

# *What Has Christianity Ever Done for Us?*

## Paul Copan



## **ABOLITION OF SLAVERY.**

**The GLORIOUS 1st of AUGUST, 1838,**  
*When it is confidently expected that the last  
vestige of SLAVERY will be swept away in all  
our West India Islands.*

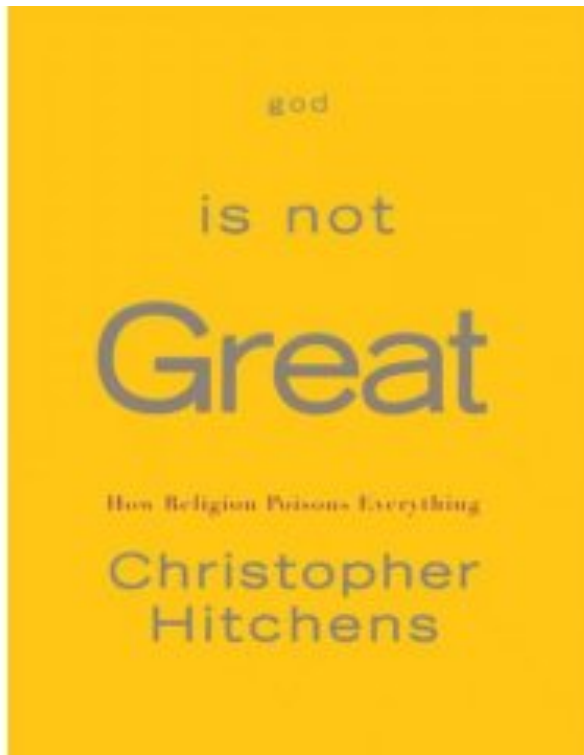
A Public Thanksgiving Service will be held in the ENGLISH  
WESLEYAN CHAPEL, on WEDNESDAY Evening next,  
AUGUST 1st, 1838, PRECISELY at 7 o'Clock. Addresses in both  
Languages will be delivered on the auspicious occasion.

The attendance of ALL that feel interested in the welfare of  
**800,000** of their fellow-creatures who will shortly emerge from a  
state of SLAVERY into that of FREEDOM, is most earnestly requested.

Carmarthen, July 30th, 1838.

P.S.—A Collection will be made to defray the local expenses of the Carmarthen Anti-  
Slavery Society, and to aid the General Committee, in London, in their important and  
unwearied labours, to secure to the Negro the possession of ACTUAL, as well as  
NOMINAL Freedom.

# Christopher Hitchens: “Religion poisons everything”?



Martin Marty (U Chicago), an authority on religion: At least 17 distinct definitions of religion; scholars “will never agree on the definition of religion.”



William Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence: Secular Ideology and the Roots of Modern Conflict* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 28.

- **Everyone—atheist, theist, etc.—has a worldview, and whatever the worldview, it should be justified—not simply assumed.**
- **Atheism has done a lot of “poisoning” (e.g., Stalin, Mao Tse-Tung, Pol Pot).**
- **Not all traditional “religions” are created equal (the caste system of India, Hinduism’s abusive male deities, ).**

- **We're not denying bad things done in the name of God/Christ (Jesus predicted this!).**
- **It may be more instructive to observe professing Christians in hostile settings rather in places where one easily calls oneself a Christian but lives like a moral relativist.**
- **The Bible makes clear our profound human sinfulness/self-orientation and proneness to self-deception.**

**FOCUS: “What happens when people faithfully follow Jesus Christ, when they are consistently living out their message—not simply wearing the ‘Christian’ label?”**

Many of us are **cultural trust-fund kids**. We are heirs to the hard-fought gains brought to us by courageous, dedicated Christians following Jesus.



# OVERVIEW

- 1. A Case Study from India: Hinduism and the Status and Treatment of Women**
- 2. Roots, Shoots, and Fruits—the Impact of Various “Model Voices” on Culture.**
- 3. How Faithful Jesus-Followers Shaped Western Culture—Modern Science, Bioethics, Human Rights/Democracy**
- 4. Reinforcement from Non-Theistic Scholars**



# 1. A Case Study from India: Hinduism and the Status and Treatment of Women



**Dec. 16, 2012, 23-year-old P.T. student Nirbhaya was gang-raped and brutalized on a public bus in Mumbai, India, and she died as a result.**



**NIRBHAYA**  
Be Fearless©



**KANCHA ILAIAH, “The Roots of Rape in India,”**  
*The Deccan Chronicle, May 10, 2014*



**“Rape has, of late,  
become an acute disease  
in the Indian society.  
Prima facie, this is a  
problem arising out of a  
mental disorder, but there  
is also a larger cultural  
context that, to an extent,  
explains how the Indian  
male became so brutal....**

**“Daily reports of infants being raped across the length and breadth of a country is a phenomenon unique to India, a society that’s otherwise highly conservative. Clearly, the institutional upbringing, including that in family, needs to undergo change....”**

**“We cannot leave it entirely to the police or the judiciary to tackle such heinous acts. For, rape is also a cultural problem; and it is a more serious problem because of the extermination of the victim. We need to treat the malaise from its very roots.**

**...there is no appreciation, per se, of a healthy man-woman relationship which is rooted in the concept of equality.”**

**Kancha Ilaiah, “The Roots of Rape in India,” The Deccan Chronicle, May 10, 2014. Available online at <http://archives.deccanchronicle.com/130510/commentary-columnists/commentary/roots-rape-india>**

**“We also have a god, Shiva, who insisted on entering the bathing arena of Goddess Parvati and did so by eliminating a child who was keeping guard at the open door.”**





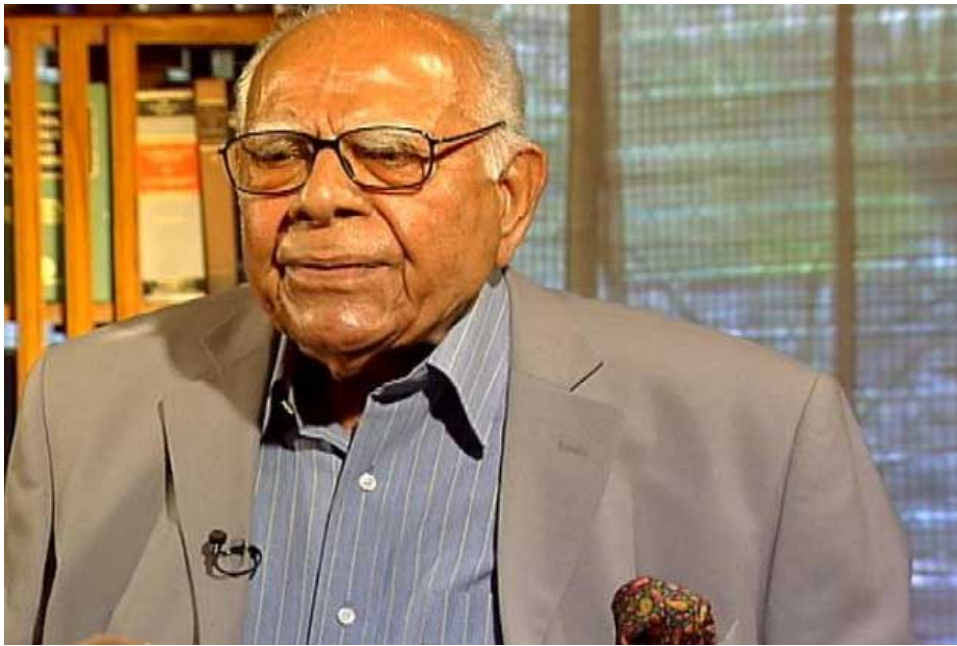
**“Lord Krishna stole the clothes of women while they were bathing in the Yamuna river. He did so to tease them and for the pleasure of watching the beauty of their naked bodies.**

**We hang miniature paintings of the same act in our homes proudly. The young men who grow up seeing this, or listening to the story told in an amused tone are bound to not find such an act abhorrent.”**

