



THE CULTURAL FRUIT OF CHRISTIANITY: CELEBRATION

BACK IN THE 1970S, when Volkswagen, Toyota, Sony, and a host of other German and Japanese products were coming to dominate American markets, a wag observed that the best thing a country could do was to lose a war to the United States. Whether through the Marshall Plan of European reconstruction, NATO's protection against Warsaw Pact aggression, or the democratization of Japan, "defeated nations" were helped to flourish economically.

Whatever America's virtues or shortfalls, there is a far powerful, analogous point to be made in the spiritual realm. There is nothing which blesses a nation so much as voluntary, glad surrender to the King of kings. When Jesus becomes Lord of a great many citizens, the cultural fruit is undeniable.

THE FRUIT OF CONVERSION

When someone is born again, he or she exhibits new appetites, passions, distastes, directions, and resolve. Family members and associates notice the difference, and the transformation contributes to the case for Christianity. Of course other conversions result in better behavior. When a drug-dealing gang leader joins the Nation of Islam in prison, he may well show gains in sobriety, sexual morals, and circumspection in speech. This alone does not prove the validity of Islam. First, there is no substitute for truth. But also one's performance must be taken as a whole. Has he gained ground in grooming and punctuality but lost ground in his treatment of Jews? Of course the same could be asked for any religious group. Has the conversion of people in the group made them more of a blessing to society? A look at Louis Farrakhan would suggest that the Black

Muslim ideal is less than ideal, and one would be more inclined to suspect than trust his followers.

That is not the case for genuine Christian converts, and accounts of their transformation provide material for the apologist.

Billy Sunday

Within a month of his birth in 1862, Billy Sunday lost his father to pneumonia, and the family struggled for survival. Finally his mother was forced to send him and his brother to orphan homes, first near Council Bluffs, Iowa, and then to Davenport, Iowa. Eventually he distinguished himself in sports and made it to professional baseball, where he signed with the Chicago White Stockings, where he had moderate success. He was an extraordinarily fast runner, becoming the first man to circle the bases in 14 seconds. But his life was empty.

On a Sunday afternoon in 1886, after having a few beers with his baseball buddies and sitting out on the curb, Billy heard a gospel mission band playing what he described as “the gospels hymns I used to hear my mother sing back in the log cabin in Iowa.” . . . He left his buddies and went into the Pacific Garden Mission in Chicago where he became a born-again Christian. Billy continued to play major league baseball for five more years but never again on Sunday. Sundays he spent working for the Young Men’s Christian Association.¹

In 1888 Billy Sunday was traded to Pittsburgh, where the papers were as impressed as much with his character as with his prowess on the field.

The Pittsburgh Press reported that Billy and his former White Stockings teammate, Abner Dalrymple, shared a room on a quiet street in Allegheny city and that their presence in the neighborhood was likely to alter the public’s perception of professional baseball players, for according to the paper, “two quieter or more gentlemanly men in any line of business it would be hard to find.”²

The same paper reprinted an article from the *Chicago Interocean*, one that said the following:

Chicago sends to Pittsburgh[h] one of its best and most exemplary ball players, a young man of irreproachable habits and morals, by name William Sunday, who used to chase after sky-scraping [*sic*] flies and daisy-destroying grounders for the White Stocking team and never utter a “cuss word” when the ball slipped through his fingers; who under no circumstances dallied with red liquor nor looked upon beer except with abhorrence; who knew not the taste of “the weed” in any form whatever; who played good ball on week days and attended church and Bible class on the Sabbath; who ran bases with such race-horse speed that a two-bagger usually landed him on third.³

A couple of weeks later *The Press* added fresh commentary of its own:

Billy Sunday's consistent walk in the straight and narrow path which leads to life everlasting has already won him a host of friends among the church-going people of the North Side. The roughest ball player on the diamond respects his scruples and will stifle an oath in his presence. If caught, unwittingly, they have been known to apologize in a shame-faced manner for their language. He usually acts as a peacemaker in factional contests, but when the war becomes too hot will quietly slip away. It is his unpretentions [*sic*] manner more than anything else that has won their respect. More like him would be a credit to any club in the country, even if they did not possess his ability.⁴

Then

In 1891, despite being offered \$400 a month by the Philadelphia Phillies and \$500 a month by the Cincinnati Reds, Billy took a job as the secretary of the religious department at the Chicago YMCA at a monthly salary of \$83.33. In 1894 the Pittsburgh Pirates offered him \$2,000 a month, but instead Sunday became the advance man for evangelist J. Wilbur Chapman for \$40 a week.⁵

To be sure, Sunday later became wealthy, for the crowds and offerings at his revival meetings were enormous. He bought "fashionable clothes" and "stylish cars" and enjoyed "a rural retreat in the Hood River country of Oregon." But he was also charitable, donating, for instance, his entire offering from the April 1917 New York meeting (\$120,500) to the "war work of the YMCA and Red Cross." Next year he "donated the entire free-will offering from the Chicago crusade, more than \$54,000, to the Pacific Garden Mission." (In those days, the average worker made \$14,000 a year.) He was also a tither.⁶

THE FRUIT OF REVIVAL

When the Spirit of God moves in extraordinary ways to save souls and reform the churches, the nations are beneficiaries. Evidence of this fact is seen in the impact of these great movements of God.

