

How Christianity Changed the World

Slavery

Slavery is a common staple in every society that ever existed – including Africa, Arabia, Greece, Rome and the American Indians long before Columbus. With few exceptions, kings, pagan priests and philosophers approved of it. Slavery is not just about whites enslaving blacks – it's primarily about people enslaving other people. It exists today in many parts of the world, especially in the Sudan, where Muslims are enslaving Christian and others.

Christianity was the first major religion that was against slavery. **Galatians 3:28** Paul's statement was beyond revolutionary; it was ridiculously radical, and unheard of before in history.

Explain Philemon.

Because of Christianity, slavery had become extinct by the 14th century in Europe. It was revived by the British empire's expansion in the 17th century, especially in the British colonies (including America). William Wilberforce finally ended slavery in England in the 1800's because of his Christian convictions. Most of the abolitionist movement (2/3rds) in America in the mid-1800's was made up of Christians and clergy. While there were some Christians who defended slavery, this doesn't nullify that fact that most Christians were against it and because of them, it ended here in America.

In all the pain and suffering that American blacks endured during slavery, they were greatly aided by Jesus' presence in their life thru the Black Churches. Christianity is not a segregated religion. It has offered itself without restriction to all peoples, classes and nations. It is not limited to one people, like Judaism, nor to one nation or empire, like the GRC.

Slavery was first abolished in the Western world as a direct result of C. To those who disagree, answer these questions: 1) Was slavery first abolished in countries where Christianity had a major influence or a minor influence? 2) Where slavery exists today, does Christianity have a major or minor influence in those countries? 3) For those countries that still practice slavery, which religion or political system is in place?

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Sanctity of Human Life

1. Infanticide:

Infanticide is the killing of newborn infants. Historical research shows that infanticide was common in many ancient cultures such as the GRC, India, China, Japan, and Africa, as well as North and South American Indians, among many others. The 12 Tablets of Roman Law support infanticide, as do many ancient philosophers like the Roman Seneca. Large GR families were rare because of this. Infant girls were especially vulnerable. In Greece, it was rare for a wealthy family to have more than one daughter. Polybius, a Greek philosopher, blamed the population decline on infanticide. Throughout the centuries, Christians have never wavered in their condemnation of infanticide – in part because of **Matthew 19:14**. They have always called it what it really is – murder. The Roman Emperor Valentinian (sufficiently influenced by Bishop Basil of Caesarea in Cappadocia) formally outlawed it in 374AD.

2. Child abandonment:

GRC (among many others) practiced child abandonment. In Sparta, when a child was born, it was taken before the elders of the tribe, and they decided whether it should be kept or abandoned. Children were abandoned for many reasons such as economic, grieving an emperor's assassination, frustration in child rearing, etc. In neither Greek, nor Roman literature can we find any guilt feelings over this practice. Clement of Alexandria, a church father in the later part of the 2nd century, condemned the Romans for protecting birds and other creatures better than its children. Christians did more than just condemn the practice; they often took these children into their homes and raised them as their own. This is one reason why the early Roman church wasn't very rich; as they expended a great amount of time and money on raising these children. When the Roman Emperor Valentinian outlawed infanticide in 374AD, he also outlawed child abandonment. Christians saw child abandonment as a form of murder.

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3. Abortion:

GRC had a very low view of human life. While the Roman view of marriage started out rather high, it quickly deteriorated. Countless Roman woman engaged in adulterous sex and when they became pregnant, they aborted the evidence. Plato, Aristotle, Celsus and others had no problem with the killing of the unborn. While there was a little opposition (like Hippocrates), it was very little. Plato said it should be done to stop over-population of the state. Most ancient cultures practiced abortion.

TALK ABOUT FORGIVENESS!

The early church's opposition to abortion, infanticide and child abandonment distinguished Christian from pagan societies. And their opposition was a major factor in giving the Western world its high regard for human life (at all stages in its development). Emperor Valentinian outlawed abortion in the Roman empire in 374AD.

4. Gladiatorial Games:

Gladiators fought not only other men but beasts also. Thousands upon thousands of them were slaughtered during the seven centuries of the "games". These games were held throughout the Roman empire. The emperor Trajan (98-117AD) celebrated his conquest of Dacia by hosting games that lasted four months and included 10,000 gladiators with 10,000 beasts. Half of the gladiators died during the games, while many more died afterwards, from their wounds. Emperor Titus inaugurated the Roman Coliseum in 80AD with 5,000 thousand animals being killed in one day, plus hundreds of gladiator lost their lives in the games...

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4. Gladiatorial Games *(continued)*:

Christians condemned and boycotted these games as murder (**Exodus 20:13**). Their opposition didn't go unnoticed, as Romans thought the Christians were being unpatriotic. A Roman pagan is quoted as saying, "You do not go to our shows, you take no part in our processions... you shrink in horror from our sacred (gladiatorial) games."

The historian W.E.H. Leakey (no friend to Christianity) states: "There is scarcely any single reform so important in the moral history of mankind as the suppression of the gladiatorial shows, a feat that must be almost exclusively ascribed to the Christian church." The games were outlawed in the Roman empire in 404AD.

Child Sacrifice:

Where paganism rules, it was not uncommon to see human beings, especially children, sacrificed to pagan gods. Child sacrifices were common in places like Canaan (Palestine).

1st Kings 18:16-40, 2nd Kings 16:3, 21:6 and Jeremiah 7:31

The pre-St. Patrick Irishmen sacrificed prisoners of war and newborns to the harvest gods. It was also common among the pagan Prussians and Lithuanians until the 14th century. The Aztecs and Mayans of South America also practiced child sacrifice and didn't stop until conquered by the Spanish.

Whether the human life was a fetus, an infant, or an adult, early Christians saw God as the creator of all human life (**Job 1:21**); only He could give and take human life.

If we took a fellow-human life, it was murder. This view that human life was sacred went totally against the prevailing GR view. The Roman emperor Tiberius (14-37AD) loved to see tortured humans thrown into the sea. Emperor Caligula (37-41AD) killed all who once served in his palace. He also dragged humans through the streets with their bowels hanging out!

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