**“Our mythology tells us that what a husband does is right, that his will is greater than the woman’s. If a mythological hero is praised for his acts of killing, drinking and fornicating with multiple women..., it is glorification of such behaviour.”**

Kancha Ilaiah, “The Roots of Rape in India,” The Deccan Chronicle, May 10, 2014. Available online at <http://archives.deccanchronicle.com/130510/commentary-columnists/commentary/roots-rape-india>





**India Supreme Court judge Ram Jethmalani: “Ram was a bad husband. I don't like him at all” (Nov. 2012).**

**The god Ram sent his virtuous wife, Sita, into exile because a washer man slandered her. Ram listened to him and sent her into exile.**

*“I don't like Ram, he was a bad husband: Jethmalani,” Times of India (8 Nov. 2012):*  
<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/i-dont-like-Ram-he-was-a-bad-husband-Jethmalani/articleshow/17147691.cms>



**Summary: When Hindu gods engage with women, it is to strike/curse them or to use them as sexual objects.**

## 2. Roots, Shoots, and Fruits—the Impact of our “Model Voices” on Culture.



**While all cultures are sick, some are sicker than others.**

**Why are some cultures more change-prone instead of change-resistant?**

HOW DOES ONE CHANGE SUCH A  
MINDSET THAT DIMINISHES OR  
DENIGRATES WOMEN AND THE GIRL-  
CHILD—OR CHANGES A CASTE  
SYSTEM?

**Merely multiplying laws is inadequate. “The more corrupt the Republic, the more laws”** (Roman writer Tacitus, *Annals* 3.27).

**A more profound, pervasive transformation is required to change.**

# ***“ROOTS, SHOOTS, AND FRUITS”***

***Worldvoice:*** articulated by a model religious or philosophical spokesperson or even worshiped deity—Jesus, Muhammad, Buddha, Shiva, Marx (“**roots**”).

***Worldview:*** philosophical, religious, intellectual precepts/outlook (“**shoots**”).

***Worldvenue:*** Visible expression of beliefs through concrete social customs and practices (“**fruits**”).

# Biblical Voices

**Genesis 1:27: “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”**

**Jesus in Matthew 7:12: “In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”**

# Hindu Voice (Book of Manu): “Not all are created equal”



## INDIAN CASTE SYSTEM



**Brahmins**  
(Priests)



**Kshatriya**  
(Warriors)



**Vaishyas**  
(Merchants, landowners)



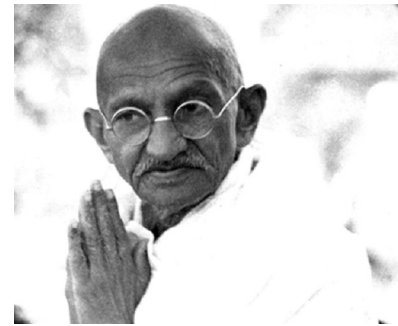
**Shudras**  
(Servants, subordinate to Vaishyas,  
Kshatriyas and Brahmins)



**Dalits**  
(Cobblers, street sweepers latrine cleaners  
considered beneath the caste system)



# Mahatma Gandhi



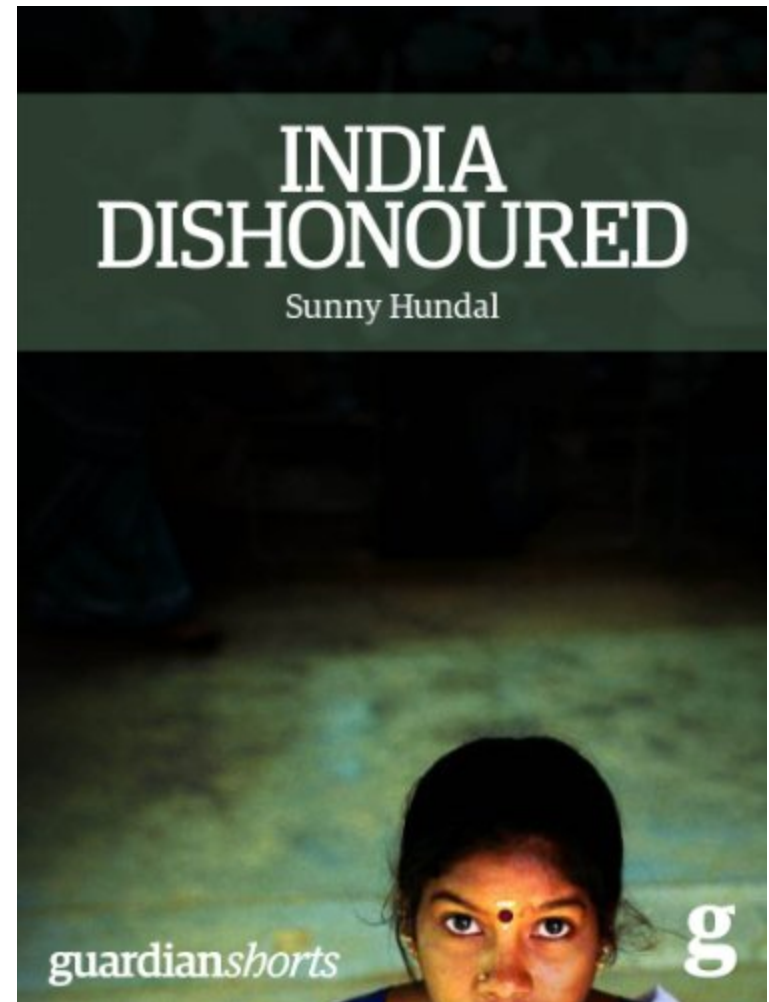
**"I do maintain...that the vast masses of Harijans [Dalits/untouchables] and for that matter of Indian humanity, cannot understand the presentation of Christianity, and that, generally speaking, conversion wherever it has taken place, has not been a spiritual act in any sense of the term. They are conversions of convenience."**

**"They [Harijans] can no more distinguish between the relative merits [of worldviews] than can a cow. Harijans have no mind, no intelligence, no sense of difference between God and no-God"**

Gandhi, *Harijan* (1936), pp. 140-141, 360. Cited in B.R. Ambedkar, "Christianising the Untouchables" (New Delhi: Critical Quest Publishers, 2014).

# Sunny Hundal's *India Dishonoured*

- There are 60 million “missing women” in India—largely through gendercide.
- Males outnumber females by 37 million.



# International Center for Research on Women and the United Nations Population Fund

**Marital rape (which is not a crime in India):**  
“Last year [2014], the United Nations  
Population Fund and the International Center  
for Research on Women surveyed more than  
9,200 men across seven Indian states. One-  
third of them admitted to having forced a  
sexual act on their wives, while **60 percent said  
they’d used some form of violence to assert  
dominance over their partners.**”

“India’s Marital Rape Crisis Reaches ‘Tragic Proportions’”(24 Nov. 2015)

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/india-marital-rape\\_us\\_564d8c21e4b00b7997f9469e](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/india-marital-rape_us_564d8c21e4b00b7997f9469e)

# The UN Special Rapporteur's Mission Report (1 April 2014):

**“Violence against women in India is systemic and occurs in the public and private spheres. It is underpinned by the persistence of patriarchal social norms and inter- and intragender hierarchies. Women are discriminated against and subordinated not only on the basis of sex, but on other grounds, such as caste, class, ability, sexual orientation, tradition and other realities. That exposes many to a continuum of violence throughout the life cycle, commonly referred to as existing ‘from the womb to the tomb’. The manifestations of violence against women are a reflection of the structural and institutional inequality that is a reality for most women in India.”**

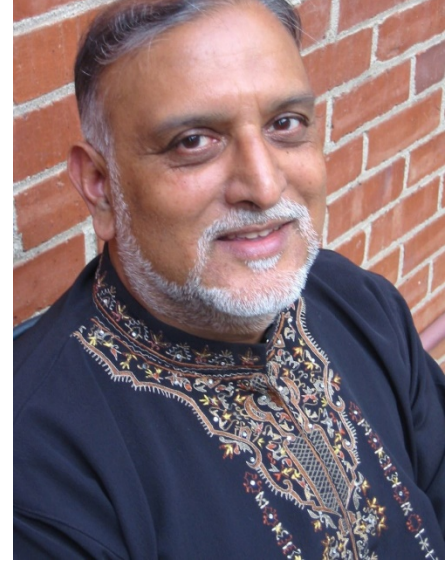
**“Sexual violence, including rape and sexual harassment, is widespread across the country and perpetrated in public and private spaces ... Many interlocutors stated that there was a general sense of insecurity for women in public spaces, especially in urban settings.”**