The British and American Awakenings of the 1740s

Canadian theologian and historian J. Wesley Bready observed:

Without revolution or bloodshed the Evangelical Revival, of which Wesley was the central and inspiring prophet, abolished both the slave trade and slavery through all British domains—the greatest single social triumph in all modern history. By various pioneering means, this same Movement laid deeply and well the foundations of England's free and popular education. Through the devoted labors of Wesley, John Howard and Elizabeth Fry, it humanized the Anglo-Saxon prison system and penal code. . . . It raised up Lord Shaftesbury as "Emancipator of the Industrial Worker," and Dr. Bernardo as "Emancipator of the Outcast Child." Not least, it created the great and unparalleled philanthropic movement of the nineteenth century—a movement which only the cynic will ignore. Finally, it inspired a series of important world-wide organizations including the Sunday

School movement, the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor, the Y.M.C.A., the Y.W.C.A., the British and American Bible Societies, the Salvation Army, and many more.⁷

J. Edwin Orr's Chronicles

Picking up on these phenomena, J. Edwin Orr, the great chronicler of revival, was ever ready to note the social impact, the cultural fruit, of awakenings. He penned a number of books focusing on particular revivals, beginning with the evangelical revivals of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. He writes of the crusading efforts of key evangelicals—John Wesley and William Wilberforce against slavery; John Howard and Elizabeth Fry for prison reform; Theodore Fliedner and Florence Nightingale for better medical care; Lord Shaftesbury, John Wood, and Richard Oastler for the improvement of working conditions and against the use of child labor; James Mackintosh and Arthur Broome against animal cruelty; and throughout the world, as William Carey fought “widow burning” (*suttee*) in India, the Moravians established a leper colony in South Africa, where David Livingstone also provided medical care.⁸

Thanks to Orr, the following presents a closer look at the transformative touch of two of these revivals:

The 1850s prayer revival. Prompted by the American prayer revival, initiated by Jeremiah Lanphier in a Dutch Reformed church in Manhattan in the fall of 1857, the British experienced their own outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the late 1850s. It included these manifestations:

- In Ulster a man rose to declare himself “a vile sinner,” “the profligate of Broughshane,” and “a servant of the devil,” led by “the spirit of the barley.” He admitted that he had “brought [his] wife and family to beggary” but that now he had reformed by the grace of Christ.⁹
- In Cardiff, Wales, “a remarkable work of the Spirit” was powerful in “affecting public morals and bringing hundreds to the house of prayer, so much so that a town councilor (Anglican) of long experience testified that police cases were dwindling and a detective added that Cardiff had become a different place.”¹⁰
- In Lowestoft, Suffolk, police arrests for drunkenness had dropped from 120 to 20 nightly.¹¹
- In Wellington, Somerset, “a notorious gambler gathered together his dice and cards, and told his wife that he was about to play his best game, and threw them into the fire. A number of cockfighters beheaded their birds and ate the fowls for dinner. Poachers and prize-fighters likewise repented.”¹²

- In Belfast “certain prostitutes confessed that they were first made to consider an amended life by the falling off in business,” and “the Rev. John Venn of Hereford quoted a Belfast policemen who saw a body of fourteen prostitutes making their way to a House of Refuge, the result of a visit to a prayer meeting.”¹³
- From 1855 to 1861, there was a drop in annual criminal convictions in Ulster, from 889 to 593.¹⁴
- A “Revival School of Christian Philanthropists” emerged, “endeavouring to go straight to the heart of the slums with practical Samaritanism” and “numberless philanthropic institutions—homes, asylums, refuges, brigades, schools—were founded in all parts of the country.”¹⁵

Of course there were foes and detractors.¹⁶ When Irish Presbyterian moderator William Gibson wrote *The Year of Grace*, celebrating the revival, Rev. Isaac Nelson responded with a book of his own, *The Year of Delusion: A Review of “The Year of Grace,”* suggesting that Gibson might well have named his book *The Year of Blowing Our Trumpet*. Nelson, in turn, faced a polemic, penned by Rev. T. S. Woods, *The Delusion of the Rev. I. Nelson*, calling his critique “a bilious misrepresentation of the Revival” and “a low, vulgar libel on those who believe in it.”

One critic noted that instances of public drunkenness increased in Belfast during the revival—from 2,539 cases in 1858 to 3,112 in 1859. The revivalists responded that this was due to “the 40,000 Roman Catholics who continued to drink freely” and “that none of the inebriates was a convert of the Revival.” Furthermore *The British Standard* reported that in the city of Derry there were 100,000 Presbyterians, but “not one drunken person called himself a Presbyterian.”

Others pointed to the continued slave-holding of some Americans involved in the revival but ignored the antislavery work of revivalist Charles Finney. And so on it went. Still, few can deny the generally salubrious effect and the striking conversion of thousands. Certainly British Prime Minister Lloyd George praised the evangelical revival, which, in his words, “improved the condition of the working classes in wages, hours of labour and otherwise.” And of course the Salvation Army resulted from these works of God, as did the YMCA.¹⁷

The revival spread to other continents, with similar results. In Kerala, India, “it reformed the lives of drunkards, of deceivers and extortioners, and brought about a restitution of property wrongly acquired.”¹⁸ And the flood of missionaries flowing from the revival in the United States and Britain had great impact on the developing world, as in Mexico, in 1865. There Melinda Rankin founded a school in Monterrey, and in subsequent years her colleagues established schools “in rural areas, the first ray of hope for the mestizos in many a neglected district. . . . The schools produced many a leader in national life.”¹⁹

