running deep into paganism. The focus on children should not be limited to one day per year.

There is much more about this topic on the website.

The emphasis on children

There is probably no better time of year to be a child than Christmas time. Children around the world are showered with gifts and affection at this time of year. They are the focus of attention. Parents who are normally busy with the details of everyday life suddenly have time to focus their energy on the children who adore them. The focus that children receive at this time of year is a long standing tradition. However, to understand how it began, we must understand how children were treated and viewed in the past. To do that we will take a brief stroll through the history of children. We will begin at the present and move backward in time.

For the most part, children today are treated very well in most societies around the world. The development of the idea that children should be treated with tenderness and compassion is a very new one. The following quote shows how children were being treated during late nineteenth century Greece. *"It is however much needed law, especially in the cotton and textile factories, where children of 9 years of age of both sexes are kept at work during the heat of summer from 4:30 a.m. till 7:30 p.m., with only 1 hour's interval during all that time for meals and relaxation."*~ Commercial Relations of the United States with Foreign Countries, Iss, 125-126

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The Children



This informational pamphlet gives the reader a basic understanding of why there is such an emphasis placed on children at Christmas time.