**“Women are easy targets of attacks, including sexual violence, whether while using public transportation or sanitation facilities or on the way to collect wood and water. Many victims of sexual violence carry a deep sense of shame, which is further exacerbated by the stigma and exclusion they experience, especially from family members and the community, and which may result in suicide.”**

**“National crime statistics indicated that, compared with other caste affiliations, rape was most highly reported among Dalit [no caste] women.”**

UK Home Office, “Country Information and Guidance India: Women fearing gender-based harm/violence” (April 2015):  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/565773/CIG-India-Women-v1-April-2015.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/565773/CIG-India-Women-v1-April-2015.pdf)

# Vishal Mangalwadi, *The Book That Made Our World*



- Tells the story of dying 18-month-old Sheela, a girl born into a poor Hindu family in rural India.
- Vishal and his wife Ruth persisted in their offers to help the child despite parents' protestations ("we don't have money/the time to take her to a hospital").
- Though Sheela was medically treated and became healthy, her parents let her die. Sheela was a burden to them. It was her "karma" to suffer and die young, and her life/death didn't really matter since she would be reincarnated.

*The Book That Made Our World* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2011), 60-65.

# 3. How Faithful Jesus-Followers Help Transform Culture





**In the West, we are presently  
*living off the fumes of*  
*“Christendom,”* which was largely  
shaped by persons dedicated to  
living out the biblical message.**

**It is like a house whose  
construction, function,  
and durability we take  
for granted. We simply  
inhabit it without  
thinking about how it  
came to be.**



**Yale historian Wayne Meeks on “the first urban Christians,” who were “resocialized” through conversion:**

- **“the intimacy of the Christian groups [as] a welcome refuge”;**
- **“the emotion-charged language of family and affection”;**
- **“the image of a caring, personal God”;**
- **“the master symbol of the crucified savior.”**

**These “crystallized a believable picture of the way the world seemed really to work.”**



A new mindset, identity, and social (family) structure were created.

- **The earliest Christians of all social strata—master and slave, Jew and Gentile, male and female (Gal. 3:28)—were exhorted to “greet one another with a holy kiss” (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; etc.).**
- **They would eat together as equals at “love feasts” followed by the Lord’s Supper.**
- **They would call one another “brother” and “sister” as their spiritual family. After all, they had been adopted by their heavenly Father through their crucified, self-sacrificing Master and Savior Jesus Christ.**

## **2<sup>nd</sup> CENTURY: *Epistle to Diognetus***

**“They [Christians] dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. ... They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven....**



**They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives. They love all men, and are persecuted by all. They are unknown and condemned; they are put to death, and restored to life. They are poor, yet make many rich; they are in lack of all things, and yet abound in all; they are dishonored, and yet in their very dishonor are glorified.”**

# Emperor Julian “the Apostate” (ca. AD 360)—hostile toward Christians



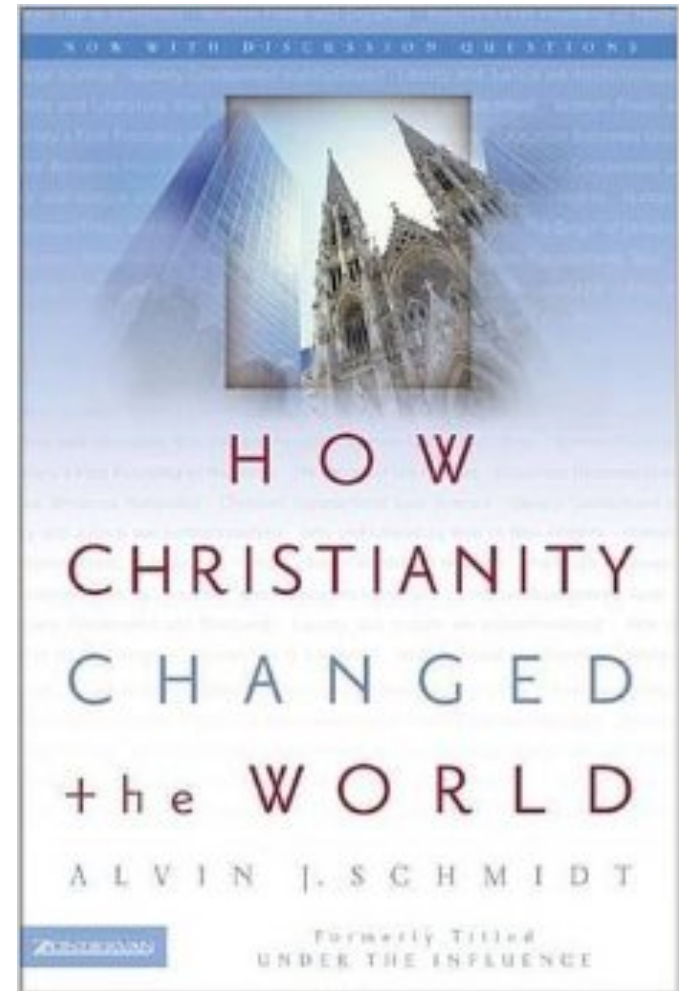
“Why do we not observe that it is their [the Christians'] benevolence to strangers, their care for the graves of the dead, and the pretended holiness of their lives that have done most to increase atheism [i.e., disbelief in the pagan deities]? For it is disgraceful that, when no Jew ever has to beg, and the impious Galileans [i.e., Christians] support not only their own poor but ours as well, all men see that our people lack aid from us. Teach those of the Hellenic faith to contribute to public service of this sort.”

***Although we'll jump ahead to the Protestant Reformation, we should remember many reforms and advances that were inspired by the Christian faith both in the ancient world and the Middle Ages.***

# Moral/social reforms

**After AD 313 (Constantine):**

- **Outlawing gladiatorial games**
- **Prohibiting child abandonment/infanticide**
- **Creation of hospices (AD 325)**
- **The creation of hospitals (AD 369)—motivated by Jesus’ words: “I was sick and you looked after me” in Matthew 25:36.**



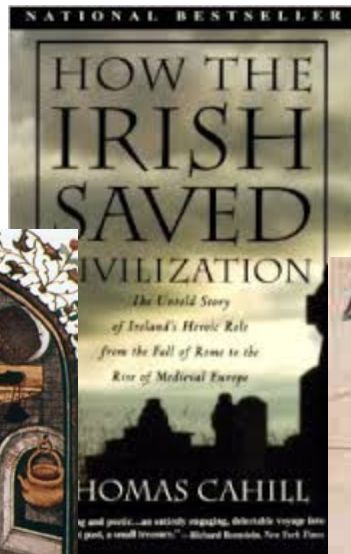


# Missionary endeavors and church planting

For example, St. Patrick, 5<sup>th</sup> century—went back to Ireland where he was once a slave. planting 700 churches, ordaining up to 1,000 priests— with 150 Celtic tribes becoming largely Christianized.



