

The Positive Influences and Contributions of Christianity

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Introduction

Fiction writers have created stories based on alternate histories—for example, if the Nazis had won the second world war, the Confederates had won the US Civil War, the Cuban Missile Crisis had escalated into a nuclear war, or the Protestant Reformation had not occurred. An intriguing alternative history might be to consider what the world would be like if Jesus Christ had never been born and Christianity had not developed into the world-encompassing movement that it is today.

However, we do not need to speculate much to visualize such an alternate history. We see the results of the waning influence of Christianity in Western society around us today—for example, riots and shootings in urban areas, increasing rates of sexually transmitted diseases, families with only a single parent, horrific deaths from street drugs, massive accumulations of government debt that bankrupts nations, unfulfilled promises from politicians for whom lying is a natural phenomenon, and the genocide of abortion. This is the outcome of a society which has rejected the true God and his laws. As he informs us, the result of a world without a regard for him and his laws is one in which wickedness is great and every intention of the thoughts and hearts of men is evil continually, from their youth (Genesis 6:5; 8:21), and one in which everyone does what is right in his own eyes (Judges 17:6; 21:25). Therefore, rather than speculating on an alternate history—what if Christianity had never developed—a more pertinent consideration is to reflect on what have been the positive influences and contributions of Christianity since the fledgling NT church was organized in 33 AD after the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Before we identify some of the contributions of Christianity, we must address a few caveats:

- Christianity must be defined by God himself through what he communicates in the Bible, and not by what its opponents say it is. Opponents of Christianity have, from the 1st century AD, created strawman caricatures which they can tear apart as they attempt to discredit Christ and Christianity. For example,

early pagan antagonists claimed that participants in the agape-feast (Lord's Supper) were cannibals. Today, a common accusation is that Christians are bigoted and intolerant.

- A definition of Christianity must not include all the practices or behaviour of its adherents. All people who profess to be Christians, sin and break God's laws. Some people who claim to be Christians commit heinous actions, sometimes in the name of Christ or in the name of the branch of Christianity to which they express allegiance. We readily admit that professing Christians have brought great shame to the name of Christ throughout history. However—and this in no way excuses the evils practiced by professing Christians—in balance, the positive influences and contributions of Christianity have far outweighed the egregious behaviours of some who claim to be Christians.
- The total contributions made by Christians have been of far greater value than all the good contributions made by those who espouse other religions or non-Christian philosophies or political systems, or by those who claim to be antireligious or atheists. And, evils perpetrated by the proponents of non-Christian religions, philosophies, and political systems have been horrific—including wars of conquest, mass genocide, oppression and slavery, and economic ruin. However, we will not directly compare these systems with Christianity but leave the reader to draw his or her own comparative conclusions based on a consideration of the positive influence of Christianity.

Contributions made by true Christianity to society, nations, civilization, and the world during the past 2,000 years include the following:

1. Christianity answers the fundamental questions of mankind

As long as mankind has inhabited the earth, people have formulated questions relating to:

- *Ontology* – e.g., What is existence? What exists? Can there be or has there ever been absolute nothingness? and, Does God exist?
- *Teleology* – e.g., Why does something exist instead of nothing? and, Why do I exist?
- *Epistemology* – e.g., What do we know? and, How do we know anything?
- *Cosmology* – e.g., How did the universe and world arise and obtain its present form? and, How old are the universe and the world?
- *Biology* – e.g., What is life? How did the variety of life arise on the earth? and, What is death?
- *Eschatology* – e.g., Can material things cease to exist? Does everything cease to exist? and, What happens to a person at physical death?
- *Morality and Ethics* – e.g., What is right and wrong? Who defines right and wrong? Why do people do bad things (sin)? and, What should happen when people do bad things?
- *Esthetics* – e.g., What is beauty?

God presents himself in the Bible as a self-existent, uncreated, non-material, infinite, eternal, intelligent, righteous, just, and loving person. He is the ultimate cause and creator of all of space, time, energy, matter, and life. With the Biblical perspective on reality, there is no endless regression of causation, such as in the question, “Who created God?” He tells us how material entities, including living beings, came into existence in the opening chapters of the Bible (Genesis 1–2), and how the present structure of the world was formed in general terms (Genesis 6–9). The Genesis account is history, it records what happened at the beginning of time with a sober historical account, and not with a hint of myth or fairy tale.

No other system of thought (religion or philosophy) presents a cohesive, consistent answer to the fundamental questions that people ask about reality and their purpose for existence.

2. Christianity is the source of absolute truth

It is claimed by some that we now live in a post-truth world, in which ‘truth’ is relative to a person’s culture, education, and experiences. However, the reality is that since Satan tempted Eve, through the serpent, with lies (Genesis 3:1–5), mankind has existed in a post-truth world.

God’s word is true because God does not lie and cannot lie (Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18). He cannot lie because he is holy and cannot be tempted to lie (James 1:13). He has no reason to lie (e.g., from pride, guilt, or covetousness, or out of spite) because of who and what he is. In contrast, every man is a liar (Psalm 116:11; Romans 3:4).