The Welsh revival of the early twentieth century. In answer to the prayers of many, revival fell on Wales in 1904. It had happened once before, in 1859, when the influence of the New York Prayer Revival spread to Wales, generating as many as 100,000 conversions in this small country. But by century's end the spiritual fires had dimmed, and the Welsh were much in need of the Spirit's fresh touch. Stirred by the preaching of Evan Roberts and Seth Joshua, who cried out, "Bend us, Oh Lord," the nation saw 85,000 professions of faith that year. And the social impact was considerable: "The crime rate dropped, old debts were repaid, ale houses stood empty, and work improved in the mines."²⁰

Always the fastidious and sympathetic chronicler, J. Edwin Orr traced its moral impact around the world, as the work of God spread out to the nations:

- "After the 1905 New Year, the Swansea [Wales] County Police Court announced to the public that there had not been a single charge for drunkenness over the holiday weekend, an all-time record."²¹
- "The register . . . at Somerset House in London showed a decrease of illegitimate births when measured against the one per cent increase of population, this being true of not only England but the other parts of the United Kingdom."²²
- In Norway, "Old debts were settled and conscience money was paid up: misappropriated articles were restored, intoxication was abandoned by many, and a purer moral atmosphere was noted by observers of social conditions."²³
- In Michigan a regional Methodist journal reported, "So completely have the principles of righteousness permeated the common thought and feeling that even the long tolerated forms of stock gambling and swindling rate-methods have come in for exposure and sharp censure."²⁴
- In Malawi, "The brave but bloodthirsty Ngoni warriors were learning to live in peace with other tribes, also moved by Christian teaching."²⁵
- At a Christian and Missionary Alliance orphanage in the Indian state of Gujarat, "Sixty rupees of conscience money were restored, as well as stolen articles from blankets to pins. The head carpenter returned ten stolen rupees."²⁶
- In the West China city of Kiating, "idolatry, theft, murder, adultery, gambling, opium smoking, disobedience to parents and hatred of employers, quarrelsomeness, lying, cheating, and the like were confessed for forgiveness."²⁷

THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF MISSIONARIES

As Christian missionaries have fanned out across the world, they have brought "the whole counsel of God," which includes not only the way to heaven

but also the way to walk on earth. Of course multiculturalists are often upset that many of “the old ways” were supplanted, sometimes by harsh means, as with children in Indian schools. But the impact has been overwhelmingly good.

On the international scene some unbelievers tend to defame missionaries, calling them tools of colonialism, insensitive to the national cultures and so on, but any fair treatment of these courageous saints can only leave one with the impression that they have elevated the condition of those they have tried to reach.

Africa

Missionaries established and pioneered schools everywhere, and these schools became the nurseries for change: they sowed the Gospel, they sowed Christianity and perhaps unawares and unintentionally they sowed also the new revolution. It is the young men and women in these schools who assimilated not only religion but science, politics, technology and so on. . . . Through missionaries too came European medicine and knowledge of hygiene which, however, had a slow influence at the beginning. In addition to the physical impact, the new medicine prepared people psychologically to become more receptive to western culture and education. Eventually the new form of medical care and knowledge began to reduce infant mortality and put under control diseases like small-pox, malaria and stomach ailments which had always been the main killers of African peoples.²⁸

Indonesia

Early missionaries to Indonesia encountered a range of ruinous behaviors, “not only head hunting, continuous warfare between villages, slavery, and gambling, but also the custom of marrying at a young age, giving dowries, slaughtering large numbers of animals at social events such as funerals, and cock fighting.”²⁹

Under constant pressure from the missionaries, in 1913,

the government took stern action against head hunting, acts of revenge, burying people alive and infanticide. In the same year Fr. Jos van de Kolk developed the idea of a model *kampung* (village) in Okaba. In 1914 Merauke also got its model kampung. The aim of their idea was to enforce a radical change in the life of the Marind-anim, in order to save them from extinction by the venereal disease granuloma.³⁰

They sought to end the absurd “tradition that many male members of the husband’s clan had the duty to have intercourse with the bride on the first night after the marriage. The venereal disease, distributed through this ritual, led to infertility due to a rupture of the uterus.”³¹

Then the Great Awakening came in 1915 and lasted until 1930. “In the realms of family-life and worship there were important developments, like the

acceptance of monogamy, greater freedom for women and children, and cultural developments like the songs of the awakening.”³²

Individual Missionaries

Any number of individual missionaries can be credited with enhancing the living conditions of those they sought to reach with the gospel. Here are a few:

St. Patrick of Ireland. Called back to Ireland, where he was once a slave, Patrick (now known as St. Patrick) became a missionary. The island was rife with warfare, with the Druid faith, which called for human sacrifice, and with pagan tribalism, where clan leaders were sometimes inaugurated with public acts of bestiality. As the Christian faith spread throughout the land, many devoted themselves to lives of sacrifice. Though they were not called to be “Red Martyrs,” as were early Christians whose blood was shed in Rome, some became “Green Martyrs,” who devoted their lives to copying Scripture in ascetic quarters and “White Martyrs,” who took classical and biblical learning to sections of Europe which had lost it.³³

David Wilkerson of New York. Touched by a courtroom drawing in *Life* magazine, Pennsylvania pastor David Wilkerson headed into New York City to see what he could do to bring the gospel to the city’s violent youth offenders. Moving into a grungy office on Staten Island, he started a “program aimed at setting youngsters free,” a program which is today called Teen Challenge. In 1959 his work saw great gain in power when a gang leader named Nicky Cruz came to Christ and led his followers to do the same. Eventually Wilkerson established Times Square Church, which continues strong to this day.³⁴

Joe Church of Rwanda. When a terrible famine was tormenting Rwanda in 1928–29, Anglican missionary Joe Church wrote in his newsletter that “one cannot go far in any direction without seeing corpses lying by the roadside.” He wrote an appeal that appeared as a full-page article in a newspaper published in neighboring Uganda. The British press, including *The Times*, picked up the article, as did the *Cambridge Daily News*, which ran the headline, “Cambridge Man’s Lone Hand in Famine-Stricken Area.”

