

How Has Christianity Changed the World?

Encountering Jesus Final Session

This is the initial document from which the sermon 'How Has Christianity Changed the World' was taken.

It includes several extended segments which were just too much to include in a single message. Also included are the references which may enable the interested student to pursue an area of interest in greater depth.

2000 years ago – the world encountered Jesus Christ

What impact has that made?

Has the world been changed for the better?

This cannot be a thorough treatment of the subject, nor am I able to touch on the many instances where there has been sin and error in the church.

Also, I am obviously focusing on those parts of the world where Christianity has had an impact, although many Christian innovations have been adopted by countries not as directly influenced by the gospel.

But this is an attempt to introduce some examples of the more obvious effects of Jesus' influence on human life.

Source Material

Also, along with much reading over the years, I am particularly indebted to two books that I've read recently by eminent Sociologists, and drawn many direct quotes from in this message:

Rodney Stark's 'The Rise of Christianity' HarperCollins (RS)

Alvin Schmidt 'How Christianity Changed the World', Zondervan (AS)

Also philosophical thinker, author Vishal Mangalwadi.

The scholars agree: The rise of faith in Jesus Christ marked a brand new beginning in world history.

1. The value of human life

In the Greek and Roman culture into which Christianity came, there was a very low view of human life. The Christians, by contrast believed that every human being was made in the image of God and that Christ Himself had dignified human life in a manner like nothing before – God became a man!

This had a number of knock on effects in terms of how Christians related to the world of the first century.

Infanticide

In the Greco-Roman far more babies were born than were allowed to live.

Infanticide, the killing of unwanted newborn babies, 'was infamously universal' among the Greeks and Romans during the early years of Christianity.' (AS:49)

Seneca, Roman philosopher 'regarded the drowning of children at birth as both reasonable and commonplace.' (RS:118)

Rodney Stark: 'The exposure of infants was a very common practice and was justified by law and advocated by philosophers: Both Plato and Aristotle recommended infanticide as legitimate state policy.' (RS:118)

A recent excavation of a Roman villa in Ashkelon revealed a sewer where nearly 100 skeletons of babies only days old was discovered. They are not able to determine the gender but the assumption is that they were all, or nearly all, girls that were simply dropped into the drainage system shortly after birth. (RS:118)

In ancient Greece it was rare for even a wealthy family to raise more than one daughter.

Historians have noted that infanticide was not only common in the Greco-Roman world of Europe but was found also in India, China, Japan, Brazil, among Eskimos, in Africa and among Indians of North and South America. (AS:49)

The early Christians, however, declared infanticide to be murder. These infants were created in the image of God and should not be disposed of.

The Christian 'Didache', a manual of church teaching from late 1st/early 2nd Century: 'You shall not murder a child by abortion nor kill them when born.' (RS:124)

Abandonment

In addition to infanticide, the practice of exposure or abandonment of babies was common and was also justified.

Alvin Schmidt: 'In neither Greek nor Roman literature can one find any feelings of guilt related to abandoning children.' (AS:52)

Christian leader, Clement of Alexandria condemned the Romans for saving and protecting young birds but abandoning their children. Lactantius (Christian teacher) said it is as wicked to abandon and expose the child as it is to kill it. (AS:53)

When the Christians arrived in Rome, not only did they condemn the practice but they sought to bring a solution. They took the abandoned babies into their homes. Many developed ministries that placed babies with Christians, right through the 3 centuries of persecution against Christians. (AS:53)

Finally, after Christianity attained legal status in the Roman Empire, Valentinian, the Emperor, under strong influence of Christian leader, Basil from Caesarea, outlawed both infanticide and abandonment of infants in 374. (AS:51)

It was the example and influence of Christians that resulted in the practice of generations being outlawed, and both morally and legally ascribing to infants the sanctity of life.

This also extended to the issue of abortion also with strong resistance to abortion throughout history among Christians.