# Copying and preserving manuscripts/promoting learning



# Establishing universities and centers of learning

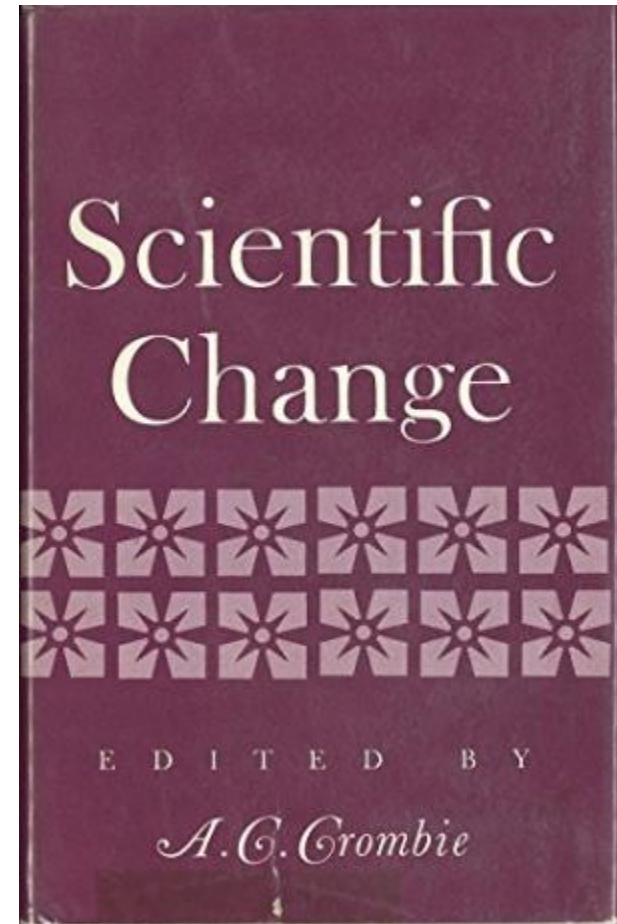


# **Technological advancement (horse power, horseshoe, harnessing water-power, wheelbarrow, eyeglasses, clocks)**

**“The chief glory of the later Middle Ages was not its cathedrals or its scholasticism: it was the building for the first time in history of a complex civilization which rested not on the backs of sweating slaves or coolies but primarily on nonhuman power.”**

# Oxford Symposium on Scientific Change (1961)

**“Christian beliefs provided the rationale, and faith the motive energy for western technology” (U. of Marburg historian Ernst Benz).**



See Benz, “The Christian Expectation of the End Time and the Idea of Technical Progress,” in *Evolution and Christian Hope* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966). White notes that the Latin West had a more “voluntaristic” spirit than the contemplative Greek East, which facilitated technology (*Medieval Religion*, xx).

# 16<sup>th</sup> Century: Protestant Reformation



# **The democratizing roots of the Protestant Reformation (starting in 1517) focused on three core, transformative values:**

- (1) the priesthood of every believer before God (“a kingdom of priests”: cp. 1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6) rather than the more hierarchical Catholic/Orthodox Churches;**
- (2) the right of every believer to study the Bible for himself in his own language;**
- (3) the appropriateness of pursuing any honest vocation to the glory of God.**



# Various Democratizing Gains for Humanity ("Missionary Roots of Liberal Democracy," *APSR*)

Political scientist Robert Woodberry (National University of Singapore): "conversionary Protestant" (missionary) Christians in particular were responsible for these remarkable gains:

*"the development and spread of religious liberty, mass education, mass printing, volunteer organizations, most major colonial reforms [abolishing slavery, widow-burning, foot binding, female circumcision, pre-pubescent marriage of girls, etc.], and the codification of legal protections for nonwhites in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries."*



**“Areas where Protestant missionaries had a significant presence in the past are on average more economically developed today, with comparatively better health, lower infant mortality, lower corruption, greater literacy, higher educational attainment (especially for women), and more robust membership in nongovernmental associations.”**

Andrea P. Dilley, “The world the missionaries made,” *Christianity Today* (January/February 2014), 39.

**European Protestant missionaries  
(19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries) sought to  
protect indigenous peoples from  
abusive colonial powers:**

- **were selected as judges to punish or reprimand military officials or magistrates in cases of murder, seizing land, and forced labor;**
- **applied the same legal standards for whites and nonwhites;**
- **documented colonial atrocities through detailed information, later through photos.**

# Robert Woodberry:

**Without Protestant missionaries and ministers, mobilizing mass protests would have been difficult. These missionaries helped create a kind of “cocoon in which non-violent, indigenous political movements could develop” to press for democracy and decolonialization.**

Robert Woodberry, “Missionary Roots,” 254.

**Woodberry's challenge:**  
Look at any map: where  
**Protestant missionaries have**  
**been, there you will find more**  
**printed books and more schools**  
**per capita. You'll discover that in**  
**Africa, the Middle East, and parts**  
**of Asia, "most of the early**  
**nationalists who led their**  
**countries to independence**  
**graduated from Protestant**  
**mission schools."**

Andrea P. Dilley, "The world the missionaries made," *Christianity Today*  
(January/February 2014), 41.



# Woodberry's thesis that Protestant missionaries were moral and social change agents has held up under rigorous scrutiny.

- This theory has been repeatedly tested using all available variables. Noted scholars like historian Philip Jenkins (Baylor) and sociologists Rodney Stark (Baylor) and Christian Smith (Notre Dame) find it convincing.
- The *American Political Science Review* required an additional 192 pages of supporting documentation.
- His article has received several awards, including the prestigious Luebbert Article Award in 2012 for the best article in comparative politics.

# Statistical evidence indicates a Protestantism-democracy association:

**\*\*Protestantism facilitated the development of modern representative democracy.**

**\*\**Stable* democracy first emerged in Protestant Europe and British-settler colonies.**

**\*\*By World War I every *independent*, predominantly Protestant country was a stable democracy—with the possible exception of Germany.**

**\*\*Less stable versions of democracy developed in Catholic areas with large Protestant and Jansenist minorities, such as France.**

**\*\*Democracy lagged in Catholic and Orthodox parts of Southern and Eastern Europe where Protestants had little influence. A similar pattern existed outside Europe.**

# **Atheist historian Niall Ferguson**



**The connection between Protestantism and a strong work ethic is one of the six “killer apps” that propelled the West forward as a civilization.**

**Other “apps” include civilizational competition, science, modern medicine, property rights, and a free market.**

# **Other Distinctively Christian Contributions to the World**



# Modern Science

**Pillars of modern science who believed in the Bible, design, and the possibility of miracles:**

**Isaac Newton (classical physics), Johannes Kepler (astronomy), Nicholas Copernicus (astronomy, mathematics), Galileo Galilei (astronomy), Robert Boyle (chemistry), Michael Faraday (experimental science, electromagnetism), James Clerk Maxwell (electromagnetism), William Henry Perkin (synthetic organic chemistry), George Stokes (spectroscopy, fluids), William Thompson/Lord Kelvin (electromagnetism, heat), and J.J. Thompson (physicist).**



**J.J. Thomson, who identified and characterized the electron and was the Cavendish Professor of Physics at Cambridge University, placed over his door in the Cavendish Laboratory a verse from the Bible: *“Great are the works of the Lord. They are studied by all who delight in them” (Psalm 111:2).***

**Paul Davies (physicist):** “Science began as an outgrowth of theology, and all scientists, whether atheists or theists . . . accept an essentially theological worldview.”

**Rodney Stark (sociologist):** The roots of science have “rested entirely on religious foundations, and the people who brought it about were devout Christians.”

Paul Davies, *Are We Alone?* (New York: Basic, 1995), 96.

Rodney Stark, *The Victory of Reason* (New York: Random House, 2005), xi.

# Bioethics

**Daniel Callahan—a founding father of the bioethics movement/co-founder of Hastings Center for bioethics:**

“When I first became interested in bioethics in the mid-1960s, the only resources were theological or those drawn from within the traditions of medicine, themselves heavily shaped by religion.”

Daniel Callahan, “Religion and the Secularization of Bioethics,” *Hastings Center Report* 20 (1990): 2-4.

# Human Rights

**The Declaration of Independence:** “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights” —*life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness (i.e., well-being and virtue).*

**France’s Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen:** Rights affirmed “in the presence and under the auspices” of “the Supreme Being.”

**United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948):** Acknowledges “the inherent dignity” and “the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family....All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”



## ***Who Was Behind the UN Declaration?***

**Harvard legal scholar Mary Ann Glendon: the chief movers seeking to create a “new world order” of human rights—particularly in the wake Nazi and Japanese atrocities during World War II—were primarily church coalitions and individual Christian leaders who worked closely with some Jewish rabbis.**

Mary Ann Glendon, *The World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (New York: Random House, 2001).