The matter surfaced in both the English and Belgian Parliaments, and “in London a steady stream of gifts came in from *The Times* offices to the CMS [Church Missionary Society],” continuing for months. Belgium transferred doctors from their colony in the Congo and committed a large sum of money to road improvement and transport for relief.³⁵

William Carey of India. William Carey, pioneer missionary to India, established the Serampore Press, which “had issued before his death 212,000 copies of the Sacred Scriptures, in forty different languages—the vernacular tongues of about 330,000 of immortal souls.” Furthermore “His Sanskrit grammar

was the very first elementary work in this language that was published.”³⁶ But he not only paved the way for distribution of the gospel; he also applied Christ’s morals to the culture as one of the first to petition the East India Company to abolish the Indian practice of widow burning. Between 1815 and 1826, there were 7,154 occurrences in Bengal alone. As horrible as it was, many a widow went to her death convinced “that by this sacrifice she expiates the crimes of her husband, raises him from misery to happiness, and thereby earns the right to dwell with him 35,000,000 of years in a state of perfect felicity.”³⁷

David Livingstone of Africa. British missionary David Livingstone was early on repulsed by the slave trade in Africa, disgusted both by the Arabs who bought them and the Africans who sold them. “He spent many hours explaining to chiefs that ‘if they sell their fellows, they are like the man who holds the victim while the Arab performs the murder.’” In “two cool and lucid dispatches to the Foreign Secretary,” he argued for stiff blockades by the British navy and a string of coastal depots for freed slaves so the ships could return to station more promptly—policies which helped lead to the shutdown of Zanzibar’s slave market a month after his death.³⁸

DOMESTIC CHARITIES

At the close of Matthew 25, Jesus addressed those whom he said ignored him in his time of need. They asked, “Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or without clothes, or sick, or in prison, and not help You?” (v. 44). And he responded, “I assure you: Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for Me either” (v. 45). And the stakes could not be higher, for those who ignore the need are destined for “eternal punishment” (v. 46). (Of course the genuine disciple works more from love than fear.)

God’s call to be charitable extends back into the Old Testament, but Christ brought the teaching to its fullness. And throughout church history his people have been models of grace, as in these instances.³⁹

George Müller

Converted at 20 after some earlier run-ins with the law, George Müller became a remarkable trophy of God’s grace. Beginning as a church planter, he was led to begin an orphan ministry in Bristol, England, in 1836, one of which grew over the years to amazing size. At his retirement over 2,000 children were under his care. Müller is most remarkable for his reliance on prayer for provision. Time and again help appeared in the nick of time, as when prayer was said over empty plates, with food arriving at the last moment. And as one journal entry expressed it, “August 23. Today I was again without one single

penny, when [three shillings] was sent from Clapham, with a box of new clothes for the Orphans.”⁴⁰

The Clapham Church

Under the leadership of John Venn, England’s Clapham Church was notable for its evangelical enthusiasm and piety at the turn of the nineteenth century. But it was also a center for Christian social work through the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor, which Venn organized in 1799. The Society directed its aid to the industrious, “deserving poor” and did so methodically, with directors and “visitors” attending to the needy in the parish’s eight districts. They gave special attention to arresting the spread of disease and to the education of children.⁴¹

Jubilee Partners

Jubilee Partners, a Christian organization in northeast Georgia, is helping “Lost Boys of Sudan” settle in America. Orphaned by the tyrannical Islamic government in Khartoum, they fled southern Sudan for the relative safety of Ethiopia but were later forced by civil war to gather in Kenya. From there thousands have been flown to America where Christians have helped them with employment and education.⁴²

USA Today Charities

In its Christmas Eve 2007 issue, *USA Today* devoted a page to promoting 25 selected charities, “representing a broad range of interests including environment, health, animals, arts, education, human services and public benefits.” The page avoided explicitly Christian groups such as the Salvation Army and Samaritan’s Purse. Nevertheless many of the charities had Christian founders and connections—Big Brothers, Big Sisters (Ernest Coulter, addressing Central Presbyterian Church, New York City); America’s Second Harvest (John van Hengel, St. Mary’s Basilica, Phoenix); Habitat for Humanity (Disciples of Christ Millard Fuller, inspired by Southern Baptist Clarence Jordan); Special Olympics (Anne Burke, St. Simon the Apostle Church, Chicago); Ducks Unlimited (Joseph Knapp, son of Phoebe Knapp, who wrote the music to “Blessed Assurance,” and a member of John Street Methodist Church, New York City); Good Will Industries International (Methodist minister Edgar J. Helms, Boston); American Red Cross (Henry Dunant, from “a devout and charitable Calvinist family” in Geneva, Switzerland).

Welfare and Workfare

On the public policy front, law professor and columnist Stephen Carter has said that the church has a balanced influence, making sure that the destitute are rescued and the able are held accountable.