John Calvin: 'The unborn child...though enclosed in the womb of its mother, is already a human being...and should not be robbed of the life which it has not yet begun to enjoy.' (AS:49)

General low view of human life

The Greco-Roman world, with all its pride in philosophy, mathematics and theatre – was actually far more violent than we imagine.

The relatively low view of human life was actually perpetuated by the Roman Empire's leaders.

The Emperor Tiberius enjoyed seeing people tortured and thrown into the sea. Caligula (37-41) killed all his staff at one time, and had people dragged through the streets until they died.

Claudius encouraged the disembowelment of men in the Colosseum.

Nero executed hundreds of Christians forced Seneca to commit suicide and was well known for his cruelty and violence. (AS:56-57)

When the believers got to Rome the Romans had already watched thousands upon thousands of real-life deaths at the gladiatorial games. These contests had been running for 300 years and were always hugely popular.

The gladiators were usually slaves, condemned criminals or prisoners of war kept alive for the purpose of participating in these games.

Occasionally a freeman would become a Gladiator for large amounts of money.

Sometimes more than 100 gladiators fought on a single day. And the sand in the amphitheatre in the Coliseum was saturated in blood.

The Christians were appalled at these games and church leaders forbade their people from attending.

Stoic philosophy and thinking had no compassion for these victims of Roman entertainment – but Christianity's growing influence in the Roman Empire began to have an effect, which, with the legalization of Christianity finally led to Roman Emperors banning the gladiatorial contests.

Historian WEH Lecky: '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.' (AS:63)

Obj: What's the difference between movies and video games now?

Ans: It's fiction/acting now. Back then a real person was really being murdered.

Obj: What about boxing?

Ans: The referee stops the game and declares a winner. In those days the crowd and the Emperor was willing the victor on to fully murder the weaker opponent.

Alvin Schmidt: 'Allowing individuals to be deliberately killed for people's enjoyment has not again been permitted in Western societies since the Christian emperors outlawed the gladiator contests.' (AS:64)

Other changes

Other changes came about in the years following Constantine's adoption of Christianity: outlawing branding of criminals' faces, outlawing branding of slaves, speedy trials in order to protect the accused, outlawed crucifixion, the separation of male and female prisoners in the prisons. (AS:65)

In addition to these changes in Roman Law there have also been other influences: the outlawing of human sacrifices for religious reasons as well as gladiatorial. And the resistance to suicide, which had been romanticised especially for servants of great leaders/soldiers – but the Christian emphasis on the sanctity of life itself sought to restrain and discourage suicide.

2. The Dignity of Women

Sociologist Rodney Stark asserts: 'Although some [Roman and Greek] classical writers claimed that women were easy prey for any 'foreign superstition', most recognised that Christianity was unusually appealing because within the Christian subculture women enjoyed a far higher status than did women in the Greco-Roman world at large. Historians have long noted this fact.' (RS:95)

He adds, 'Exposure of unwanted female infants and deformed males was legal, morally accepted and widely practiced by all social classes in the Greco-Roman world.' (RS:97)

A letter from the 1st Century by Hilarion to his pregnant wife Alis highlights the pre-Christian thinking with regard to female infants:

'I ask and beg you to take good care of our baby son, and as soon as I receive payment I shall send it up to you. If you are delivered of a child [before I come home], if it is a boy keep it, if a girl discard it. You have sent me word, 'Don't forget me!' How can I forget you? I beg you not to worry.' (RS:97)

Non-slave boys in Athens received an education but not girls.

The Greek wife had little more rights than that of a slave. When a husband's male guests were present in the home, the wife was not permitted to eat or interact with them. She could not divorce him though he could divorce her. (AS:98)

The Roman wife, while enjoying a little more freedom socially, did not have legal rights. The wife was under the total control of her husband including ownership of all her possessions and any subsequently inherited property. He could divorce her but she could never divorce him. Also, according to the Institutes of Roman Law by Rudolph Sohm, a husband could have his wife executed. (AS:100)

Even in the Jewish communities a woman's testimony was not considered reliable enough in a court of law.

