

Something to Pray About

August 2014 – Cindy Sears

You are like light for the whole world...your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven.
—Matthew 5:14a, 16 GNT

What's So Good About Christianity?

Christians and Christianity get a lot of flak from the media nowadays. We have been blamed for all kinds of bigotry and injustice and exploitation in the world. Many people want to believe that science and religion are incompatible, that Christians are misogynistic and bigoted, and that we want to set up a theocracy and force people to abide by our faith's tenets and doctrines. They like to wail about how Christians have suppressed women or opposed scientific facts or the acquisition of knowledge, and condoned injustices, such as slavery or the exploitation of poor workers by powerful business owners. The Christian underpinnings of our country have been denied and ignored and taken out of our history books. It is time that we fought back with "Just the facts, Ma'am" as Joe Friday said on *Dragnet*. Actually, he said, "All we want are the facts." So here are some good facts about Christianity.

"The concept of universal human rights and equality comes exclusively from the biblical idea that all people are created in the image of God." From this belief we see the evolution of Jewish and Christian societies to become more and more egalitarian, and more just and fairer throughout history.

Christians also highly value the lives of all humans. This has led to better treatment for women (early promoters of women's rights, including voting rights, were Christians) and children (Christians worked to improve and then eliminate the use of children in labor), who are no longer considered as property to be disposed of at will. It was Christians who rescued Roman babies that were left to die because their parents did not want them. Most Christians have consistently opposed abortions, too. We were also at the forefront of the abolition of slavery in the West. (Actually, slavery was outlawed in the "Dark Ages." It resurfaced later when the Church became corrupted.) We and our missionaries have helped to eradicate cannibalism and human sacrifice in many parts of the world.

Christian monks saved many ancient texts from being lost by copying and preserving written works—secular, pagan, and Christian. "In order to promote Bible literacy, Christians have been leaders in education." When the Puritans in America passed the first law to require education for the masses, they called it "The Old Deluder Satan Act." They believed that Satan got his foothold in people's lives because of their *ignorance of Scripture*, (which is a major problem in American churches today.) "All but one of the first 123 colleges in colonial America were Christian institutions." Christian faith influenced the literature of such writers as Dante, Chaucer, Donne, Dostoevsky, Shakespeare, Dickens, Milton and more. Much of classical music was written in praise of God, and especially of Jesus. Handel, Vivaldi, and Bach worked to honor God with their compositions. Art of all kinds has been used to honor God and point people to Jesus or glorify the works of God in the natural world. The cathedrals of Europe show how architecture can honor God, too.

Scientific inquiry has its roots in Christianity. Other world religions express a worldview of *fatalism* (everything is fatalistically determined) or of *illusion* (the physical world is an illusion). The Christian worldview says that a rational God created the world, and that view led to the possibility of scientific

laws. Nearly all the founders of modern science were Christians—Kepler, Boyle, Newton, etc.

In government, we have stood for the Rule of Law based on moral absolutes (a biblical concept), and that all people have certain “inalienable rights.” Private property rights can be traced to the Ten Commandments. Our work ethic comes from biblical ideas and we have found that biblically-based capitalism helps move human’s natural selfishness toward altruism as business people try to make more money by fulfilling the needs of their customers. “One may say that capitalism civilizes greed in much the same way that marriage civilizes lust.” (Dinesh D’Souza)

Robert Woodberry, a graduate student in sociology at UNC-Chapel Hill had historical proof that Christian “missionaries had educated women and the poor, promoted widespread printing, led nationalist movements that empowered ordinary citizens, and fueled other key elements of democracy. Now the statistics were backing it up: Missionaries weren’t just part of the picture. They were central to it.” From his research, Woodberry can now support a sweeping claim:

“Areas where Protestant missionaries had a significant presence in the past are on average more economically developed today, with comparatively better health, lower infant mortality, lower corruption, greater literacy, higher educational attainment (especially for women), and more robust membership in nongovernmental associations.”

In short, want a blossoming democracy today? The solution is simple—if you have a time machine: send a 19th century missionary.”

What about today? After years of letting the film, music, publishing, and art industries be overrun with immorality and vulgarity and gory violence, Christians are once again stepping into all aspects of art and literature and helping to turn the tide back to more wholesome and edifying materials. We are out of practice, so much of our work has been subpar; but we are improving and making better films and art, and writing better literature and music. We are also becoming more politically engaged. Though we go overboard at times, forgetting that only God can save and provide for us, at least we are learning to speak up for what is true and good. Younger people are now more likely to consider abortion wrong, too.

Find out more good things about Christianity with the following resources: “The Good News about Marriage: Debunking Discouraging Myths about Marriage and Divorce” by Shaunti Feldmahn and Tally Whitehead. (Things are not as bad as we’ve been led to believe, because 72% of people today are still married to their first spouse. Of those who are not, a portion of them are widows, so the current divorce rate is actually 20-25%, not %50 as is often stated. Among those who attend church regularly, the percentage of those who have divorced is even less.); “How Christianity Changed the World” by Alvin J. Schmidt; “America: Imagine a World without Her” and “What’s So Great About Christianity” by Dinesh D’Souza; “Amazing Grace: William Wilberforce and the Heroic Campaign to End Slavery” by Eric Metaxas; “Christian Film Industry” on Wikipedia.org; <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/nineteen/nkeyinfo/amabrel.htm>, the section titled: “American Abolitionism and Religion;” and <http://www.ctlibrary.com/ch/1992/issue33/3321.html> about “The Abolitionists” (Christians); and visit www.faithfacts.org for many articles on the topic of how Christianity has improved the world. †