Because God cannot lie, the Bible, his communication to mankind, is absolutely true. The Bible is the only ancient religious text which presents an objective history about creation, detailed prophecies which are fulfilled, and an account that is consistent with the facts of science and post-creation historical events. Thus, a quest for truth must begin with the Bible and with Jesus who is the living truth (John 14:6). Each part of the Bible is a true statement of God’s communication to mankind.

The claim that the Bible is the ultimate authority for truth is not irrational. No one can *prove* (or disprove) the Bible’s truthfulness—although there are many types of evidence which support its veracity and accuracy—such as the fulfillment of its detailed prophecies. However, if someone attempts to prove that the Bible is true (or untrue), he will have to select a system of proof. Then, an opponent could ask him to prove that whatever system he had selected was valid. For example, if we subjected the historical statements of the Bible to a test of their historicity by comparing them with non-Biblical accounts of history, we would have to ask how we could prove that the non-Biblical writings are accurate. Any form of proof brought forward to defend a lower level of proof would have to be, in turn, subjected to another, higher, level of proof; and the argument would proceed into an infinite-regress, with no hope of a solution. The Bible cannot be an *ultimate* standard if it is subjected to proof, otherwise whatever standard was used to assess the Bible would have to be considered an ultimate standard.

It is necessary to apply circular reasoning to validate *all* instances of ultimate authorities. For example, consider logic. It is impossible to prove that logic is logical or true—we cannot step outside the system of logic to prove logically that the laws of logic are true. Yet, if the laws of logic did not exist or weren’t consistent, we couldn’t make any arguments. Since we can make rational arguments using logic, the laws of logic must exist, and they must be true. Logic authenticates its own existence. Similarly, you cannot prove that mathematics is true, without assuming it is true. Logic and mathematics are ultimate self-authenticating systems because they are derived from the mind of the self-existent God.

When people read the Bible, they know that they are hearing from the living God, even if they strenuously deny it to be his word. When they read the Bible, they encounter God and his self-authenticating word.

3. Christianity provides objective standards for morality and justice

After God had created Adam, he told Adam that he was not to eat fruit from a particular tree in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:16–17). This was not an arbitrary or capricious action on the part of God but had several purposes, including to:

- Indicate to mankind that God, as creator, is the lawgiver.
- Demonstrate that man, as the only rational creature in the material universe, has been endowed with moral responsibility.
- Test Adam and Eve’s faithfulness toward their creator, since, as Jesus states, mankind’s first duty is to love God and obey him (Matthew 22:37–38).

When Adam and Eve ate the fruit from the forbidden tree, they not only breached a specific prohibition but broke the commandments that God had placed on their hearts (Romans 1:18–19; 2:15) and would later inscribe in writing on tablets of stone (Deuteronomy 5:1–22). For example, they:

- Defined for themselves other gods which they viewed with greater esteem than the living God—self, self-will, and pleasure.
- Made the fruit of the forbidden tree into an idol which they worshiped, believing that eating from it would give them blessings that they did not already possess.
- Blasphemed the name of God by accepting Satan’s statement that God was a liar (Genesis 3:4).
- Committed suicide, murder, and genocide (Romans 5:12, 17).
- Committed theft by taking the fruit which did not belong to them.
- Indulged in lies by accepting Satan’s lies, deceiving themselves, and deceiving one another about the benefits that would accrue from an indulgence in the fruit that was pleasing to their eyes and palates.
- Coveted the fruit because they did not possess it, even though God had graciously given them free access to every other tree in his garden (Genesis 2:16).

The essence of the Ten Commandments was known to mankind before the commands were formally delivered on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 20). For example, Abimelech knew that it was wrong to approach sexually the wife of Abraham (Genesis 20:2–7) and Jacob and Laban understood the nature of property rights and theft (Genesis 30:33; 31:19, 30). At the time of the Israelites’ departure from slavery in Egypt, God delivered through Moses, a written record of his moral law—the Ten Commandments—and case laws which illustrate how to apply the Ten Commandments. Morality and sin are defined by God’s enduring law—for example, David said it is against God that he had sinned when he committed adultery (Psalm 51:4)—and not against rules defined by fickle people, changing practices, the whim of politicians, or the dictates of a human judiciary.

Many of the legal procedures followed today in North America and the UK originated when the Roman Empire was ruled by ostensibly Christian emperors (e.g., Justinian I, 529–565 AD) and during the Middle Ages in England under the reign of professedly Christian kings (e.g., Edward the Confessor, c 1003–1066 AD; and Stephen, 1092–1154 AD) who incorporated the Ten Commandments and biblical case laws into their statutes.