But the status of women was to undergo a revolutionary shift as the influence of the teachings of Jesus Christ became more popular.

Jesus' own example:

He spoke with a Samaritan Woman – taught her that He was the promised Messiah, the Christ.

With Martha and Mary – Martha assumed the traditional female role of preparing the meal for the guests while Mary did what only men would do – be instructed as a disciple by the Rabbi. Mary violated the cultural norm by assuming the role of a learner or a disciple - and Jesus defended her.

Later, he instructed Martha too – asking her questions to see if she had understood his meaning.

Through the gospels we see that women followed Jesus and supported the mission – which was practically unheard of in Jesus' day.

Jesus also appeared first to women after his resurrection – intentionally sending them to inform the Apostles that He had risen – establishing that God considers women to be reliable witnesses. (AS:104)

Of course, the status of women was radically, stunningly, elevated by the Apostle Paul.

He commanded husbands to 'love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her.' (Eph 5:25)

He also commanded that Elders should be the husband of one wife – not of many (Tit 1:6). Thus the leadership of the Christian church modeled monogamous marriages which gradually became the norm in cultures where Christianity was influential.

Paul also asserted that women enjoyed complete equal standing with men before God 'for you are all one in Christ Jesus.' (Gal 3.28)

And he rejected pagan disdain for women by honouring them as 'co-labourers' in the gospel.

Rodney Stark lists 5 key areas in which Christian women enjoyed a higher status than pagan women in the Greco-Roman culture

1. In the Christian subculture the Christians did not condone female infanticide
2. Christians condemned divorce, incest, marital infidelity and polygamy (Christian women were protected from these things).
3. Like pagans, early Christians prized female chastity, but unlike pagans, they rejected the double standard that gave pagan men so much sexual license. Christian men were urged to remain virgins until marriage and extra-marital sex was condemned as adultery.
4. Christian women married at a substantially older age and had more choice about whom they married than pagan women and girls, who were often forced to be married as child brides.
5. Should they be widowed, Christian women enjoyed substantial advantages. Pagan women faced great social pressure if they failed to remarry. Of course, when a pagan widow did remarry she lost all of her inheritance – it became the property of her new husband. In contrast, among Christians, widowhood was highly respected...thus, not only were well-to-do Christian widows enabled to keep their husband's estate, the church stood ready to sustain poorer widows, lessening the pressure on them to re-marry and giving them a choice.

Summing up, Stark notes, 'In all these ways the Christian woman enjoyed a far greater marital security and equality than did her pagan neighbour.' (RS:104-5)

Women in the Church

Another expression of the increased dignity accorded to women was seen in their involvement in the Christian Church. This was a radically different from pagan religions which used some women as temple prostitutes and excluded the rest.

In the Christian church women were given equal status with men. Women were not separated from the men but could participate in worship and in receiving instruction from the Scriptures by the preachers.

They were fully able to participate in Baptism and the Lord's Supper, as well as in prayer and in the expression of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the public meetings.

Most radical of all, they were entrusted with leadership roles in the church.

Pliny, writing to the Emperor Trajan (early 2nd century), describes the execution of numerous Christians and also writes of the torture of two women who were 'called deaconesses'.

Clement of Alexandria wrote about 'women deacons'.

And in 451, the Council of Chalcedon recommended that a deaconess should be at least 40 years old.

Origen also mentions 'women deacons in the Church...who have given assistance to so many people and who by their good works deserve to be praised.' (RS:109)

Christian women were not only allowed to attend and learn, but to participate in the ministry and even to exercise leadership.

We could also point to legislation that has come about as a direct consequence of Christian concern for women: the outlawing of 'Sati' in India, and ancient cultural custom of the widow being burned alive on the funeral pyre of the husband. The champion of this cause was Missionary William Carey.