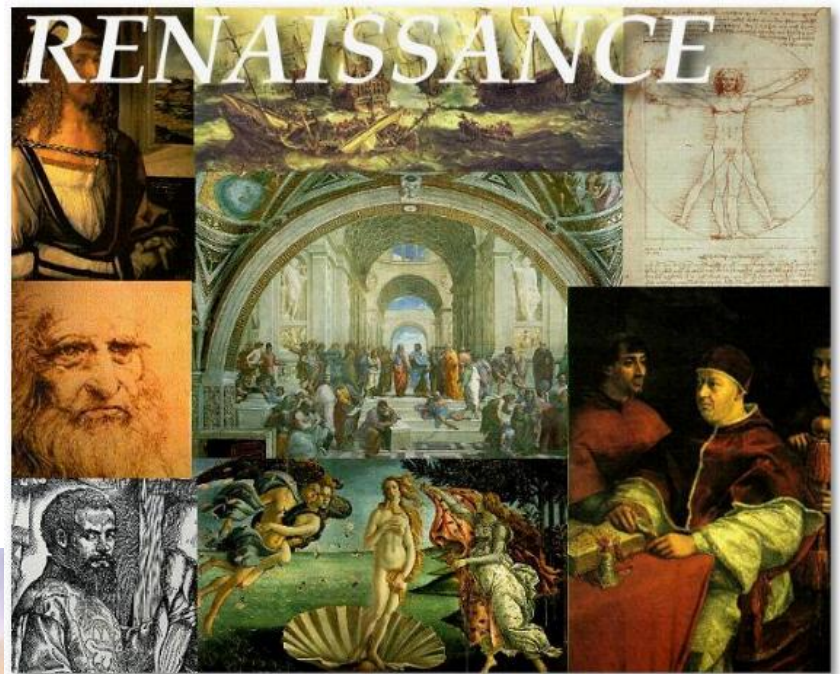


**Human rights scholar, Max Stackhouse:  
“intellectual honesty demands recognition of  
the fact that what passes as ‘secular,’ ‘Western’  
principles of basic human rights developed  
nowhere else than out of key strands of the  
biblically-rooted religion.”**

Max Stackhouse, “A Christian Perspective on Human Rights,” *Society* (January/February 2004): 25; see also, Rodney Stark, *The Victory of Reason* (New York: Random House, 2005), xi.



# “But What About Greek Democracy, the Renaissance, and Enlightenment Influences?”



# *Did Modern Rights and Democracy*

## *Arise in Ancient Greece?*

***Greece—“the cradle of democracy”—had an elitist version of democracy, which was very different from modern democracy.***

**Plato: His *Republic* emphasizes the rule of philosopher-kings; ordinary citizens were not capable of such rule.**

**Aristotle: some humans are slaves by nature (“animated tools”).**

**Both thinkers considered manual labor undignified—a kind of semi-slavery.**

## Philosopher **Luc Ferry**:

*The Greek world was fundamentally an **aristocratic** world, a universe organised as a hierarchy in which those most endowed by nature should in principle be 'at the top', while the less endowed saw themselves occupying inferior ranks. And **we should not forget that the Greek city-state was founded on slavery....***



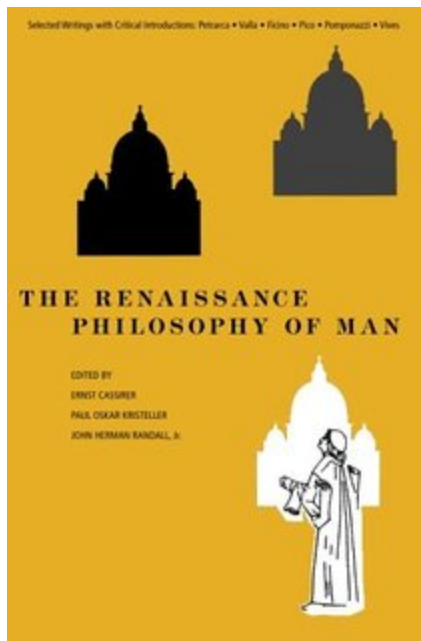
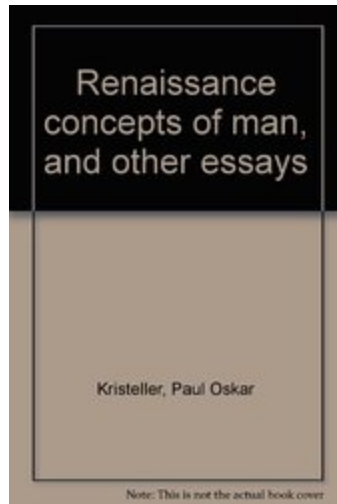
*To explain further: the Greek world is an aristocratic world, one which rests entirely upon the conviction that there exists a natural hierarchy, of organs of sight, of plants, or of animals, but also of men: some men are born to command, others to obey, which is why Greek political life accommodates itself easily to the notion of slavery.*

*A Brief History of Thought: A Philosophical Guide to Living. New York: Harper Perennial, 2011), 72-73.*

# *Did Democracy and Human Rights Arise from the Renaissance (1300-1550)?*

Renaissance scholar **Paul Oskar Kristellar:**

***“The view that the humanist movement (of the Renaissance) was essentially pagan or anti-Christian cannot be sustained....***



# Kristeller (cont'd)

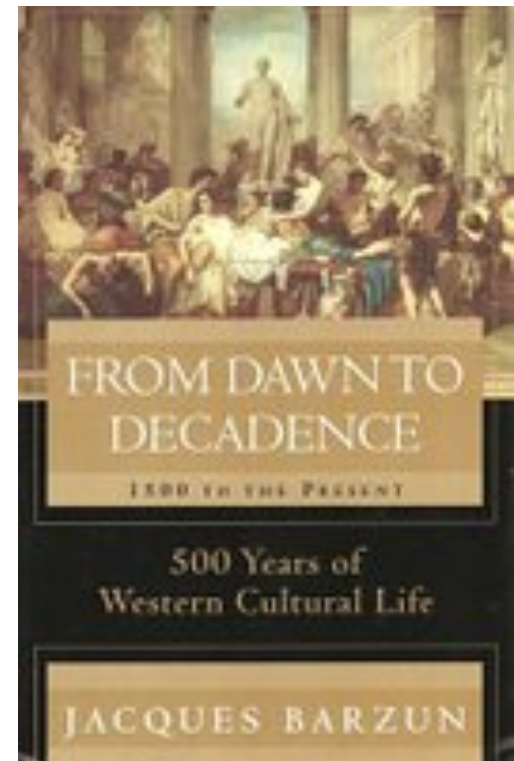
***...I am convinced that humanism was in its core neither religious nor antireligious, but a literary and scholarly orientation [i.e., 'the humanities'] that could be and in many cases, was pursued without any explicit discourse on religious topics by individuals who otherwise might be fervent or nominal members of one of the Christian churches."***

*Renaissance Thought: The Classic, Scholastic, and Humanistic Strains* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 74-75.

# ***Historian Jacques Barzun (1907-2012)***

**These Renaissance humanists “remained deeply religious” and their references to pagan mythology, history, and geography were no more a theological compromise than that of the Puritan poet John Milton, who did the same.**

*From Dawn to Decadence* (New York: Harper, 2000), 49, 52.



*Did the Enlightenment (1650-1800)  
Bring Human Rights and Democracy?*

**Actually, it was rooted in Protestantism!  
Consider that the following  
Enlightenment's democratic theorists and  
practitioners had a Protestant/Calvinist  
education and family background:**

*Hugo Grotius, John Locke, Jean-Jacques  
Rousseau, Benjamin Franklin, John  
Adams, Patrick Henry, James Madison,  
and Alexander Hamilton.*



**Puritans and Protestant Nonconformists preceded these prominent social contractarians by arguing for the equality of all persons. Even the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights are modeled on previous colonial compacts utilizing theological and biblical terms—well before social contract theorists Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) and John Locke (1632-1704).**

# Historian Stephen Hopgood



The post-Enlightenment use of “Human Rights” has been a secularization of its biblical roots: **“humanism (the cultural precondition for Human Rights) was a secular replacement for the Christian god.”**

*The Endtimes of Human Rights* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), x.