A widespread religious conviction that we must aid the poor will inevitably find its way into legislation, and so the nation will create welfare programs. A widespread religious conviction that long-term help is no substitute for hard work will inevitably find its way into legislation, and so welfare will evolve into workfare.⁴³

A Threat to “Progressives”

Harold O. J. Brown, longtime professor of theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Reformed Theological Seminary, has observed that the Christian record of charity is so distinguished and pervasive that it poses a threat to those who favor a paternalistic state:

In the so-called socialist, i.e., Communist, countries, Christian communities are rigidly prohibited from engaging in works of social welfare, because the government knows that the social ministry of the church has been one of its attractions from the dawn of Christianity and is determined that the people shall be beholden to the State alone. In the Western democracies, the welfare state has accomplished much the same thing by substitution rather than suppression. Christian social ethics appear unnecessary when, “All good things come of thee, O, State.”⁴⁴

SOBRIETY

Though there is disagreement among evangelicals over the morality and prudence of consuming beverage alcohol, there should be no dispute over the convictions that “wine is a mocker, beer is a brawler, and whoever staggers because of them is not wise” (Prov 20:1). Christian reform has often meant addressing the considerable problems associated with alcohol.

Prohibition

Though the Eighteenth Amendment of 1920 was repealed by the Twenty-first Amendment of 1933, and Prohibition suffered from a variety of problems including lax enforcement and the proliferation of organized crime, it had its salutary effects, often covered over or ignored by the media. Christians anticipated these benefits and so were prime crusaders for its institution—people such as revivalists Billy Sunday and Mordecai Ham and Christian women crusaders such as Francis Willard and Carry Nation, and organizations such as the Women’s Christian Temperance Union.

According to [Billy] Sunday, in July of 1905, temperance legislation went into effect in that city [Kansas City, KS] of 100,000. At the time, there were 250 saloons, 200 gambling halls, and 60 houses of prostitution. Within less than a year after Prohibition began, the benefits of the legislation were already quite apparent. The president of one of the city's major banks found that deposits had increased \$1.7 million and that 72 percent of the deposits were from men who had never saved a cent before. The pace of business accelerated, while court expenses decreased. The decrease in crime following Prohibition was so significant that the city canceled plans to expand its jail. The number of elderly committed to the poorhouse because their children squandered money that was needed to care for them decreased. The city had to employ eighteen additional teachers to instruct children between the ages of 12 and 18 who had not previously attended school because they were helping their drunken fathers take care of the family.⁴⁵

Pentecostals

Chilean philosophy professor Arturo Fontaine Talavera is director of the Center of Public Studies. While tracking the impact of evangelical/Pentecostal revival in Santiago, he was struck especially by the converts' rejection of alcohol. The man "stops drinking, orders his life, abandons old friends, partying, and women, stops spending wildly, renews his marriage on the basis of respect and love, becomes involved with the children, and takes part in domestic chores." Talavera concludes, "The change is so complete that it is difficult to believe; the evidence is overwhelming, however."⁴⁶

University of Southern California professor Donald E. Millar joins Talavera in appreciation for the impact of Pentecostalism, the benefits extending well beyond diminished interest in alcohol. "By avoiding alcohol, gambling, womanizing, and other such taboos, extremely poor people eventually have surplus capital that they can in turn use to get better education to their children and provide better health care for their families, and all this, in turn, may lead to upward social mobility."⁴⁷

THE REFORMATION OF MANNERS

Though the expression "reformation of manners" traditionally refers to the full range of Christian behavior, including the use of alcohol, here we speak more narrowly of clean speech and a tone of graciousness and dignity.

The Companies of Cornwall

When three companies of British soldiers were dispatched from Plymouth to Truro in Cornwall for duty in the winter of 1756, minister Samuel Walker jumped at the opportunity to extend the gospel ministry to them. At first they were reluctant to hear him preach, but with the encouragement of Walker's parishioners, "they soon became a large number." As things developed over a three-week period, "a full hundred of them came to [Walker's] house asking

what they must do [to be saved]”—and many were, with resultant change in barracks life. As Walker recounted, the new believers “and the others who never came near me in private, are plainly influenced, that a certain fear has restrained them from swearing and cursing, which, when they came hither, was universally their practice.” Furthermore “military punishments are grown much less frequent among them.”⁴⁸

The Georgia and Mississippi Brigades

J. William Jones’s chronicle of religion in the Confederate army, *Christ in the Camp*, details the effects of revival on the various units. For instance, when a notoriously dissolute captain in a Georgia brigade was converted, he told his troops, “Men, I have led you into many a battle, and you have followed me like men. Alas! I have led you into all manner of wickedness and vice, and you have followed me into this too. I have now resolved to change my course.” Virtually everyone in the unit was saved, and “those former ringleaders in every species of vice had become a centre of powerful influence for the religious good of their regiment and brigade.”⁴⁹

Then in a Mississippi brigade the new believers “solemnly resolved to fast one day in every week in order that they might send that day’s rations to the suffering poor of the city of Richmond.”⁵⁰ And Christian soldiers throughout the Confederacy could be seen after the battle,

going over the ground to hunt up and care for the wounded of the enemy—binding up their wounds as best they could, carrying them to the field-hospitals, and providing surgical attendance, sharing with them their scant rations, bringing them water, building brush shelters to protect them from the sun, and proving: “good Samaritans” indeed to men whom they had so lately met in the shock of battle.⁵¹

RACIAL JUSTICE

Because everyone is made in the image of God, discrimination on the basis of race is unconscionable, and the mistreatment of any people group is naturally the target of Christian reformers.