Biblical standards for administering justice, which we assume to be standard practice include the following:

- *Swearing to tell the truth.* Our courts generally require that we promise to “tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth” (Leviticus 5:1; Proverbs 14:5, 25).
- *Swearing on the Bible.* Placing one’s hand on the Bible to swear an oath is a proper action since the Bible is God’s perfect word and can act as a surrogate for himself and is equivalent to other actions of respect toward God, such as raising hands toward heaven (1 Timothy 2:8).
- *Punishment of perjury.* Perjury is a serious crime that requires punishment (Proverbs 19:5, 9; 21:28). One way that perjury is committed is through suborning false witnesses (e.g., as occurred at the trial of Jesus; Matthew 26:60–61). Another is by the presentation of falsified evidence (e.g., planting drugs to misdirect assignment of guilt), which the Bible soundly condemns (Exodus 23:1–2; Proverbs 24:28).
- *Innocent until proven guilty.* A person accused of a crime must be considered innocent until proven guilty in a court and should be permitted to continue acting as a private citizen until formally declared guilty (Exodus 23:6–7; Joshua 20:3–5) unless there is a justifiable risk of flight or of his committing additional criminal activities.
- *The distinction between murder and manslaughter.* Murder is the unlawful premeditated killing of another person (Numbers 35:20–21); whereas manslaughter is the killing of another person without malice aforethought (Numbers 35:22–23).
- *Graded courts.* Moses’ father-in-law recommended that Moses institute an efficient process for dealing with disputes—the less serious cases could be handled at a local level, but the more difficult cases

would be escalated to Moses (Exodus 18:13–26). Moses implemented this suggestion and appointed able men to serve as judges. Thus, a system of graded courts with an appellate process is a concept endorsed by Scripture (Deuteronomy 16:18).

- *Presentation of evidence.* In the event of an accusation of a crime, a person shall be presented with a clear statement of the charge and evidence against him (Proverbs 12:17; Matthew 18:15–17).
- *Multiple witnesses.* The Bible requires that for any conviction and sentencing of a crime there must be multiple witness to the crime (Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 19:15; 17:6–7; Matthew 18:16; 2 Corinthians 13:1; Hebrews 10:28). These witnesses may be eyewitnesses or clear circumstantial evidence (Joshua 7:22) such as the presence of DNA or fingerprints at the scene of a crime.
- *Just judgements.* Judges are to pass just sentences that justify the innocent and exonerate the righteous, and do not acquit the guilty; anything else is an abomination before God (Exodus 23:6–7; Deuteronomy 1:16; 16:19–20; Proverbs 17:15). Also, judges are not to take bribes, because that would blind clear sightedness, subvert justice, and deprive the innocent of their rights (Exodus 23:8; Deuteronomy 16:19; Isaiah 5:23).
- *Impartiality in judgements.* All persons are to be treated as equal before the law. Judicial decisions are not to favour one class of people over another, whether they are natives or foreigners (Deuteronomy 27:19) or rich or poor (Exodus 23:3; Leviticus 19:15; Deuteronomy 1:17), and without exceptions for special situations based on age, health, phenotypical characteristics, ethnicity, aboriginal status, physical disability, dementia, gender, sexual ‘preference’, income, status, rank, etc.
- *Trial by a jury of peers.* Trials should be public with evidence against the accused being presented publicly (Amos 5:15) before a jury of a sufficient number (e.g., twelve) of peer citizens of the jurisdiction (Deuteronomy 21:3, 6; 1 Corinthians 6:1–8) where the crime was committed.
- *Quick administration of justice.* A person accused of a crime should be provided with a speedy trial (Ecclesiastes 8:11) to establish an example for others who might be inclined to commit a similar crime because they believe that there are no immediate consequences.
- *Punishment should fit the crime.* This is the principle of *lex talionis* (the ‘law of *talion*’ or retribution), which is God’s standard for justice. It is summarized in the statement, “an eye for an eye” (Exodus 21:23–25; Leviticus 24:17–22; Deuteronomy 19:21; Jeremiah 50:29; Obadiah 15; Habakkuk 2:8). In our society, we see abuses of the principle of equitable justice in two directions: inadequate punishments for serious crimes and drastically overstated or absurd penalties in frivolous tort cases. In the Gospels (Matthew 5:38) Jesus endorses *lex talionis* by expounding on the underlying meaning of the principle.
- *No personal vindictiveness.* ‘Honour killing’ and vigilante revenge are antithetical to Biblical principles. Jesus and Paul exclude the use of personal vindictiveness (Matthew 5:38–39; Matthew 7:2; Romans 12:17–21). Any action to rectify a wrong should be carried out only under the jurisdiction of an authorized civil magistrate or the matter should be dropped (1 Corinthians 6:7).
- *Punishment should not be cruel.* When corporal punishment is applied it should be restrained (Deuteronomy 25:1–3).

In addition, there are Biblical jurisprudence principles which most people in the West would like to see applied more consistently within our nations, including:

- *Restoration and recompense.* The Biblical model for providing justice in the case of theft is to prescribe a punishment that is, in general, a double repayment of the value of the goods stolen (Exodus 22:4, 7, 9). An exception appears to be if the goods were disposed of after they were stolen; then a five-fold (for the most valuable items) or fourfold (Exodus 22:1) repayment is required. When Zacchaeus encountered Jesus, he offered to repay fourfold what he had defrauded as a tax collector (Luke 19:8). Jesus implicitly endorsed Zacchaeus’ proposed restoration and recompense.
- *Restitution.* The Biblical model for punishing liars is to require full restitution with an additional penalty (Exodus 22:14–15; Leviticus 6:1–7; Deuteronomy 19:15–20). Thus, the concept of imprisoning a person because, for example, he told a lie appears to be contrary to the Biblical model; does nothing, if

that is the only form of punishment, to compensate those who are the victims of a lie; and saddles citizens with the expense of housing the liar in a jail.