Of footbinding in China being banned.

There is still much more that needs to be done around the world, of course, nevertheless...

As one writer noted, 'The birth of Jesus was the turning point in the history of Woman.' (AS:122)

3. The elevation of charity and compassion

The emphasis on compassion in Jesus' teaching has had a profound impact on the world.

The parable of the Good Samaritan instructs us that our neighbour is anyone we see in need.

His assertion that if we serve the prisoner, the naked, the poor that we are serving Him has proved a massive impulse towards charitable works.

From the earliest times Christians have set aside funds and created ministries to serve the poor.

Tertullian mentions a common fund which supported widows, the physically disabled, orphans, prisoners, funds for funerals and for the release of slaves. (AS:125)

This charitable help usually extended beyond the church to meet the needs of the society around.

Historian WEH Lecky, 'not a friend of Christianity' wrote: 'The active, habitual and detailed charity of private persons, which is such a conspicuous feature in all Christian societies, was scarcely known in antiquity.' (AS:128)

This was particularly true during the various plagues and epidemics that killed so many people across the Roman Empire: The Christians became famous for serving and caring for those who were sick and dying and was a key factor in the eventual acceptance of the Christian Faith. (See RS:73-94 for a brilliant overview)

Dionysius, around AD260, wrote, 'Most of our brother Christians showed unbounded love and loyalty, never sparing themselves and thinking only of one another. Heedless of danger, they took charge of the sick, attending to their every need and ministering to them in Christ, and with them departed this life serenely happy; for

they were infected by others with the disease, drawing on themselves the sickness of their neighbours and cheerfully accepting their pains...

The best of our brothers lost their lives in this manner, a number of elders, deacons and laymen winning high commendation so that death in this form, the result of great piety and strong faith, seems in every way equal of martyrdom.' (RS:82)

The Emperor Julian, not a believer, was deeply suspicious of the Christians' famous compassion and believed they were pretending to be compassionate so as to win converts.

He wrote, 'The impious Galileans support not only their poor but ours as well, everyone can see that our people lack aid from us!' (RS:84)

From early in the life of the Church Christians cared for orphans, establishing orphanages of various kinds. Many churches ran homes to care for the aged who had no-one else.

Countless voluntary associations and organizations have been established because of the Christian concern for the poor.

Child labour laws have been put in place, prison reform, and even state welfare programs have been established in large measure due to the influence of Christian compassion in countries where Christianity has had a strong influence.

Hospitals and Health care

Jesus said, 'I was sick and you looked after me!' (Mt 25:36)

What greater impulse to care could there be?

Jesus healed the sick and instructed his followers to do the same. And when supernatural healing didn't follow, the care didn't stop.

The impulse began with tending for those deformed children who were abandoned at birth. Benignus of Dijon was martyred (2nd Century) because he 'nursed, supported and protected a number of deformed and crippled children that had been saved from death after failed abortions and exposures.' (AS:153)

In terms of an institution closer to the hospital, Alvin Schmidt writes: 'Given the pervading fear the pagans had about caring for the sick and dying, together with their low view of the poor and of manual labourers, it is not surprising that...there were no established medical institutions (hospitals) for nursing and ministering to the general populace.' (AS:153)

Some have pointed to pagan shrines to mythical Greek gods of healing, but they weren't hospitals – even if people stayed to pray and sacrifice overnight.

Others have pointed to the Greek *iatreia* where the sick went to physicians for diagnosis – but they were closer to doctors' rooms rather than a place that provided nursing care.

Some have pointed to the Roman *valetudinaria*, but these were primarily to care for wounded gladiators or soldiers and certainly nothing like providing nursing care for the general population. (see AS:153-156)

Before the unbanning of Christianity in the Roman Empire, most Christian care took place in homes. But after the legalization of Christianity – at the very first ecumenical council, the Council of Nicea in 325 all bishops were directed to establish a hospice in every city where there was a large enough church. (AS:155)

The first hospital in recorded history was built in AD369 in Cappadocia. It included ‘a large number of buildings, with houses for physicians and nurses, workshops and industrial schools.’ (AS:156)

The workshops gave those without occupations the chance to learn a trade while recuperating.

