

# How Christianity Changed the World

## *Charity and Compassion*

We need to transfer ourselves back to the GRC (Greco-Roman culture). This will be hard, as we have grown up in a Christian culture (CC). Human compassion among the ancients was rare. Plato said that a poor man (usually a slave) who was no longer able to work because of sickness should be left to die. Roman philosopher Plautus said that “You do a beggar bad service by giving him food and drink; you lose what you give and prolong his life for more misery.” Remember that Roman spectators took great delight in seeing gladiators mauled or stabbed to death in the arenas; a practice that took place for over 600 years. In essence, the GRC didn’t see the hungry, sick, dying or slaves as worthy of human assistance. Remember, slavery had been practiced throughout the world until the influence of Christianity stopped it. More on this later. When plagues hit an area, people fled. Such behavior prompted the Roman emperor Julian to lament that the Christians, whom he detested, showed love and compassion, whereas his pagan countrymen didn’t. The eastern cultures resembled the GRC in this regard. In its extreme form, these cultures could easily practice human sacrifice, especially in the land of Canaan. Into this callous, compassionless culture, Christians entered. See ***Matthew 25:35,36,45 John 15:13***

### **1. Charity to orphans:**

Child abandonment was common in the ancient world. More on this later. Many parents died while their children were still young. The early Roman church wasn’t ‘rich’ because they regularly took in abandoned and homeless children into their homes and raised them as their own. This is why they required godparents at each child’s baptism. In case they died, the godparents would take over and raise the child themselves. Much later, Christians established orphanages for homeless children. No other culture or religion did this. Christians did this because they saw biblical teachings that said every human life was precious in the sight of God.

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### **2. Charity to the aged:**

There is no historical evidence of homes for the aged in the years preceding Christianity. Christians established homes for the aged by the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Before that, many Christians took them into their homes and cared for them. While some cultures did esteem their elders, it didn't translate into caring for them when they were old, frail and alone. For example, in the Eskimo culture, many years ago, it was a common practice to let their aged slowly freeze to death...

### **3. Charity by American volunteer associations:**

In the 1940's, Gunnar Myrday (a foreign observer) noted, "No country has so many cheerful givers as America." He attributed this to "influence from the churches." The following organizations were largely influenced by Christians and Christian churches:

Fraternal Benefit Societies

Lutheran Brotherhood, Ukrainian National Association, etc.

Service Clubs

Kiwanis, Lions, Optimist, Rotary, etc.

YMCA, YWCA

# Lesson 2



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### **4. Child-labor laws:**

A major tragedy of the industrial revolution was child-labor exploitation. People who greatly influenced governments to outlaw child-labor were English Christians like William Wilberforce, Charles Dickens, Thomas Carlyle and Anthony Cooper, aka. Lord Shaftesbury.

While child labor has been effectively outlawed in “Christian” western countries, it still is widespread in many non-western, non-Christian countries today. Countries like China, Thailand, Bangladesh, Africa, etc. In 1997 UNICEF estimated 2-4 million children worked in various sectors of Mexico’s economy; and Mexico is nominally Catholic (obviously, they’re not practicing it!).

People who think that human charity and compassion existed as a result of mere civilization without the impetus and influence of Christianity are just plain misinformed.

George Grant says, “As missionaries circled the globe, they started hospitals, founded orphanages, started rescue missions, opened soup kitchens, incorporated charitable societies and changed laws... they lived as if people mattered.” Sympathy toward the poor is a concept that comes from Christianity; however, the elite and rich in the GRC despised them.

# Lesson 2

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### 5. Hospitals and health care:

The GRC had a colossal void when it came to caring for the sick and dying. Because God loves everyone (**John 3:16**), Christians cannot please God unless they love one another (**John 15:12,13**). The early Christians rejected the inhumane treatment of the sick and dying. They saw each person has having a redeemable soul and so, they needed to nurse and nurture each and every person regardless of the physical condition or social standing. Saving physically frail people was an affront to the GRC. It violated their cultural norms. Seneca, 1<sup>st</sup> century Roman philosopher, said, "We drown children who at birth are weakly and abnormal."

While Greeks and Romans (and others) had doctors, they were only for the elite and rich (and sometimes, soldiers). Doctors and hospitals for everyone else did not exist until Christians established them. Nearly 400 years after Christians began building hospitals, the 8<sup>th</sup> century Arabs noticed the humanitarian work of these Christian hospitals and began to build them in their countries. Almost all of the early American hospitals were started by Christians or churches. This is still true in countries like India today...

Nursing as a profession was started by Florence Nightingale, a Christian who was greatly influenced earlier by a Christian doctor and his nurse.

The Red Cross (and the Red Crescent, the Muslim part of the Red Cross) was started by Jean Henri Durant who said at the end of his life, "I am a disciple of Christ as in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, and nothing more."

It is an astonishing mystery that the Greeks and Romans, who built large temples in honor of their gods and goddesses, fashioned statues of all sorts, wrote a wide variety of literature, built big arenas, built aqueducts and great roads, and NEVER built any hospitals for the regular people. The American church historian Philip Schaff said, "The old Roman world was a world without charity."

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# How Christianity Changed the World

## *Liberty and Justice for All*

### 1. American Liberty:

We'll just focus on American liberty because it's been so misunderstood and we only have limited time today...

From the US Supreme Court 'Holy Trinity' case in 1892:

*"This is true. From the discovery of this continent to the present hour...*

*These and many other matters... add a volume of unofficial declarations to the mass of organic utterances that this is a Christian nation."*

*Pass out pages of our Founding Fathers achievements showing their Christian nature.*

*Pass out table of most cited thinkers who influenced our Founding Fathers.*

For example, Montesquieu's 'separation of powers (checks and balances)' theory is rooted in **Jeremiah 17:9** that man naturally tends toward corruption and cannot be trusted with too much power.

*Note: some people have said that the Constitution doesn't mention God at all...*

The Constitution is like an owner's manual; it tells you how to operate government (the by-laws). The Declaration of Independence gives the reasoning for that freedom (the articles of incorporation). It's in the Declaration where the Christian influence is most directly seen. The Declaration is THE foundational document of our Republic; not the Constitution...

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