- *Limiting litigation.* Proverbs indicates that we should not be hasty to bring a case to court (Proverbs 25:7b-10). Paul reinforces the principle that vexatious or frivolous lawsuits should not be pursued (1 Corinthians 6:1–8).

The closer the laws and judicial procedures of a nation adhere to Biblical standards, the more just they will be. Countries which have accepted God’s law and Mosaic exemplary case laws as their standard have been the most humane and just of any nations throughout history. We, in the West, have been blessed with this heritage. A society or country without a Biblical standard for justice is suicidal (Proverbs 8:36)

4. Christianity values human life

Christians have been advocates for protecting human life from conception in the womb until natural death. From the 1st century in the Roman Empire until today Christians have advocated for restrictions on abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, murder, suicide, genocide, and techniques for harvesting and purging of unused fertilized human ova.

Christians believe that life begins at conception (Psalm 22:9–10; 51:5; 139:13–16; John 1:14 with Luke 1:35), pre-born babies are distinct persons, with their own DNA, hearts, and minds. Even the most strident supporters of abortion admit this, they merely claim that it is irrelevant and that the mother’s ‘rights’ supersede the baby’s. A baby in his or her mother’s womb is an individual person created in the image of God (Genesis 25:21–26; Luke 1:41–44) and is not to be murdered (Exodus 20:13; 21:22–25).

Christians also believe that God alone has the right to determine when a person should die, and that humans in a prolonged coma, or who are mentally deficient or ‘unstable’, physically disabled, depressed, elderly, or economically unproductive are not to be considered as candidates for removal from this life.

God declares that anyone who sheds the blood (i.e., murders) of a person (Genesis 9:5–6; Exodus 21:12–14; Numbers 35:16–33; Matthew 26:52; Romans 13:4) even in the womb (Exodus 21:22–25), is subject to having his own blood shed. Today, many people, including many professing Christians, advocate against capital punishment for murder, claiming that is barbaric. However, capital punishment for murder is not inconsistent with the protection of human life, but an endorsement of the value of a human life. It is ironic that many of the people who protest against the use of capital punishment for murder, also advocate for the slaughter of the unborn in the womb of their mothers.

Case laws in the Bible provide examples of how we are to protect the lives of other people, such as erecting fences to prevent people from falling into unattended swimming pools or into construction excavations (Deuteronomy 22:8) and through avoiding the spread of infectious diseases (Leviticus 13). [We will consider, below, how Christians have taken seriously the responsibility to care for the wellbeing of others as an expression of loving our neighbours.]

5. Christianity values marriage and the family

When Christianity began to expand from its birthplace in Jerusalem and Judea to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8), it encountered pagan cultures saturated with sexual immorality. As Christian influence increased in the Middle East, Europe, and North Africa (for example), the Biblical understanding of marriage, sexual practices, and the family began to permeate those cultures.

God defines marriage as a lifelong physical, psychological, and spiritual relationship between one man and one woman (Genesis 2:21–24; Matthew 19:3–9), solemnized with a covenant (Malachi 2:14) that creates new obligations, which override already existing obligations to the couple’s parents. Sexual intercourse is to be practiced only between a male and female in a marriage relationship (Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 18:20; Matthew 5:27; Acts 15:20; Romans 1:29; Romans 13:9; Hebrews 13:4) within the bounds of consanguinity defined by God (Leviticus 18:8–18; 20:11–21; Deuteronomy 22:30; 27:20;).

Sexual immorality includes many sinful practices, such as: fornication (sexual relations between individuals not married to each another), adultery (extra-marital sex), pre-marital sex, prostitution, polygamy, polyandry, concubinage, homosexual acts, rape, incest, bestiality, unjust divorce or desertion, viewing pornography, lustful thoughts or imaginations, and uttering innuendos or lewd jokes.

For almost two millennia, nations influenced by Christianity have to a greater or lesser extent followed the Biblical principles relating to marriage and sexual practices. However, since about 1960 many of the sexual practices deemed to be sinful by God, have been stricken from the statute books. Within Western nations, some Biblical principles have been declared illegal and the those who support them have been accused of ‘hate’ crimes (e.g., speaking against same-sex ‘marriage’). During this period, we have seen the consequences of abandoning God’s regulations for marriage. For example, increases in the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases, the number of children born outside of wedlock, percentage of marriages that end in divorce, and the number of single-parent families. Also, there are increased discipline problems in schools and crimes committed by juveniles, both of which can be attributed, at least in part, to the lack of stable family environments.

A related aspect of the Christian influence on cultures and civilization has been a marked improvement in the treatment of women. Both sexes were created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26–27; 5:1)—each sex alone is an image-bearer of God—and both sexes (“them”) were given dominion over the rest of creation. Only Christianity, among all religions, has a foundation on which to declare the full natural equality of the sexes (Galatians 3:28).