The story of the Hospital, as well as monasteries providing healthcare is wonderful. Of course, the model was admired and imitated by many who were not Christian and the Hospital has now become a norm all over the world.

In the Middle Ages, of course, there were the ‘Order of the Hospitallers’ who recruited women to nurse the sick. The Hospitallers of St. Lazarus founded in the 12th century, devoted themselves to nursing and founded many hospitals across Europe. (AS:158)

The Augustinian Nuns and the Lutheran Deaconesses Order (who eventually had such an impact on Florence Nightingale) were specifically Christian.

The institution of nursing itself, apart from the image of God being expressed through a carer, is essentially a Christian innovation – one reason why it seems ridiculous to common sense that it would be wrong for a caring nurse to offer to pray for a patient.

The spread of hospitals, of the profession of nurses, the mental health institutions (begun by believers in the early 1400’s), organization like the Red Cross and the non-Christian versions of all the above – are a direct result of the influence of compassion and care of Jesus Christ.

4. Education, Work and Slavery

Education

Even non-Christians say that Jesus was the greatest teacher who lived.

His commitment to teaching the people was yet another expression of the fact that we are made in God’s image.

That God should approach us graciously, inviting us to listen to Him, and learn from Him is amazing!

No surprise that, following Jesus' emphasis on teaching, that the early church held teaching, particularly Biblical teaching, in such high regard.

The church developed an oral Question and Answer style of teaching for new converts called the Catechism. This teaching was for all new converts.

Schools

Soon, formal schools were created. In 150 Justin Martyr established a school in Ephesus and another in Rome. Soon Christian schools were being established in most major cities. (AS:171)

A theological and literary foundation was taught to the future leaders in these schools. Christian doctrine was the primary focus, but mathematics and medicine were also often taught.

Historian William Boyd, in his book, 'The History of Western Education' writes that through these schools, 'Christianity became for the first time a definite factor in the culture of the world.' (AS:172)

While Christians weren't the first to engage in this kind of formal school-like setting, they were the first to insist on education for all. William Ramsay asserts that Christianity's aim was 'universal education, not education confined to the rich, as among the Greeks and Romans...and it made no distinction of sex. They were so effective that Augustine, early in the 5th Century stated that Christian women were better informed than pagan male philosophers.' (AS:172)

Cathedral and Episcopal Schools were maintained from the fourth century onwards – primarily to train future Pastors but included others, covering a wide range of subjects from grammar, rhetoric and logic to music and astronomy. Monasteries and nunneries also operated schools.

Universal Education was the aim, particularly in the earlier days of the church, because converts often came from the less privileged of society.

At the time of the Reformation Martin Luther urged a state school system so that every child would receive an education. He urged 'vernacular primary schools for both sexes, Latin secondary schools and universities.'

Boyd adds, that 'Luther...wanted a system of education as free and unrestricted as the Gospel he preached and indifferent, like the Gospel, to distinctions of sex or of social class.' (AS:177)

In Geneva, John Calvin advocated universal education. His plan included 'a system of elementary education in the vernacular for all, including reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, and religion and the establishment of secondary schools for the purpose of training citizens for civil and ecclesiastical leadership.' (AS:177)

Philip Melancthon, Luther's co-worker, successfully persuaded the civic authorities to implement the first ever public school system in Germany. (AS:179)

The impulse for modern education was championed by Protestant Reformers, Martin Luther and John Calvin.

Other innovations in the system were likewise developed by Christians: graded education, the idea of a kindergarten, education for the deaf, education for the blind. (AS:180-183)

Universities

Although the Greeks and the Romans had given the West major philosophers and academic disciplines, no educational institutions were formed.