The Tappans

Arthur and Lewis Tappan were raised in Northampton, Massachusetts, where decades earlier Jonathan Edwards’s preaching stirred the Great Awakening in America. Their mother was converted in that revival, and she led her sons to cherish Christ and the spiritual life he brought. As wealthy men (the founders of the nation’s first credit rating agency, which became Dun & Bradstreet), the sons were active in what became known as the Second Great Awakening in America, and one strong application of their faith was establishment of the New

York Anti-Slavery Society in 1833. For their stance the brothers endured threats and vandalism, with a price on Arthur's head in several states. Nevertheless he was resolute: "You demand that I shall cease my anti-slavery labors. . . . I will be hung first." His brother Lewis, who served on the *Amistad* Committee, raising funds for the slaves' legal counsel, called slavery, "the worm at the root of the tree of Liberty. Unless killed the tree will die."⁵² Though it took a Civil War to abolish slavery, the moral basis for such a fight was being laid by men like the Tappans earlier in the century.⁵³

Ruby Nell Bridges

Immortalized in a Norman Rockwell painting, which shows her walking to school under the protection of federal marshals, Ruby Nell Bridges was a six-year-old black girl in the early days of court-ordered desegregation. Adults screamed obscenities at her as she passed by, and one even displayed a black doll in a coffin. One day her teacher saw her lips moving as she approached the school. She asked what Ruby was saying to the people gathered to heap scorn on her. She responded, "I wasn't talking to them. I was praying for them." She usually prayed in the car but had forgotten to do so that day. When she met the crowd, she began to petition God, "Please be with me . . . and be with those people too. Forgive them because they don't know what they are doing."⁵⁴

Bulgarian Orthodox Church

Though Bulgaria became a passive ally of Germany in World War II and subsequently passed anti-Jewish laws, all its Jews were saved, despite orders to round them up and ship them to extermination sites. In fact Bulgaria's Jewish population increased during the War. The reason was simple: Leaders of the nation's Orthodox Church stood up against persecution. For instance Metropolitan Kyril of the city of Plovdiv, threatened to lie on the railroad tracks if Jews were loaded onto trains headed for the death camps. And Metropolitan Stefan defied the government at several points, including refusal to close the churches when the state ordered it to suppress the spread of damning information about deportation schemes.⁵⁵

GRACE UNTO DEATH

The *Dorchester*

Midnight on February 3, 1943, a German torpedo ripped through the hull of the troop ship *Dorchester* in the North Atlantic. The ship sank in 27 minutes, and many of the soldiers on board were unprepared. Since their quarters were stuffy, they had come up on deck to sleep, leaving their life preservers below.

To save what lives they could, four chaplains—two Protestants, a Catholic, and a Jew—handed their own life preservers to desperate troops. Then they joined arms, prayed, recited Scripture, and sang as they went down with the ship. This was the Judeo-Christian ethic at work, an act honored with a commemorative stamp in 1948 and a special medal of heroism, granted by Congress in 1960.⁵⁶

The *Oryoku Maru*

In recounting his terrible experience on the Japanese “death ship,” the *Oryoku Maru*, on which 1,300 of 1,600 American POWs would die, Estel Myers remembers another chaplain who gave that others might live. “One chaplain consistently gave away his rations of food and water to the sick, telling the protesting corpsmen that he felt fine and would keep his next ration. But he would give the next one away, too, making the same promise until finally, after praying with the men on January 24, his weakened body gave out.”⁵⁷

Eric Liddell

Through the Academy Award-winning movie *Chariots of Fire*, many are familiar with the athletic skill and Christian devotion of Eric Liddell. But far fewer know that he died of a brain tumor as a missionary in a Japanese prison camp in China. Years later theologian Langdon Gilkey, a fellow prisoner of Liddell’s, described the Olympic champion’s grace under terrible conditions. He was often engaged with the youth in the game room, whether at chess, model boat-building, or square dancing—“absorbed, weary and interested, pouring all of himself into this effort to capture the minds and imaginations of those penned-up youths.” Gilkey continued, “In camp he was . . . lithe and springy of step and, above all, overflowing with good humour and love of life.”⁵⁸ When once a Canadian journalist asked Liddell whether he missed the limelight, Liddell replied, “Oh well, of course it’s natural for a chap to think over all that sometimes, but I’m glad I’m at the work I’m engaged in now.” He concluded, “A fellow’s life counts for far more at this than the other. Not a corruptible crown, but an incorruptible, you know.”⁵⁹

Betsie ten Boom

In her account of prison life in the Nazi death camp system, Dutch Protestant Corrie ten Boom tells of the death of her sister. As they toiled in Ravensbrück, wielding shovels outside in the rainy November cold, Betsie began to cough up blood as her temperature rose. The bare room set aside for sick call was dismal, but for Betsie, “it was simply a setting in which to talk about Jesus.” Everywhere she went, “Betsie spoke to those around her about His nearness and His yearning to come into their lives.” Corrie observed that, “as her body grew

weak, her faith seemed to grow bolder.” Indeed Betsie chided her sister for her negativity, explaining that sick call was “such an important place. . . . Some of these people are at the threshold of heaven!”⁶⁰