Even though the two sexes were created equally as image-bearers of God, this does not mean that the sexes have identical roles. The three persons in the Trinity are all equally God, yet they have different roles in creation, providence, and redemption. Thus, having different roles does not diminish a person’s essence. The existence of different roles is indicated by the use of the terms, ‘male’ and ‘female’. The two sexes are intended by God to complement and complete each other (Genesis 2:20) and to work at making their marriages successful through compassion, compromise, and communication (Ephesians 5:22–33).

We could consider a number of examples from God’s law on how women are to be treated. However, one example will suffice—older widows (along with orphans) are to be given special attention and care (Deuteronomy 10:18) and in controlled situations, where they have no family members, to be supported by the Church (Acts 6:1; 1 Timothy 5:9–11; James 1:27).

Another example of how Biblical principles support the family is the provisions made for inheritance. Envy and governments’ lust for revenues are undermining the Biblical principle of parents providing an inheritance for their children and grandchildren. Advocates for heavy taxation (even 100%) on estates, argue that:

- Unearned income is undeserved.
- Inheritance rewards people for being born to the ‘lucky sperm club’ and contributes to a lack of economic mobility.
- Inheritance taxes help to distribute wealth and provide badly needed money for addressing societal ills and inequities.

- Inheritance taxes prevent the spendthrift and lazy from maintaining a decadent lifestyle and encourages individual hard work and thrift.
- From a utilitarian perspective, more people benefit from an inheritance tax than are harmed by it.

In contrast, the Bible teaches that leaving an inheritance to one's descendants is not only permitted (Genesis 15:1–3) but is a good thing (Proverbs 13:22), and possibly an obligation on parents (2 Corinthians 12:14). It is also considered to be a tragedy when there is nothing left for one's descendants to inherit (Ecclesiastes 5:13–14). Numbers 27:8–11 provides direction for leaving an inheritance to other family members when there are no immediate children to receive the inheritance. This passage speaks of a single son or daughter inheriting, but this does mean that there was a prohibition against leaving an inheritance to multiple sons and daughters—which is viewed as a legitimate option (Numbers 36:2; Job 42:15; Proverbs 13:22; Luke 12:13–15), presumably in accordance with the testator's will.

6. Christianity provides meaning and purpose for life

The Bible identifies work as a means for a person to glorify God and to provide meaning in his life. Work is innately a good thing, since God himself works—by creating and then by providentially governing and sustaining his creation. In his whole being, man was created to work—he was given a mind to work from, a body to work with, and a world to work in and on.

The appointment of work for man is not the result of sin and the curse on sin; mankind in paradise was not exempt from work. Productive work was given to man as a mandate and as a blessing, not something to be avoided or shunned. In the state of perfection work, and particularly the physical labour mentioned in Genesis 2:15, was challenging and delightful without being wearying. Man was not created to be idle. This is why we innately despise the 'idle rich' (the ancient aristocrat and the modern playboy), while at the same time envying them because of our souls' propensity to sin.

Consuming without contributing, partaking without producing, and eating and drinking without earning and diligence, are contrary to the created nature of man. We need to work, because:

- God appointed productive employment as part of our created nature.
- Life without a productive purpose becomes life without meaning.
- We must provide for our own and our family's needs (2 Thessalonians 3:10; 1 Timothy 5:8).
- Providing for the needs of others extends our focus beyond self.
- We gain true pleasure from doing a job well, for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31).
- Without cultivation, the natural world would run wild. Even before the sin of Adam, man was to keep (cultivate) the garden; now it is even more needed because of the decay man introduced through his sin (Romans 8:20–22).
- It demonstrates that we are sub-sovereigns over the creation (Genesis 1:26).

God's intention at the time of creation was for mankind to be employed in meaningful, productive, work. Governments, corporations, and labour unions often conspire to frustrate God's purposes. For example:

- Minimum wage laws make it difficult for employers to hire the unskilled.
- The able-bodied are compensated for not working with unemployment insurance and welfare disbursements, while jobs go unfilled and produce lies unharvested on farms because potential workers prefer to collect 'entitlements'.
- Restrictive laws and labour contracts make it so difficult for firms to change workers' jobs that they automate functions rather than hire workers.
- Manufacturers dissect jobs into highly specialized, dull, repetitive steps to increase productivity.
- Corporations expect dedication from their employees yet treat them as commodities which can be laid off at the whiff of an economic downturn and make no investment to retrain them with new skills.

- Unions with closed-shop agreements, make it difficult for companies to hire novices.
 - Unions and governments collude in restricting employment to those who carry particular credentials.
- All of these, and more, undermine God’s mandate for man to work productively for his own good and to glorify his God.

The work that Adam was assigned was to cultivate the garden (Genesis 2:15). From his efforts, he would have been able to partake of the fruit and crops that the garden would yield. He was to manage the garden so that its resources would not be neglected, dissipated, or spoiled; but rather made to flourish. This mandate remains ours. Through diligent husbandry, we are to establish order and productivity in the physical realm that God has placed under our care.