While it is possible to read the idea of a university back into the Greek and Roman academic culture, there was no recognizable guild of scholars or students and they certified no one. No theories were formally tested. No research was done.

The roots of the Western University is not found in the Greeks but in the Christian monasteries.

The first prototype university was established by Benedict of Nursia who founded the Benedictine Order's first monastery at Monte Cassino in Italy in 528.

He established an elaborate library system which enabled other monasteries to exchange books and research. (AS:186)

Out of these monasteries the first Universities proper were established. First, the University of Bologna in 1158, followed by the University of Oxford in 1167 and the University of Paris formally founded in 1200 (although the French claim an earlier date).

There's no question that the early Universities were to equip Christian ministers with the best reasoning and knowledge available to advance the Christian faith in the world.

This desire for knowledge created the environment for all kinds of scientific and social advances which helped drive Western civilization forward in terms of technological research and discovery.

The Dignity of Work and the Abolition of Slavery

In answering the question why have so many technological advances come from the West, Indian Scholar Vishal Mangalwadi cites the fact that the focus of the monks of Buddhist monasteries in Asia was the emptying of the mind in order to achieve 'shunya', silence, oneness, through the chanting of mantras.

See: A suggestion as to why the Chinese Printing Press (9th C) did not produce the modern era but the European one did <http://bit.ly/diTqVx>

The Christian monks in Christian monasteries had a different view entirely. They saw creation not as illusion but as given by God to man, and that it's resources were to be harnessed, managed and developed by man. There was a work ethic in the monasteries based on Paul's statement 'If a man refuses to work then neither let him eat.' The Christian monks were not only eager to develop better farming technologies, such as constantly improving the design of their ploughs etc. but also developed the most technologically advanced machine of the era, the Pipe Organ, the central instrument used to enhance worship.

In the Greco-Roman world of the 1st century both Romans and Greeks had a very low view of physical work. There was really no dignity ascribed to work at all. But the Christians taught a very different view of work:

Jesus, the Son of God, had demonstrated that work was good by Himself being a Carpenter – a labourer.

Paul, while having had some theological training as a Hebrew Pharisee, also had technical training in a manual trade – he constructed and sold tents.

Also the church always held Paul's command 'If a man will not work, neither let him eat.' (2 Thess 3:10)

Jesus said, 'The worker is worthy of his wages.' (Lk 10:7)

At the time of the Reformation, which really launched the world into the modern era, Luther taught that work was a calling, a vocation, and that you were not merely working to survive, but working for God.

The Protestant work ethic, along with other factors, helped produce a so-called 'middle class'.

John Calvin's teaching that it is permissible to earn interest on capital (except when lending to the poor) was credited by Sociologist Max Weber as being the genesis of Western Capitalism. (AS:199)

The Reformers goal was not simply to produce wealth and prosperity as an end in itself but as a means to advance the gospel, serve mankind and thereby bring glory to God (AS:200).

Abolition of Slavery

Occasionally the Christian faith is criticised for not speaking out against slavery. Paul urges those who are slaves to be diligent rather than to organize for emancipation. As far as we know, slavery was an ordinary part of most indigenous cultures before the arrival of Christianity. True in African and Arab as well as Roman and European cultures. (AS:272-273)

Resistance to slavery was slow, and a minority protest. But it is well known that the champion of the abolition of slavery during the colonial period was an evangelical Christian called William Wilberforce.

It is a continual struggle to see the statement of Jesus: 'The worker is worthy of his wages' applied in every generation as it should be.

Paul's strategy seemed to be to introduce the gospel into a culture and then see the benefits of the gospel influencing that culture.

Therefore the first human right is the right of conversion – often the one that people die for first - then all the other human rights can flow more freely.

That happened in Europe and it's happening still around the world today. The issue of slavery is still with us – and Christians are and should remain in the frontlines attacking it.