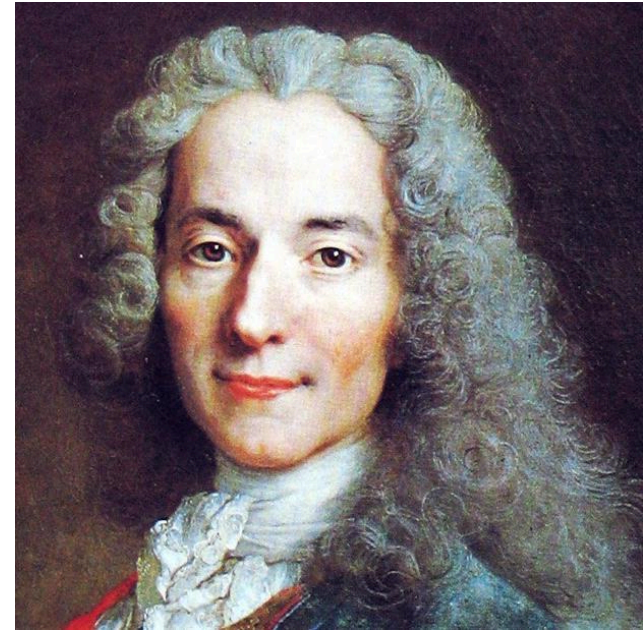
**Historian, author  
Tom Holland:  
“Why I Was  
Wrong About  
Christianity”**



**“The longer I spent immersed  
in the study of classical  
antiquity, the more alien and  
unsettling I came to find it.”**

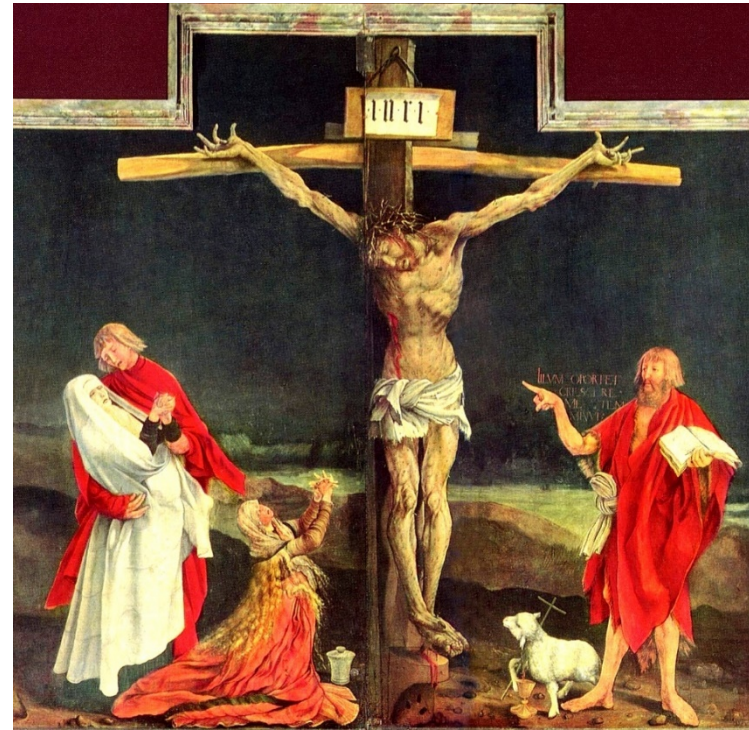
**“It was not just the extremes of callousness that I came to find shocking, but the lack of a sense that the poor or the weak might have any intrinsic value. As such, the founding conviction of the Enlightenment – that it owed nothing to the faith into which most of its greatest figures had been born – increasingly came to seem to me unsustainable.”**

**“‘Every sensible man,’ Voltaire wrote, ‘every honourable man, must hold the Christian sect in horror.’ ... Yet Voltaire, in his concern for the weak and oppressed, was marked more enduringly by the stamp of biblical ethics than he cared to admit.**



**“‘We preach Christ crucified,’ St Paul declared, ‘unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.’ He was right. Nothing could have run more counter to the most profoundly held assumptions of Paul’s contemporaries – Jews, or Greeks, or Romans.”**

**“The notion that a god might have suffered torture and death on a cross was so shocking as to appear repulsive. Familiarity with the biblical narrative of the Crucifixion has dulled our sense of just how completely novel a deity Christ was. In the ancient world, it was the role of gods who laid claim to ruling the universe to uphold its order by inflicting punishment – not to suffer it themselves.”**



**“Today, even as belief in God fades across the West, the countries that were once collectively known as Christendom continue to bear the stamp of the two-millennia-old revolution that Christianity represents. It is the principal reason why, by and large, most of us who live in post-Christian societies still take for granted that it is nobler to suffer than to inflict suffering.**



**“It is why we generally assume that every human life is of equal value. In my morals and ethics, I have learned to accept that I am not Greek or Roman at all, but thoroughly and proudly Christian.”**

Tom Holland, “Why I was wrong about Christianity,” *New Statesman* (14 Sept. 2016).



## 4. Non-Theistic Acknowledgments of “Human Rights” Origins

Atheist philosopher Jürgen Habermas:

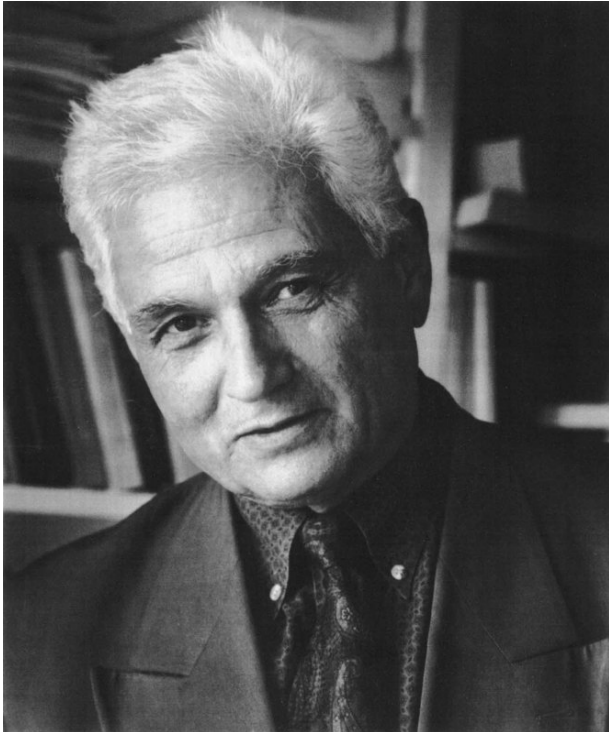
**“Christianity has functioned for the normative self-understanding of modernity as more than just a precursor or a catalyst. Egalitarian universalism, from which sprang the ideas of freedom and a social solidarity, of an autonomous conduct of life and emancipation, the individual morality of conscience, human rights, and democracy, is the direct heir to the Judaic ethic of justice and the Christian ethic of love....**

# Habermas (cont'd)

**...This legacy, substantially unchanged, has been the object of continual critical appropriation and reinterpretation. To this day, there is no alternative to it. And in light of current challenges of a postnational constellation, we continue to draw on the substance of this heritage. Everything else is just idle postmodern talk.”**

Jürgen Habermas, *Time of Transitions*, ed. and trans. Ciaran Cronin and Max Pensky (Cambridge: Polity, 2006), 150-1.