The work that man was originally assigned to do included physical labour. This type of work is generally scorned today. If a person does not have a university degree or does not work in a profession, with a computer, or with his ‘mind’ he is considered by many in our society to be doing something less significant. Yet, it was physical labour, given to man in the state of innocence, that was deemed by God to be the most meaningful and fulfilling form of work. When we understand God’s design for mankind, we realize that the sense of accomplishment that we receive from setting out a row of seedlings, completing a fine brick wall, or installing a well-made cabinet easily exceeds the financial rewards which the world associates with many jobs that often lead to stress, frustration, and burn-out. Although physical labour would be cursed later (Genesis 3:17), being made painful and difficult, it is still what mankind was designed for and will find most rewarding. The ideal form of work seems to be that which permits us to labour with our hands and exercises our minds as we bring order and beauty into this sin-stained world.

7. Christianity advances material prosperity

Systems such as socialism and communism (if applied consistently with their theoretical premises) breed envy, non-productive laziness, and economic decline. Where the Christian understanding of the importance of work, for the glory of God and the good of mankind, has been incorporated into a society’s ethos, the results have been an evident increase in material prosperity. The Christian work-ethic, and associated Biblical principles, has made our modern world.

Some people have observed that material prosperity appears to be dependent on key foundational concepts such as the rule of law and the right of individuals to own property. At a basic level, the command “You shall not steal” (Exodus 20:15; Deuteronomy 5:19) means that we are not to take anything that belongs to someone else without his permission. However, the existence of this command implies that individuals, families, or collections of persons (e.g., corporations), may own personal or real property, and own property exclusively. This fundamentally rules out any form of coerced collective ownership or initiatives to abolish the ownership of private property. God states that individual people are permitted to own real property—land and buildings (Leviticus 25:10; Acts 5:4)—and personal property—movable objects, whether animate or inanimate (Exodus 22:4, 7–8; Hebrews 10:34). He also states that stealing real property (Deuteronomy 19:14; 1 Kings 21) or personal property (Romans 13:9; Ephesians 4:28; Titus 2:10) is a sin.

The right for individuals to own property is important for societal prosperity, for at least the following reasons:

- *The problem of communal ownership.* In 1833, William Lloyd, an English economist, published a pamphlet describing a hypothetical example of over-use of a common pasture by cattle herders. Each herder could benefit from adding an additional animal, but all would suffer as the pasture was depleted. The concept he described has become known as the ‘tragedy of the commons’ and can be applied to other shared resources such as the atmosphere, radio frequencies, fish stocks, highways, health care or welfare services, and even an office refrigerator. Any resource that has value that is not owned by an

individual, and for which there is no usage charge to control or limit access, becomes a potential candidate for abuse by those who can benefit from the over-use of the resource. An individual has an incentive to overuse resources produced by others and little incentive to contribute to the production of resources that will be used by others. Thus, the existence of private property is necessary to address human selfishness.

- *Pride of ownership.* Even if a person pays to use property (e.g., renting an automobile or a dwelling unit), he has less incentive to maintain the property than if he owned it. Humans generally don't care about the property that is owned by others or by a collective entity. Thus, private ownership is necessary in order to engender a spirit of responsibility in mankind.
- *Ownership provides incentives for improvement.* When a person owns a house, he has an incentive to maintain it and to make improvements that increase the value of his property—he makes an investment in it. Likewise, ownership of other things provides similar incentives. For example, a person who owns all or a portion of a company works directly to make that company more innovative, efficient, productive, and profitable, in order to improve the stock price and his investment. This is demonstrated by the difference usually seen in the customer service experiences and financial performance between privately-owned, publicly-owned, or government-owned companies providing a similar service.
- *Ownership engenders prosperity.* The most prosperous nations throughout the ages have been those which have respected the God-given right for people to own private property. The more prosperous nations have fewer people who live at or below subsistence-level. These nations are also the ones that have individuals who have been able to supply resources for pursuits beyond providing for the necessities of life, such as advanced education and the arts.

Societies and nations espousing the Biblical principles of the rule of law and of private ownership have had the resources to make advancements in other areas including education, science [considered in the next section], technology, and the arts. They are also the societies and nations which have demonstrated a true understanding of what it means to be stewards of the earth which God has placed under mankind as sub-sovereigns (Genesis 1:26, 28). These societies and nations do not endorse the destruction of the resources (e.g., hunting animal species to extinction, polluting rivers and the atmosphere, denuding large swaths of land through clear cutting) which God has provided to us, but the wise use of them.

Christians (following the OT model, e.g., Deuteronomy 6:6–7; Proverbs 1:8) have placed a priority on providing education for their children. Thus, Christian individuals, collectives of Christian parents, and church leaders, have been instrumental in providing educational opportunities, such as creating home-schooling curricula, founding Sunday Schools, establishing private elementary schools and high schools (e.g., as part of missionary endeavours), and founding universities—such as Oxford (1096; motto: “The Lord is my light”), Cambridge (1209; motto: “From here, light and sacred draughts”), Harvard (1636; motto: “Truth for Christ and the Church”), and Yale (1701; motto: “Light and truth”). Christians have consistently viewed providing education for both males and females (boys and girls) to be important so that they can read the Bible and contribute to societal advancement.

