



RESILIENT

A Light Shines

Isaiah 9:2



George Orwell

“Who controls the past
controls the future; who
controls the present controls
the past.”



Has Christianity been good for
the world?



Steven Weinburg

American Theoretical Physicist (1933-2021)

“Without religion, we'd have good people doing good things, and evil people doing evil things. But for good people to do evil things, that takes religion.”



Christopher Hitchens

God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything

“We keep on being told that religion, whatever its imperfections, at least instills morality. On every side, there is conclusive evidence that the contrary is the case and that faith causes people to be more mean, more selfish, and perhaps above all, more stupid.”



Christopher Hitchens

God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything

“Violent, irrational, intolerant, allied to racism and tribalism and bigotry, invested in ignorance and hostile to free inquiry, contemptuous of women and coercive toward children: organized religion ought to have a great deal on its conscience.”



Isaiah 9:2

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shone.



The Influence of Christianity

Week 1: Antiquity

Week 2: Middle Ages

Week 3: Modern Age



Aristotle

(384-322 BC)

“For that some should rule and others be ruled is a thing not only necessary, but expedient; from the hour of their birth, some are marked out for subjection, others for rule.”



Larry Siedentop

Inventing the Individual

“At the core of ancient thinking we have found the assumption of natural inequality. Whether in the domestic sphere, in public life or when contemplating the cosmos, Greeks and Romans did not see anything like a level playing field. Rather, they instinctively saw a hierarchy or pyramid.”



Larry Siedentop

Inventing the Individual

“Different levels of social status reflected inherent differences of being. The paterfamilias, priest or citizen did not have to win or justify his status. His superior status reflected his ‘nature’. It was self-justifying.”



Ancient Thinking

1. Inequality
2. Hierarchy
3. Fate



What were the results?



Glen Scrivener

The Air We Breathe: How We All Came to Believe in Freedom, Kindness, Progress, and Equality

“Roman society, as with every ancient culture, was arranged as a vertiginously steep hierarchy. That hierarchy was not simply one of rank or role; it was a hierarchy of *being*. The punishments of the state were an expression – and an enforcement – of this hierarchy. Certain classes of people could not be crucified and certain classes could.”



Kyle Harper

From Shame to Sin: The Christian Transformation of Sexual Morality in Late Antiquity

“But the Romans built one of history’s most enduring and extensive slave systems, and the ownership of slaves would gradually shape virtually every social institution in Roman life, including pederasty. The laws deflected lust away from the freeborn body, and slaves provided a ready outlet.”



Kyle Harper

From Shame to Sin: The Christian Transformation of Sexual Morality in Late Antiquity

“Women accounted for at least half of the slave population, and they bore the brunt of sexual abuse. Without legal or social protection, they were devastatingly vulnerable. Sexual abuse was simply presumptive, and many slave girls probably experienced sexual initiation traumatically early.”



Plato

Republic

“The offspring of the good, I suppose, they will take to the pen or crèche, to certain nurses who live apart in a quarter of the city, but the offspring of the inferior, and any of those of the other sort who are born defective, they will properly dispose of in secret, so that no one will know what has become of them.”



When humans lack intrinsic value and are naturally unequal, the result is...

1. Brutal, state-sanctioned punishment.
2. An enormous slave system.
3. An expansive sex trade.
4. The disposal of “inferior” children.
5. Horrific gladiatorial games.
6. Little interest in charity.

...and so on.



Revolutionary Ideas



Revolutionary Ideas

The Bible presents...

1. A surprisingly high view of humanity.



1. A High View of Humanity

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

Genesis 1:26-27



1. A High View of Humanity

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20



Celsus

2nd century critic of Christianity

“The radical error in Jewish and Christian thinking is that it is anthropocentric [human-centered]. They say that God made all things for man, but this is not at all evident.”



Revolutionary Ideas

The Bible presents...

1. A surprisingly high view of humanity.
2. All human beings as having equal value.



2. Equal Value

And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Mark 10:42-45



2. Equal Value

The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

1 Corinthians 7:3-5



Revolutionary Ideas

The Bible presents...