**Atheist thinker  
Jacques Derrida**



**“Today the cornerstone of international law is the sacred, what is sacred in humanity. You should not kill. You should not be responsible for a crime against the sacredness, this sacredness of man as your neighbor... made by God or by God made man....**

# Derrida (cont'd)

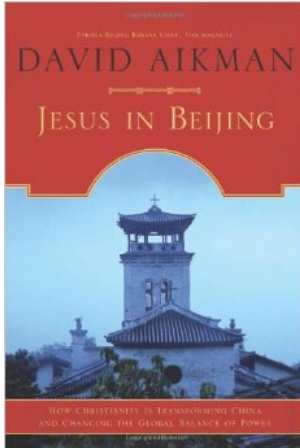
**...In that sense, the concept of crime against humanity is a Christian concept and I think there would be no such thing in the law today without the Christian heritage, the Abrahamic heritage, the biblical heritage.”**

Jacques Derrida, "To Forgive: The Unforgivable and Imprescriptable," in *Questioning God*, ed. John D. Cupto, et al. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), 70.



**Agnostic philosopher Luc Ferry: The Christian idea of human equality was “unprecedented at the time, and one to which our world owes its entire democratic inheritance.”**

Luc Ferry, *A Brief History of Thought: A Philosophical Guide to Living* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2011), 72.



**TIME** correspondent (David Aikman) tells of a Chinese lecturer from CASS (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences) speaking to American tourists:

***One of the things we were asked to look into was what accounted for the success, in fact, the pre-eminence of the West all over the world,” he said. “We studied everything we could from the historical, political, economic, and cultural perspective. At first, we thought it was because you had more powerful guns than we had. Then we thought it was because you had the best political system....***

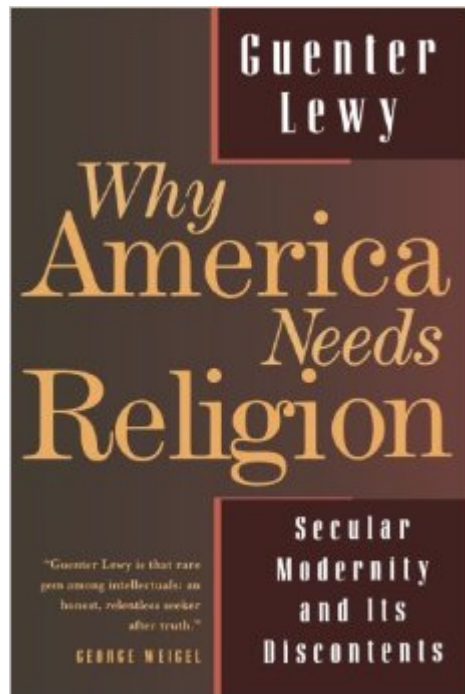
## Aikman (cont'd)

***Next we focused on your economic system. But in the past twenty years, we have realized that the heart of your culture is your religion: Christianity. That is why the West has been so powerful. The Christian moral foundation of social and cultural life was what made possible the emergence of capitalism and then the successful transition to democratic politics. We don't have any doubt about this."***

David Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing: How Christianity Is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2003), 5.



Agnostic political  
scientist Guenter  
Lewy

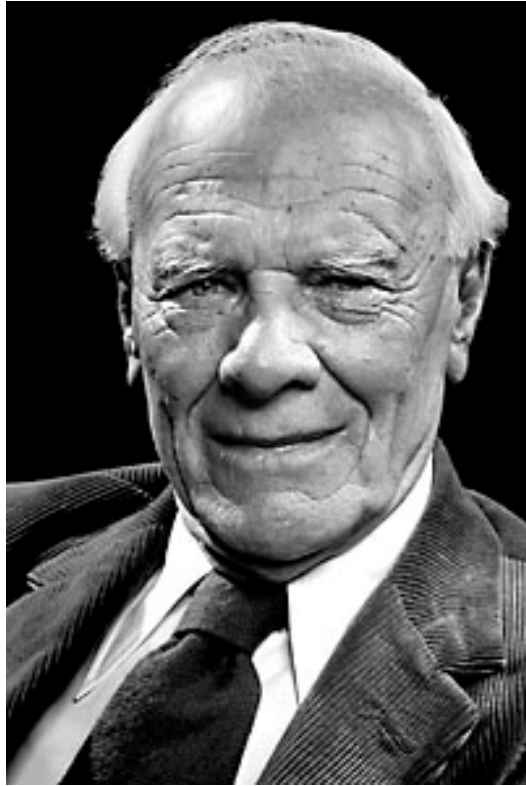


**“Adherents of [a naturalistic] ethic are not likely to produce a Dorothy Day or a Mother Teresa. Many of these people love humanity but not individual human beings with all their failings and shortcomings. They will be found participating in demonstrations for causes such as nuclear disarmament but not sitting at the bedside of a dying person....**

## Lewy (cont'd)

**....An ethic of moral autonomy and individual rights, so important to secular liberals, is incapable of sustaining and nourishing values such as altruism and self-sacrifice.”**

Guenter Lewy, *Why America Needs Religion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 137.



**Then-agnostic journalist Malcolm Muggeridge while in India and Africa, he witnessed “much righteous endeavor undertaken by Christians of all denominations.” However, he added, “I never, as it happens, came across a hospital or orphanage run by the Fabian Society or a Humanist leper colony.”**

Malcolm Muggeridge, “Me and Myself” in *Jesus Rediscovered* (New York: Pyramid Publications, 1969), 157.

# Christians and the ebola virus

Brian Palmer (*Slate's* science/medicine writer): “In Medicine We Trust: Should we worry that so many of the doctors treating Ebola in Africa are missionaries?”



*(Photo of Dr. Kevin Brantley, who contracted ebola in Liberia, treated in US)*

“There’s one other big difference between missionaries and Western merchants: The missionaries don’t profit personally from their work. They are compensated very poorly, if at all. Many risk their lives. How many people would risk death to spread the gospel of Western consumer goods gratis?”

... As an atheist, I try to make choices based on evidence and reason. So until we’re finally ready to invest heavily in secular medicine for Africa, I suggest we stand aside and let God do His work.”

*The Slate* (2 Oct. 2014):

[http://www.slate.com/articles/health\\_and\\_science/medical\\_examiner/2014/10/missionary\\_doctors\\_treating\\_ebola\\_in\\_africa\\_why\\_people\\_are\\_suspicious\\_of.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/medical_examiner/2014/10/missionary_doctors_treating_ebola_in_africa_why_people_are_suspicious_of.html)



**Canadian Broadcasting  
Corporation journalist  
Brian Stewart**

***I've found there is no movement, or force, closer to the raw truth of war, famines, crises and the vast human predicament, than organized Christianity in action. And there is no alliance more determined and dogged in action than church workers, ordained and lay members, when mobilized for a common good. It is these Christians who are right 'on the front lines' of committed humanity today and when I want to find that front, I follow their trail....***

## Stewart (cont'd)

***It is a vast front, stretching from the most impoverished reaches of the developing world to the hectic struggle to preserve caring values in our own towns and cities. I have never been able to reach these front lines without finding Christian volunteers already in the thick of it, mobilizing congregations that care, and being a faithful witness to truth, the primary light in the darkness, and so often the only light.***

## Stewart (cont'd)

*Now I came to this admiring view slowly and reluctantly. At the start of my career, I'd largely abandoned religion for I, too, regarded the church as a rather tiresome irrelevance.*

*What ultimately persuaded me otherwise – and I took a lot of persuading – was the reality of Christianity's mission, physically and in spirit, before my very eyes.*

***I'm often asked if I lost belief in God covering events like Ethiopia, then called 'the worst hell on earth.' Actually, like others before me, it was precisely in such hells that I rediscovered religion. I saw so many countless acts of human love and charity, total respect for the most forsaken, for all life.***

Brian Stewart, "Christians Are on the Front Lines of Compassion," *Canadian Christianity*. Available at:

<http://canadianchristianity.com/bc/bccn/0607/01faith.html> (my italics).



# Summary Thoughts

--The Christian faith's positive historical impact in addressing and eradicating evils doesn't by itself prove the Christian faith is true.

--But we do have good reasons for God's existence: the universe's beginning and fine-tuning, consciousness, beauty, rationality, free will, moral duties, human dignity.