While many technological advancements have been made by those who did not adhere to Biblical principles (e.g., levers, screws, metal smelting, windmills, brick making, optical lenses, paper, etc.), it is evident that the most significant technological advancements of the past millennium have been developed within the context of the ‘Christian West’. A key example is the invention of a practical printing process, with reusable movable type and a screw-press, invented by Johannes Gutenberg (beginning in 1439). His most well-known printed publication was the Latin Bible, with the first edition appearing in 1455. His inventive efforts resulted in an explosion of printed communications leading to texting on a smart phone today. Other examples of technological advancements arising from within the ‘Christian West’ include the harnessing of electricity, steam and internal combustion engines, telegraph and telephone communication, radio transmission, automobiles, airplanes, anaesthesia, lightbulbs, vaccines and antibiotics, lasers, simi-conductors, personal computers, and the internet and world-wide-web,

Developments in literature, music, and the visual arts within the ‘Christian West’ (but not necessarily by professing Christians) are also evident. A few examples include Dante Alighieri’s *Divine Comedy*, Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, and Shakespeare’s plays; music composed by J. S. Bach, Handel, Mozart, and Beethoven; and Leonardo da Vinci’s *The Last Supper* and the *Mona Lisa*, Albrecht Durer’s woodcuts, and Michelangelo’s *David* and the Sistine Chapel ceiling. Renaissance and early post-Renaissance art has provided a standard and legacy which has enriched the world.

Nations which were founded on Biblical principles have contributed more to material prosperity and have provided more significant benefits for mankind than any other nations in the history of the world

8. Christianity provides the foundation for operational science

Much has been written on why the principles of operational science arose out the European Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Reformation, and not out of countries which espoused beliefs founded upon superstitions and fatalism.^{1, 2, 3, 4} Most “of the founders of our modern branches of science were Christians who believed the Bible.”⁵ And, modern science (including medical science) was founded on Biblical principles.⁶

Simplifying greatly, Christianity provides the foundation for operational science, because it espouses at least the following relevant principles:

- God is not capricious, as are the mythical gods.
- Chance or fate does not rule the universe; God does.
- The inanimate realm (including biological entities) is not part of one cosmic organism with a super ‘mind’.
- Mankind is a separate created entity, not part of an evolutionary continuum of life (1 Corinthians 15:39).
- The universe operates under ‘laws’ governing nature (Genesis 1:14-19; 8:22) established by God, which demonstrate universe-wide regularity, repeatability, and replicability in our experience of natural phenomena.
- Mankind has been given a privilege (Proverbs 25:2) to explore and understand how the universe, under god’s providential governance, operates.
- Mankind has been given a responsibility by God to address the consequences of the curse on the created realm, resulting from Adam’s sin (Genesis 1:26).

9. Christianity encourages selfless service

From the 1st century onward, Christians have shown a marked concern for helping those who are suffering from privation and disease. For example, the Apostle Paul commends the congregation in Corinth for their willingness to make contributions for a famine relief effort in Palestine (1 Corinthians 16:1–4; 2 Corinthians 8–9). The Bible teaches that caring for the truly needy—the deserving poor, including sojourners, orphans, and widows—is required and God-honouring (Leviticus 19:9–10; 23:22; Deuteronomy 15:7–11; 24:19–22; 1 Timothy 5:9–11; James 1:27). Also, most people in the West, even if not Christians, have a sense of what is meant by the term “a good Samaritan”, which is derived from what Jesus teaches about how people should behave toward one another in emergency situations (Luke 10:25–37).

¹ Jonathan Sarfati, [Biblical roots of modern science - creation.com](http://Biblical%20roots%20of%20modern%20science%20-%20creation.com)

² James Hannam, [How Christianity Led to the Rise of Modern Science | Christian Research Institute \(equip.org\)](http://How%20Christianity%20Led%20to%20the%20Rise%20of%20Modern%20Science%20|%20Christian%20Research%20Institute%20(equip.org))

³ Sam Haselby, [How Protestantism influenced the making of modern science | Aeon Essays](http://How%20Protestantism%20influenced%20the%20making%20of%20modern%20science%20|%20Aeon%20Essays)

⁴ Eric V. Snow, [Christianity: A Cause of Modern Science? | The Institute for Creation Research \(icr.org\)](http://Christianity%20-%20A%20Cause%20of%20Modern%20Science%20?%20|%20The%20Institute%20for%20Creation%20Research%20(icr.org))

⁵ [Creation scientists - creation.com](http://Creation%20scientists%20-%20creation.com)

⁶ Jonathan Sarfati, [Biblical roots of modern science - creation.com](http://Biblical%20roots%20of%20modern%20science%20-%20creation.com)

During the Middle Ages, monasteries opened hospitals, hospices and alms houses to care for sick, dying, and destitute. For example, an early hospital (in the 6th century) was built at Monte Cassino in Italy by Benedict. Many monastic communities followed Benedict's example and built hospitals. The first hospitals in North America were established by Christians (e.g., Hôtel-Dieu de Montréal, in 1645, and the Pennsylvania Hospital, the first general hospital, in 1751). Christians also founded innumerable street missions, such as the Salvation Army, which provided meals and beds for the destitute and homeless, orphanages, and local and international relief organizations.

