

# How Christianity Changed the World

## *Transformed Lives*

### **1. Transformed lives of the disciples:**

At the crucifixion, they were cowards and utterly hopeless. When the message of the resurrection came, they had to be convinced... But once convinced, they never doubted again. These simple men and women gave the world the highest ethical teaching it has ever known. They believed and preached this, even to their deaths. Think of the absurdity of a little band of defeated cowards in an upper room one day and a few days later, transformed into a group that no persecution could silence... and then attempting to attribute this change to nothing more than the disciples starting their own religion. Who would die for a lie? Their lives had been transformed by Jesus living in them.

### **2. Transformed lives of the early, persecuted Christians:**

Roman emperors Nero, Domitian, Trajan, Antonius Pius, Marcus Aurelius (of the movie Gladiator fame), Decius, Valerian, Diocletian, Maximian and Galerian brutally persecuted believers. These early Christians were fed to the lions, or were lit as torches for Nero's garden parties; while many others either had their legs cut off, broken or torn apart. Women were thrown into brothels to suffer shame before being executed... In spite of three centuries of these persecutions, those brave early Christians did not attack their pagan enemies; they shed no innocent blood except their own.

# Lesson 1

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### 3. Transformed lives over 2,000 years of history:

Men and women, throughout the last 2,000 years of history, have had the same experience as the early disciples – transformed lives by Jesus Christ. People like James Clerk Maxwell (discoverer of the laws of electro-magnetism), Mitsuo Fuchida (Japanese pilot who led the attack on Pearl Harbor), Nicky Cruz (gang leader), cartoonists like Charles Schulz and Johnny Hart, author and literary giant C.S. Lewis and J.R. Tolkien, skeptics like Lew Wallace, author of Ben-Hur... and the list goes on and on. Napoleon (not a believer) said that he could not imagine having his soldiers die for him AFTER he was dead. Wherever Christianity has spread, it has produced results like this. Even in third world countries today (as in Sudan), believers are being killed, tortured, raped and mutilated rather than renounce their belief in Jesus. One report estimated that there have been more Christian martyrs in the 20<sup>th</sup> century than in all the previous 19 centuries combined. No other world religion has had such transformative power.

***Interesting note: there were more than 10 messianic movements in the 1<sup>st</sup> century that failed. Christ's was the only one that succeeded.***

Please refer to the books "Foxy's Book of Martyrs" and "Jesus Freaks" for specific accounts of Christian persecutions.

Go to [www.persecution.com](http://www.persecution.com) (the website of Voice of the Martyrs).

Go to [www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/](http://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/)  
(the website of Open Doors)

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## Education

***Acts 5:42 and Matthew 28:19,20***

GRC (Greco-Roman culture) education was only for the male children of the rich and elite. *Christianity was the first world religion to educate male and female alike*, despite their economic or social status. The reason for this was because Jesus saw all people as equals (***Galatians 3:28***) and if they were to spread the gospel, they all needed to be able to read and write. This produced results.

By the 5<sup>th</sup> century, St. Augustine said that Christian women were often better educated in divine matters than the pagan male philosophers. In early America, the Bible was used as one of the textbooks in schools – yes, even public schools.

Universities started out in monasteries. 92% of all American universities before the Civil War were founded by Christian denominations. Colleges like Harvard, Yale, Dartmouth, Princeton, Northwestern, Columbia, Brown, University of California at Berkeley, University of Kentucky, and University of Tennessee all started out as Christian campuses. Almost all European colleges were started as Christian colleges also, like Oxford and Cambridge.

Since human life in the GRC was cheap, infants born with disabilities were even worse. In Greece, blind babies were commonly cast into the sea. Some blind boys became galley slaves while blind girls were forced to become prostitutes. Louis Braille became blind at a very early age. Influenced by his Christian father, he came up with a system for blind people to read by. Today we know this as the 'raised dots' Braille system. On his deathbed, he said "I am convinced that my mission is finished on earth: I tasted yesterday the supreme delight: God descended to brighten my eyes with the splendor of hope."

# Lesson 1

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## Science

Alfred North Whitehead, the renowned philosopher of science, said that the origins of modern science required Christianity's insistence on the rationality of God. If God is a rational being, then may not human beings, who are made in His image, also employ rational processes to study and investigate the world in which He created? The scientist Kepler said that he wanted to think God's thoughts after Him.

GRC produced some advances in science, but because of their belief in Aristotelian philosophy, they didn't/couldn't go very far. The gods of Aristotle were part of creation (pantheism), not separate and distinct from it as in Christianity. Because the gods were part of creation, figuring out how the world worked was seen as useless as it was invading the gods' territory. Also, since the gods were not always rational, figuring out how the world operated was seen as useless. For example, planets were seen as having an intelligence and feelings; hence, this is what made them move. According to Aristotle, the world was neither created by the gods nor had a beginning. Christians saw themselves as merely trying to understand the world that God had created and over which he told them to have "dominion" (**Genesis 1:28**). This paradigm shift is another example of Christianity's impact on the world. The eastern mind (China, Japan, etc.) worked the same way that the GRC did.

Aristotle used the deductive method of reasoning; he could see how gravity worked but couldn't figure out why it worked. Christians introduced the inductive method of reasoning, which told them how and why something worked – the rationality of God and His laws of nature. Unfortunately, some believers held to the Aristotelian method. It took the Protestant Reformation in the 1500 to the 1600's to really blow the doors of scientific investigation wide open. From the 1400 to the mid-1800's, every major scientist explained his motivations in religious terms. From the mid-1800's to the early 1900's, the only exception to this was evolutionary scientists.

Calvinists founded the Royal Society of London in 1645 with 7 of its 10 scientists being Puritans. It is the most prestigious scientific society in history. The founder of Scientific American magazine was a believer – isn't that a hoot? See the list of scientists.