1. A surprisingly high view of humanity.
2. All human beings as having equal value.
3. A view that the “strong” should sacrifice for the “weak”.



3. Sacrificing for the “Weak”

You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.

John 13:13-15



3. Sacrificing for the “Weak”

We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

Romans 15:1



Revolutionary Ideas

The Bible presents...

1. A surprisingly high view of humanity.
2. All human beings as having equal value.
3. A view that the “strong” should sacrifice for the “weak”.
4. An emphasis on human responsibility.



4. Human Responsibility

I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.

Matthew 12:36-37



4. Human Responsibility

So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.

Romans 14:12



Kyle Harper

From Shame to Sin: The Christian Transformation of Sexual Morality in Late Antiquity

“The Christians of the second and third centuries invented the notion of free will. Against the threat of gnostic determinism, amid a popular culture increasingly addicted to astrology, and in opposition to a philosophical culture with ever more sophisticated accounts of moral causation, the Christians entered the fray with a message that was jarringly simple and distinctive.”



Kyle Harper

From Shame to Sin: The Christian Transformation of Sexual Morality in Late Antiquity

“The individual, whatever his or her condition, was a moral agent with unqualified capability and responsibility. These crystalline notions of freedom and responsibility came to focus on the realm of moral behavior whose wellsprings might seem most inscrutable: sex.”



Revolutionary Ideas

The Bible presents...

1. A surprisingly high view of humanity.
2. All human beings as having equal value.
3. A view that the “strong” should sacrifice for the “weak”.
4. An emphasis on human responsibility.
5. A primary ethic of love.



5. Primary Ethic of Love

So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13:13



Revolutionary Ideas

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What were the results?



John Chrysostom

(AD 347-407)

Did God not provide to us then both hands and feet for this reason that we might not stand in need of servants? Since the class of slaves is not there due to necessity, for otherwise even Adam would have had a slave formed for him, but it is the result of sin and the punishment of disobedience. But when Christ came, He put an end also to this. For in Christ Jesus there is neither slave nor free [Gal. 3:28]. Therefore, it is not necessary to have a slave.



John Chrysostom

(AD 347-407)

Therefore, if it is in their aid, I ask you not to assign any of them in ministering to yourself, but when you have purchased them and have taught them trades whereby to support themselves, let them go free. But when you threaten them, when you put them in chains, it is no more a work of philanthropy.



Gregory of Nyssa

(AD 335-395)

“When someone turns the property of God into his own property and arrogates dominion to his own kind, so as to think himself the owner of men and women, what is he doing but overstepping his own nature through pride, regarding himself as something different from his subordinates?”



William Lecky

History of European Morals

“There is scarcely any other single reform so important in the moral history of mankind as the suppression of the gladiatorial shows, and this feat must be almost exclusively ascribed to the Christian church.”



Roman Emperor Julian

(AD 331-363)

“It is a disgrace that these impious Galileans care not only for their own poor but for ours as well.”



David Bentley Hart

Eastern Orthodox Historian

“St. Ephraim the Syrian (A.D. c. 306- 373), when the city of Edessa was ravaged by plague, established hospitals open to all who were afflicted. St. Basil the Great (A.D. 329- 379) founded a hospital in Cappadocia with a ward set aside for the care of lepers, whom he did not disdain to nurse with his own hands. St. Benedict of Nursia (A.D. c. 480– c. 547) opened a free infirmary at Monte Cassino and made care of the sick a paramount duty of his monks.”



David Bentley Hart

Eastern Orthodox Historian

“In Rome, the Christian noblewoman and scholar St. Fabiola (d. A.D. c. 399) established the first public hospital in Western Europe and— despite her wealth and position— often ventured out into the streets personally to seek out those who needed care. St. John Chrysostom (A.D. 347-407), while patriarch of Constantinople, used his influence to fund several such institutions in the city.”



If you have not yet believed...

RESILIENT



If you have not yet believed...

...consider the possibility that your values
are much more “Christian” than you
previously imagined.



Romans 2:15

They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them...



If you have believed...

RESILIENT



If you have believed...

...be confident in the goodness of your
God.



Jeremiah 9:23-24

Thus says the LORD: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.”