THE ARTS AND SCIENCES

A long list of prominent scientists were professing Christians, including Isaac Newton (physicist/founder of calculus), Nicholaus Copernicus (astronomer), Michael Faraday (founder of electromagnetics), Louis Pasteur (founder of bacteriology), and G. F. B. Riemann (founder of non-Euclidean geometry). The same could be said of inventors, such as George Washington Carver (crop rotation), Johannes Gutenberg (printing press), and Cyrus McCormick (mechanical reaper); and artists, from composers J. S. Bach and G. F. Handel to painters Leonardo DaVinci and Rembrandt van Rijn to literary figures Dante Alighieri and Flannery O’Conner.⁶¹

Northwestern University

One way to demonstrate the beneficial effects of Christianity is to uncover the background of something that is generally recognized by the unbelieving world as worthy or impressive. They may consider a particular institution, company, or municipality as a secular accomplishment, owing little or nothing to God; but a little research will show that the base on which things were laid was soundly and distinctively Christian.

For instance Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, is ranked among the top dozen “National Universities” by *U.S. News & World Report*. As the smallest school in the Big Ten, with fewer than 9,000 undergraduates where the other schools average over 30,000, it prides itself on being selective and challenging. Among its former students and faculty have been Nobel laureates in physics, economics, literature, medicine, and peace. And it is a thoroughly secular university.

But this was not always the case. The university seal provides a hint: There on the pages of an open book is written in Greek, “The Word, full of grace and truth,” a description of Jesus taken from John 1:14. In a ring circling the book are the Latin words for “Whatsoever things are true,” drawn from Phil 4:8. (This had been a university norm for centuries, as with Harvard, whose 1650 college seal bore the words, *In Christi Gloriam*.)⁶²

Driving around the town of Evanston, where Northwestern is located, one sees street signs with names such as Wesley and Asbury. Even a casual student of church history will recognize the honorees as Methodist divines, and a little research will show that there are more than a dozen such street titles.

Evanston Baptist Church (SBC) has developed a list of these street names and paired them with gospel statements from their namesakes. Many of them were associated with Northwestern University, which was founded and nurtured for over a century by Christians. From time to time the church runs an ad in *The Daily Northwestern* to acquaint students with this heritage and to present the gospel by association.⁶³ For instance, they read, among the thirteen statements:

We want prophets of the [prayer] closet as well as study; men whose hearts glow while their intellects shine: who feel deeply, as well as think profoundly; who experience as well as theorize: consecrated, as well as ordained: men, who walk with God and who are intrusted with his secrets: who go before the Church, and say, "Follow us as we follow Christ" (Randolph S. Foster, Northwestern University president, 1856–1860). . . . We thank Thee for the revelation of Thyself in Thy Son to take away all sin, in Thy Spirit to quicken every virtue, in Thy Word to dispel every superstition, in Thy Providence to protect from every peril (Charles H. Fowler, Northwestern University president, 1872–1876).

A SAMPLER

This is a particularly frustrating chapter to write since the available material is overwhelming. Book after book has been published on the cultural effects of Christianity. Some, such as Alvin Schmidt's *How Christianity Changed the World*,⁶⁴ trace the actual lines of influence (his chap. 4, for instance, shows how Christianity has elevated the status of women); others, like Robert Cowley's *What If*⁶⁵ speculate over what might have happened if Christ had not risen from the grave or Luther had been executed as a heretic. Some, like Leland Ryken's *Worldly Saints*⁶⁶ (about the Puritans) deal with the influence of a particular group of Christians; others, like D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe's *What If Jesus Had Never Been Born?*⁶⁷ address the sweep of history.

Kennedy and Newcombe also team up on a book entitled *What If the Bible Had Never Been Written?* where they connect Scripture to (a) society (greater health, marriage stability, respect for law, and productivity among regular churchgoers); (b) law (the Magna Carta, Blackstone's commentaries); (c) politics (separation of powers, abolitionism), (d) science (Johannes Kepler, Carl von Linnaeus, and George Washington Carver); (e) literature (Dante, Milton, and Dostoevsky); (f) missions (the Moravians to Pennsylvania and Hudson Taylor to China); (g) exploration (Leif Erickson and Christopher Columbus); and (h) everyday things (pretzels, the calendar, expressions such as "scapegoat" and "wolves in sheep's clothing," and "blind leading the blind"; place-names such as Corpus Christi and San Francisco; flags, such as those of Norway, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom).⁶⁸

One of the most intriguing books is Brook Larmer's *Operation Yao Ming*,⁶⁹ which traces China's basketball program back to the YMCA's missionary training school in Springfield, Massachusetts. It was there that James Naismith invented the game as a winter fitness program and the trainees took it around the world. The Chinese loved it, but most were too short of stature to compete on the international stage. Thus began a national program of matching tall men and women in hopes that their offspring could stand out on the court. Hence the emergence of Yao Ming.

Who knew? But such is the unintended reach of Christians determined to honor Christ's Great Commission.

Christopher Hitchens claims that "religion poisons everything." Actually the religion of Jesus Christ transforms everything for the better, from the seemingly trivial to the obviously grand.