**--This topic is important for a world watching to see followers of Jesus hold more than intellectual beliefs but live lives that bring transformation to individuals and communities. Jesus said: “you will know them by their fruits” (Matthew 7:20).**

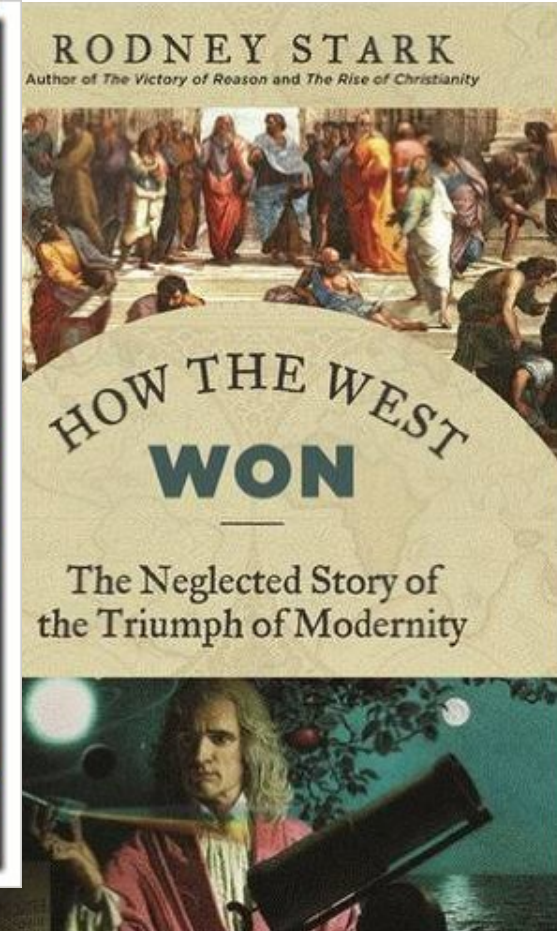
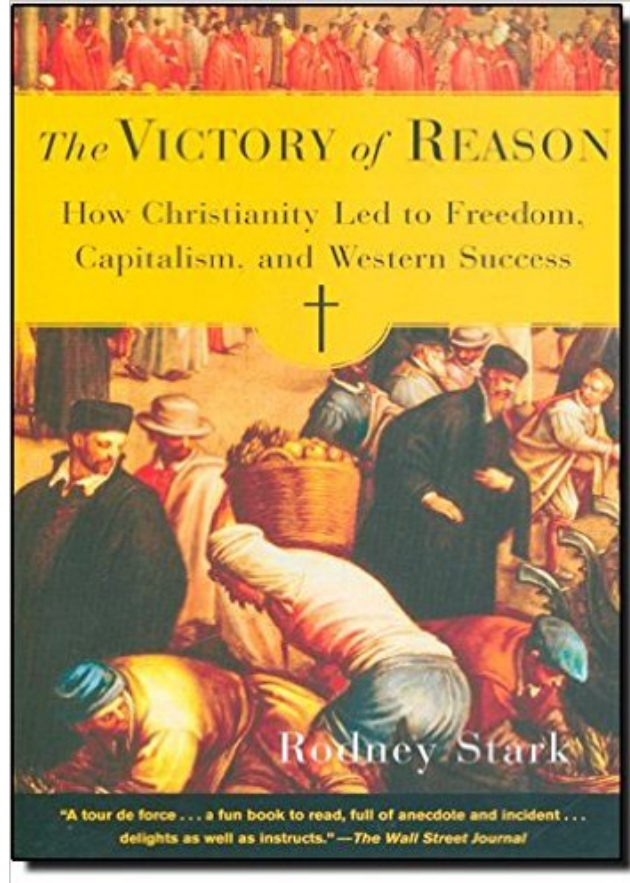
**--There is a marked difference between a Shiva-/Krishna-shaped culture and a Jesus-shaped culture: Would you rather have your son become like Jesus or like Krishna?**

**--The good news of Jesus—of God who steps into our world, shares in our pain and suffering and misery—is profound and transformative.**

**Historian Tom Holland (once again): “The notion that a god might have suffered torture and death on a cross was so shocking as to appear repulsive. Familiarity with the biblical narrative of the Crucifixion has dulled our sense of just how completely novel a deity Christ was.”**

# Sociologist Rodney Stark (Baylor University)

“I basically wrote  
myself into the  
Christian faith.”



# Postscript: A Passage (Back) to India





In 1873, the Indian reformer Jotirao (Mahatma) Phule (who studied at a Scottish Mission School in the 1840s) referenced the person he considered the “moral anchor” of his radical reforms against corruption—Jesus (“Baliraja”): ***“One great champion of the downtrodden, the holiest of the holy, the great sage and lover of Truth, Baliraja [“sacrifice king”], came into this world.”***

*Jotirao Phule, Selected Writings of Jotirao Phule. Edited with annotations and introduction by G. P. Despande (New Delhi: LeftWord, 2002).*

***Phule said that “followers of that Baliraja . . . came to India, preached and practiced the true teaching of their Messiah among the Shudras [backward castes] here. They thus emancipated the Shudras from the unnatural and inhuman slavery which was imposed by the wicked Brahmins.”***

Dedication of Phule's book *Slavery*, in  
admiration of Abraham Lincoln

**“DEDICATED TO THE GOOD PEOPLE OF THE  
UNITED STATES AS A TOKEN OF ADMIRATION  
FOR THEIR SUBLIME, DISINTERESTED, AND  
SELF-SACRIFICING DEVOTION IN THE CAUSE OF  
NEGRO SLAVERY; AND WITH AN EARNEST  
DESIRE THAT MY COUNTRYMEN MAY TAKE  
THEIR NOBLE EXAMPLE AS THEIR GUIDE IN THE  
EMANCIPATION OF THEIR SHUDRA  
[‘BACKWARD CASTE’] BRETHERN FROM THE  
TRAMMELS OF BRAHMIN THRALDOM.”**



# **Savitribai Phule, the Mother of Education in India**

**Phule's wife Savitribai had received a Gospel of John from missionary, which was the first book her husband taught her to read after they married.**



# B.R. Ambedkar (author of the Indian Constitution)

Selected Works  
Of  
DR. B. R. AMBEDKAR

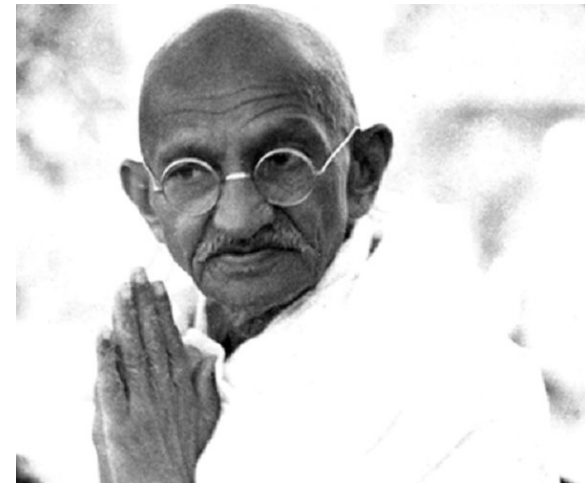


Ambedkar burned the *Book of Manu* (which institutionalizes the caste system—a “holy lie”) on Christmas Day, 1927—an obvious connection to the Christian faith!

“Hindu society seems to me, to stand in need of a moral regeneration that is dangerous to postpone.”

Ambedkar, “Annihilation of Caste: A Response to Mahatma Gandhi”

- **Gandhi was both anti-technology and a reinforcer of the caste system.**
- **Rejection of technology means, say, no running water and thus all manner of diseases that come with it.**
- **The caste system would create human wheelbarrows: enslaving others to haul water or forcing them to carry excrement on their heads, which turned out to be an embarrassment to Gandhi.**





# Cleaning up excrement— a dalit's task:

**“The first day when I was cleaning the latrines and the drain, my foot slipped and my leg sank in the excrement up to my calf. I screamed and ran away. Then I came home and cried and cried. I knew there was only this work for me.”  
— Sona, Bharatpur City, Rajasthan, June 2013**

<http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/08/25/india-caste-forced-clean-human-waste>