See the Salvation Army's Social Justice Commission webpage: <http://bit.ly/aTOM54>

5. The Growth of Modern Science

Even famous atheist Richard Dawkins, author of *The God Delusion*, acknowledges that Modern Science was birthed within a Christian intellectual framework and that the most of the significant early modern scientists were Christians.

Oxford Professor John Lennox forcefully argues that the idea that faith in God stunts scientific investigation or inquiry ignores the facts of history – rather, scientists believed in the rational intelligibility of the universe because they believed in a rational creator. They expected to see laws in nature because they believed in a lawgiver. (John Lennox in debate with Richard Dawkins)

See *The God Delusion Debate Video* – available for download free: <http://bit.ly/bMBadM>

From the monks doing basic research in monasteries through to Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Newton, Faraday, Kelvin, Simpson, Pasteur, Mendel, Lister and many more, Christians have been the architects of modern science.

James Simpson who pioneered anesthetics (chloroform) was asked once, 'Of all the great discoveries you have made, which was the greatest?' He answered, 'You know, the greatest discovery I ever made was the day I discovered Jesus Christ!' (from Nicky Gumbel, *Christianity Boring, Irrelevant and Untrue*)

If Christianity's foremost Western critic Richard Dawkins acknowledges the central role of Christianity in the birth of modern science, then I think we can rest our case there.

Other areas of influence

The shaping of the arts and architecture

Obviously great art has come through every great civilization. Human beings are made in the image of their Creator so we would expect to see that image reflected in the creation of works of art, music and so on.

The contribution of Christians in the areas of art and architecture is evident from the frescoes on the walls of catacombs where Christians hid from their persecutors, to the great works of Michaelangelo or Rembrandt.

Likewise Christian worship and the ideas involved in worshipping the God of the Bible had a huge impact on architecture, firstly in terms of churches and cathedrals but also more widely in the culture.

We know that all great civilizations have produced impressive architecture. I'm not saying the specifically Christian stuff is better – but there's no doubt that Christianity has inspired some of the most spectacular and ambitious architectural designs.

Music and the music industry (see AS:314-342)

Baptist Preacher, CH Spurgeon noted that the Christian gospel doesn't only make the mute man speak but sing! (Isa 35:6)

Both in the Old and New Testaments those liberated by God's grace begin singing. New songs are continually being written.

Because music has always been an integral part of Christian worship it is understandable that many musical innovations would be generated by those societies where Christianity has impacted the culture.

Vishal Mangalwadi makes a strong case that the impulse for the global modern music industry had its beginnings in cultures affected by Christian teaching.

For more by Vishal Mangalwadi see: <http://bit.ly/ck5qP5>

The impact on Literature

A relative explosion of writing and preaching emanated from the early church. Doctrinal, apologetic, expository and historical works were continually produced by the churches.

The impact of the Printing Press at the time of the Reformation increased the ability and impulse for Christian writing.

The King James translation in the 17th century had a huge impact on the English language.

The Puritans were essentially responsible for creating the literary culture for the English language which is still having a global impact.

Jeremy Paxman argues that the Puritan removal of icons from the English churches, replaced by a strong emphasis on teaching and the importance of words and ideas essentially created the English literary culture – from which the literary tradition, exemplified by Shakespeare, emerged.

For more on this fascinating subject see: <http://bit.ly/9DRJgW>

6. Countless individual lives transformed by Jesus Christ

If Christianity could be credited with the impulse for just one of these changes it would commend itself to the heart and mind, let alone all these.

All of these Christian contributions to the shared human experience came about ultimately because of individuals who were impacted by Christ.

His death on the cross – for us – removing God’s wrath from us, and taking our punishment – and His resurrection from the dead changes individual lives.

And He can break into your life too – if you will respond to Him.

Jesus said: ‘I have come that you might have Life, and have it to the full!’ (John 10:10)