Based on Biblical principles (e.g., that kidnapping is a capital crime before God; Exodus 21:16), Christians such as William Wilberforce (1759–1833) in England were instrumental in bringing an end to the slave trade, while others participated in the operation of the 'underground railroad' in the 19th century which funnelled runaway slaves out of the southern US states to the northern states and into Canada.

A fundamental tenet of Christianity is that those who have been saved from their sins by faith in Jesus are to serve others (Romans 13:8–10; Ephesians 2:8–10).

Today many (most) of the initiatives founded by Christians which were funded by voluntary donations have now been subsumed by governments which fund similar services out of (coerced) tax revenues—e.g., hospitals taken over by government agencies, welfare services, universal healthcare, unemployment insurance programs, and homeless shelters.

10. Christianity offers the only solution to mankind's essential problem

Most people think and claim that they are morally all right. However, they would also state that other people are not as morally good as they should be—the evidence is too pervasive to state otherwise—gang violence, homelessness, drug addictions, robbery, murders, internet and telephone scams, etc.

Explanations for why people do bad things include envy, greed, selfishness, pride, and lust. However, we can ask why people display these kinds of traits. When we explore deeper, explanations are given such as people do bad things because of their growing up in a bad environment and receiving a poor education, being the victims of poverty, or as a result of poor parenting. But 'environment' cannot explain why people do bad things. This is easy to validate, since a one-year-old child in any cultural and social setting, regardless of the situation and status (e.g., wealth or education) of his or her parents displays bad traits such as greed, selfishness, anger, and rebellion against parental authority. Again, we need to dig deeper. At root, there appear to be only three possible explanations for why people do bad things: 1) It is just the way things are. This isn't really an answer. 2) Evolutionary adaptations. No one can prove that doing bad things is good for survival. 3) Adam and Eve's rebellion against God.

Mankind's essential problem is that since Adam and Eve questioned God's authority over them and chose to disobey God (Genesis 3:1–7), every person born since (other than Jesus) has had an in-built impulse to do bad things. The Bible refers to this as sin.

As the account of Adam and Eve's sin against God unfolds, we read that God reached out to mankind (Genesis 3:8–9) and offered a solution through a redeemer who would defeat sin and death (Genesis 3:15). Thus, the solution to mankind's problem is not found in religion, but in a person—Jesus Christ.

Christianity alone among all religions, philosophical systems, and ethical programs offers a solution to the problem of sin. The solution is:

1. Acknowledge your need of salvation from sin
 - For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)
 - Behold, all souls are mine; ... the soul who sins shall die. (Ezekiel 18:4)
 - It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment. (Hebrews 9:27)
2. Acknowledge your own inability to save yourself
 - For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8–9)
3. Repent of your personal sins and be born again
 - Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy. (Proverbs 28:13)
 - Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out. (Acts 3:19)
 - If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)
 - Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” (John 3:7–8)
4. Believe in Jesus Christ as God who became a man and died on the cross and rose from the dead
 - Without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. (Hebrews 11:6)
 - In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. (John 1:1–5)
 - For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)
 - For I delivered to you as of first importance ... that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. (1 Corinthians 15:3–4)
 - Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved. (Acts 16:31)
 - And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)

Christians do not impose belief on other people. They present the solution to mankind’s essential problem with suasion and compassion and depend on God the Holy Spirit to bring those whom he is saving into his household.

11. Christianity offers true hope and joy

Before the arrival of Christianity, the nations in the Roman empire, other than Jews who believed God’s word in the Torah, Prophets, and Writings (i.e., the Old Testament), did not live with hope or an expectation of a better future. Rather, they generally exhibited constant doubts, despondency, and despair that was driven by a pessimistic fatalism. Paul refers to this situation when he says that those who were formerly unbelieving Gentiles had been without hope (Ephesians 2:11–12). A similar hopelessness, driven by pagan fatalism, pervades the false religions of the world today.

When people turn to Jesus Christ as their saviour they begin to live in hope. Their hope is founded on the truth that God (not the fates) controls everything and is working all things for his glory and for the good of

his people (Romans 8:28). Christians believe the promises of God, for example that he will provide for their temporal needs (Matthew 6:25–34). Even when confronted with temporal difficulties, Christians believe that they have a glorious future ahead of them in the everlasting next life, which makes anything that they experience now a light momentary affliction (2 Corinthians 4:16–18). Where there is true hope, true joy follows. Where there are hope and joy there is an overflowing of unceasing cheerful service for God and for other people.

Conclusion

When Paul and Silas were in Thessalonica, the opponents of Christianity dragged some of the believers before the city authorities, with the charge that, “These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also.” (Acts 17:6) Christianity is a world-changing force with great value for humanity. It provides the message of salvation from sin and provides a foundation upon which those who are true believers can build functional families, institutions, societies, and civilizations while they wait for the restoration of all things when Jesus returns and replaces this sin-cursed realm with a new heavens and earth (2 Peter 3:13)—a new sinless paradise which will last forever.