Notes

- 1 Janice Beck Stock, *Amazing Iowa* (Nashville: Rutledge Hill/Nelson, 2003), 132.
- 2 Robert F. Martin, *Hero of the Heartland: Billy Sunday and the Transformation of American Society, 1862–1935* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002), 40.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 40.
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 Stock, *Amazing Iowa*, 132.
- 6 Martin, *Hero of the Heartland*, 60.
- 7 See J. Wesley Bready, *Faith and Freedom: The Roots of Democracy* (New York: American Tract Society, 1946).
- 8 J. Edwin Orr, *The Eager Feet: Evangelical Awakenings, 1790–1830*, chap. 25, "Social Outcome of Revival" (Chicago: Moody, 1975), 79–190.
- 9 J. Edwin Orr, *The Second Evangelical Awakening in Britain* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1949), 42.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 91–92.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 121.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 132.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 181.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 179.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 210.
- 16 See chap. 8, "Opposition to Revival" in Orr, *The Second Evangelical Awakening*, 172–83.
- 17 J. Edwin Orr, *The Flaming Tongue: The Impact of Twentieth Century Revivals* (Chicago: Moody, 1973), xi–xiii.
- 18 J. Edwin Orr, *The Fervent Prayer: The Worldwide Impact of the Great Awakening of 1858* (Chicago: Moody, 1974), 107.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 190.
- 20 See Kevin Adams and Emyr Jones, *A Pictorial History of Revival: The Outbreak of the 1904 Welsh Awakening* (Nashville: B&H, 2004).
- 21 Orr, *The Flaming Tongue*, 17.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 49.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 53.

- 24 Ibid., 98.
- 25 Ibid., 124.
- 26 Ibid., 152.
- 27 Ibid., 163.
- 28 John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Heinemann, 1989), 213.
- 29 Jan Sihar Aritonang and Karel Steenbrink, eds., *A History of Christianity in Indonesia* (Boston: Brill, 2008), 146.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 Ibid., 356.
- 32 Ibid., 608.
- 33 See Thomas Cahill, *How the Irish Saved Civilization: The Untold Story of Ireland's Heroic Role from the Fall of Rome to the Rise of Medieval Europe* (New York: Doubleday, 1995).
- 34 See David Wilkerson with John and Elizabeth Sherrill, *The Cross and the Switchblade* (New York: Random House, 1963).
- 35 Katharine Makower, *The Coming of the Rain: The Life of Dr. Joe Church, a Personal Account of Revival in Rwanda* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1999), 75–80.
- 36 G. Winfred Hervey, *The Story of Baptist Missions in Foreign Lands* (St. Louis: Chancy R. Barns, 1884), 41.
- 37 Ibid., 94–95.
- 38 Tim Jeal, *Livingstone* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1973), 303–5.
- 39 See www.kairosjournal.org. A number of stories featured are drawn from *Kairos Journal*, an online resource for pastors.
- 40 See Roger Steer, *George Müller: Delighted in God* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1975). See also George Müller, *A Narrative of Some of the Lord's Dealings with George Müller* (Muskegon, MI: Dust and Ashes, 2003).
- 41 See Michael Hennell, *John Venn and the Clapham Sect* (London: Lutterworth, 1958).
- 42 See Abraham Nhial and DiAnn Mills, *Lost Boy No More: A True Story of Survival and Salvation* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2004).
- 43 Mary E. Williams, ed., *Culture Wars: Opposing Viewpoints* (San Diego: Greenhaven/Thomson-Gale, 2003), 196.
- 44 Harold O. J. Brown, "Evangelicals and Social Ethics," in *Evangelical Affirmations*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry and Kenneth Kantzer (Grand Rapids: Academie, 1990), 268.
- 45 Martin, *Hero of the Heartland*, 113.
- 46 Arturo Fontaine Talavera, "Trends Toward Globalization in Chile," in *Many Globalizations: Cultural Diversity in the Contemporary World*, ed. Peter L. Berger and Samuel P. Huntington (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 252, 265–66, 271.
- 47 "The S Factor: A Conversation with Donald E. Miller," interview by Timothy Sato, *Books & Culture*, July/August, 2009, 11.
- 48 Tim Shenton, *A Cornish Revival: The Life and Times of Samuel Walker of Truro* (Faverdale, UK: Evangelical, 2003), 225.
- 49 Rev. J. William Jones, *Christ in the Camp or Religion in the Confederate Army* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle, 1887, 1986), 397–98.
- 50 Ibid., 398–99.
- 51 Ibid., 399.
- 52 Howard Jones, *Mutiny on the Amistad*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford, 1987), 39.
- 53 See Rebecca J. Winter, *The Night Cometh: Two Wealthy Evangelicals Face the Nation* (South Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1977).

- 54 See Ruby Bridges, Ruby Bridges Foundation Web site; www.rubybridges.org/story.htm (accessed August 16, 2010).
- 55 See Michael Bar-Zohar, *Beyond Hitler's Grasp: The Heroic Rescue of Bulgaria's Jews* (Holbrook, MA: Adams Media, 1998).
- 56 See the Web sites, <http://www.fourchaplains.org/story.html> and <https://www.homeofheroes.com/brotherhood/chaplains.html>.
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- 58 Langdon Gilkey, *Shantung Compound: The Story of Men and Women Under Pressure* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 192–93.
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- 61 See D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe, *What If Jesus Had Never Been Born?: The Positive Impact of Christianity in History* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1994); Alvin Schmidt, *Under the Influence: How Christianity Transformed Civilization* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001); John Woodbridge, ed., *More than Conquerors: Portraits of Believers from All Walks of Life* (Chicago: Moody, 1992); Dan Graves, *Scientists of Faith: Forty-Eight Biographies of Historic Scientists and Their Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996).
- 62 Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Founding of Harvard College* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1935), 250.
- 63 “Evanston’s Gospel Heritage,” *The Daily Northwestern*, September 23, 2010, 9.
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