

Christianity as a modern influence

In a world where it is increasingly asked “What have Christians done” or “how has the bible influenced society” it often comes as a surprise that our modern world indeed rests on the work of Christians. The work of Christian scientists has been highlighted in *the God questions (and science)* section. This section takes that theme further.

The bible and Christians have influenced our world as follows. ⁱ

Best seller

The [Bible](#) is influential because it is the world’s bestselling book, breaking all records known to man. According to *The Guinness Book of World Records*, since 1815 the Bible has sold approximately 2.5 billion copies and has been translated into more than 2,200 languages or dialects.

The Bible’s influence is not limited to Christians; Jews and Muslims also consider the Bible to be a sacred text. There are 2 billion Christians, 14 million Jews and 1.3 billion Muslims, that means that more than half of the world’s population consider the Bible to be a major influence on their faith.

Language, science and education

Over 22,000 English words have their root in Hebrew (the original bible language). That’s more than the roots of Greek, Latin, and French.

The Bible is quoted more often than any other piece of literature in [history](#) and has had more influence on our language, culture, and laws than any other book or idea ever published.

Some of the phrases from the Bible that has become part of our everyday language include:

Gave up the ghost ~ Genesis 35:29

Out of the mouth of babes ~ Psalms 8:2

Feet of clay ~ Daniel 2:33

Salt of the earth ~ Matthew 5:13

Fought the good fight ~ 2 Timothy 4:7

Turned the world upside down ~ Acts 17:6

God forbid ~ Romans 3:4

The powers that be ~ Romans 13:1

No peace for the wicked ~ Isaiah 57: 21

The blind leading the blind ~ Matthew 15:13

The CMS (Christian Missionary Society):

- taught 200,000 to read in East Africa in one generation
- Secured the abolition of widow-burning and child sacrifice
- Brought medicine to the world
- Actually founded the educational systems in China, Japan, and Korea.

100 of the first 110 universities in America were founded for the express purpose of propagating the Christian religion.

Love of learning led to monasteries, which became the cradle of academic guilds. Universities such as Cambridge, Oxford, and Harvard all began as Jesus-inspired efforts to love God with all ones' mind.

The first legislation to publicly fund education in the colonies was called The Old Deluder Satan Act, under the notion that God does not want any child ignorant. The ancient world loved education but tended to reserve it for the elite; the notion that every child bore God's image helped fuel the move for universal literacy.

Many pioneering scientists were not only theists, but Christians: Newton, Pasteur, Kepler, Paschal, Fleming, Edwards.

Literature

Many novels have impacting on modern culture have strong bible influences such as:

Shakespeare's works, Dickens' works and American classics such as: *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck, *The Song of Solomon* by Toni Morrison, *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville, *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe.

Art

Famous biblical art include Leonardo Da Vinci's *Last Supper* and his statue of David. The Sistine Chapel in Italy is famous for its ceiling painted by Michelangelo which is bursting with beauty from biblical scenes. In the Tate Museum in London, you'll find engravings by William Blake on the Book of Job. Botticelli delights with his painting on the Adoration of the Magi at the Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence. The painting of David with the Head of Goliath by Caravaggio is also well known.

Had Jesus never been born, music would likely sound very different from what we're used to. There may never have developed the cantata, the concerto, or the symphony. Handel, Vivaldi, and Bach were Christians who worked to honor God with their work. Bach, for example, signed all his works with *Soli Deo Gloria* ("Solely to the glory of God").

Laws and morality

In America, the Constitution and the rules and laws that govern society have their roots in the Bible, through moral codes like the Ten Commandments.

In the UK, the Magna Carta was written by a Church Minister.

Human rights: The concept of universal human rights and equality comes exclusively from the biblical idea that all people are created in the image of God.

Women's rights. In ancient cultures, a wife was the property of her husband. Aristotle said that a woman was somewhere between a free man and a slave. According to the book *Reasons for God* by Tim Keller (page 249), "It was extremely common in the Greco-Roman world to throw out new female infants to die from exposure, because of the low status of women in society. The church forbade its members to do so. Greco-Roman society saw no value in an unmarried woman, and therefore it was illegal for a widow to go more than two years without remarrying. But Christianity was the first religion to not force widows to marry.

Slavery. Historians credit the British Christian evangelical William Wilberforce as the primary force behind the ending of the international slave trade (which happened prior to the American Civil War). Two-thirds of the members of the American abolition society in 1835 were Christian ministers.

Children: In the ancient world children were routinely left to die of exposure — particularly if they were the wrong gender (you can guess which the wrong one was); they were often sold into slavery. Jesus' treatment of and teachings about children led to the forbidding of such practices, as well as orphanages and godparents.

Humility: The ancient world honored many virtues like courage and wisdom, but not humility. People were generally divided into first class and coach. "Rank must be preserved," said Cicero; each of the original 99 percent was a *personis mediocribus*. Plutarch wrote a self-help book that might crack best-seller lists in our day: *How to Praise Yourself Inoffensively*.

Jesus' life as a foot-washing servant would eventually lead to the adoption of humility as a widely admired virtue.

Forgiveness: In the ancient world, virtue meant rewarding your friends and punishing your enemies. Conan the Barbarian was actually paraphrasing Ghengis Khan in his famous answer to the question "what is best in life?" — To crush your enemies, see them driven before you, and hear the lamentations of their women.

An alternative idea came from [Jesus of] Galilee: what is best in life is to love your enemies, and see them reconciled to you.

Work ethic

The biblical doctrines of *self-reliance* and *self-denial* are the foundation of the famous "Protestant work ethic."

Benevolent practices

Many of today's largest charities and similar entities have their roots in Christianity for example:

- Barnado's homes
- The Samaritans
- Salvation Army
- Red Cross
- Oxfam
- Save the Children
- YMCA

Notes

¹ Sources: <https://www.whatchristianswanttoknow.com/how-does-the-bible-influence-society/#ixzz50i9zFgjz>
<http://www.faithfacts.org/christ-and-the-culture/the-impact-of-christianity#impact>
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