

# How the Bible Changes the World

Series: Getting to Know THE BOOK that Knows Me  
Brad Bailey – February 19, 2017

*“A man reaps what he sows.” - Galatians 6:7*

*“... those who plant trouble and cultivate evil will harvest the same.” - Job 4:8-9*

## How the Bible Changed the World

The Bible, when released for all to read and understand, brought a transformation to....

- Optimism (hope, potential)
- Arts (affirmation of the value of creativity and beauty)
- Human Dignity (of ALL individuals)
- Human Compassion (Orphanages, hospitals, etc)
- Human Rights
- Justice
- Political Freedom (democracy, accountability & limited power)
- Rationality
- Science (Natural Order)
- Technology
- Economic Progress
- Family
- Education (Knowledge as positive and for all)
- Heroism

## The Decision – What world will you build?

Psalm 1:1-3 (GW)

*Blessed is the person who does not follow the advice of wicked people, take the path of sinners, or join the company of mockers. Rather, he delights in the teachings of the LORD and reflects on his teachings day and night. He is like a tree planted beside streams— a tree that produces fruit in season and whose leaves do not wither. He succeeds in everything he does.*

# How the Bible Changes the World

Series: Getting to Know THE BOOK that Knows Me  
Brad Bailey – February 19, 2017

*“A man reaps what he sows.” - Galatians 6:7*

*“... those who plant trouble and cultivate evil will harvest the same.” - Job 4:8-9*

## How the Bible Changed the World

The Bible, when released for all to read and understand, brought a transformation to....

- Optimism (hope, potential)
- Arts (affirmation of the value of creativity and beauty)
- Human Dignity (of ALL individuals)
- Human Compassion (Orphanages, hospitals, etc)
- Human Rights
- Justice
- Political Freedom (democracy, accountability & limited power)
- Rationality
- Science (Natural Order)
- Technology
- Economic Progress
- Family
- Education (Knowledge as positive and for all)
- Heroism

## The Decision – What world will you build?

Psalm 1:1-3 (GW)

*Blessed is the person who does not follow the advice of wicked people, take the path of sinners, or join the company of mockers. Rather, he delights in the teachings of the LORD and reflects on his teachings day and night. He is like a tree planted beside streams— a tree that produces fruit in season and whose leaves do not wither. He succeeds in everything he does.*

# How the Bible Changes the World

Series: Getting to Know THE BOOK that Knows Me

Brad Bailey – February 19, 2017

NOTE: The following message includes many detailed notes about each of the aspects of culture which were shaped by a Biblical worldview, that were not included in such detail when delivered verbally because I do not read or memorize...but rather paraphrase some of the main thoughts. As such, the spoken message was a shorter and simpler version of that section. I wanted to keep the more detailed notes here as a reference for any who might be interested.

## INTRO

**We began this series with the question: What are you building your life upon? What is the foundation?**

Jesus was rooted not in the ideas and institutions of man. That is why the people say he is not like the great teachers of this world...because he **had the authority as one who speaks for God**. The **earthly ideas always change**...they always **carry the wants and whims** of those who can only see with their own limits and through their own lusts.

Jesus says...build your life on that which was revealed by God.

There was a design from the beginning... that what exists is rooted in God.. The **world is not random but rooted**. It is rooted in the **one true Creator who is love**...and in whom there is **order**. So human life is not resigned to be ruled by sheer claims of one human over another....but by all life under and aligned with God.

The Bible declares that what we build our life upon... will determine what we build. [1]

**Galatians 6:7 “A man reaps what he sows.”**

**Job 4:8-9 - “those who plant trouble and cultivate evil will harvest the same.”**

**Ideas make a difference**...and **not all ideas are the same**. If you sow **different ideas**... something different will emerge. [2]

So when we ask ourselves....**What are we building our life upon?**

We should also ask ourselves....**What kind of world do we want?**

Conclude our series.... Getting to Know THE BOOK that Knows Me...we must ask:

**What kind of world do you want?**

These are **most fundamentally personal choices**. You and I must decide...what foundation are we building our lives upon... and what kind of life do we want?

But they are **also cultural questions**....because **every culture has foundations**...and those foundations shape what is built.

When God began to reveal Himself to Abraham... God had the whole world in mind. God said he was going to make a covenant with Abraham... as one the one true God over all.... and that through making Himself and His ways known to Abraham... he was ultimately going to bless the whole world.

**So we are also asking...What kind of world does God's revealed will and ways... testified to in the Bible...create?**

**We should remember that the Bible itself** recognizes that the whole world is influenced by what we might call "natural revelation." (Romans 1:18-20) That is ... there are aspects of God revealed in creation itself...of glory and goodness... so we should expect every human culture to realize and reflect some of the good intentions of God...some basic reason about what is true and right. But God sees how darkened and dim we have become and He reveals Himself directly to Abraham and then to all of Israel...which is called "special revelation." This is captured in the Scriptures...the Bible. And it is the Scriptures which provide the potential to have a shared perspective out of which to live not only as individuals...but as human community and culture.

So as God begins to engage a people within creation...and that is captured and conveyed in this Book...it **brings forth radically different understanding of the world....and who we are and how we should relate.**

It began in ancient Israel....centered in Jerusalem....and it engaged the ancient near eastern culture that the Israelites were a part of. The will and ways of God challenged the ways of the world that was operating. Jesus comes as the Living Word....to embody the very will and ways of God...and those whom he first gathered and imparted this to...were scattered...they went out.... all the way to the **capital of Rome** itself...as well as **to Greece**. So **this revelation was now engaging the great powers of thought.**

In Rome, initially they were just a **new strange group to toss into the gladiator arenas** to watch die. But there was something so distinct that could not be killed. Over the **next centuries** these ideas were **both persecuted...but also penetrating** into the pagan culture.

In the **4<sup>th</sup> century**... the **beliefs of the Bible** are **officially adopted**...and begin to spread across all of Europe.

BUT...the **Bible itself** was **not able to be engaged by the public**. The **Church would not allow** any public copies ...nor translations...and there was **no means to copy but by hand**.

That would not change **for 1,000 years**.

And then.... In **1454** –came the first major book printed using mass-produced movable metal type in Europe. It was the **Gutenberg Bible**. The Bible was soon made available to the public. Soon after came the Reformation in which Martin Luther and others declared that the Bible...not the Pope or State... held the authority to guide lives.

The Bible has a new influence upon the common culture throughout Europe...and of course becomes foundational to the New World which becomes the United States... (as well as Australia, Canada, S America). And it also becomes a large influence upon India... Africa....and has influence upon lives everywhere. [3]

What the Bible **shapes most directly**, is the foundations of **Western modern civilization**.

So let's consider...

**How the Bible Changed the World** (beginning most directly with modern western civilization.)

I am drawing upon the historical – philosophical work of Vishal (Mangalwadi) ...along with Rodney Stark and others.

The Bible, when released for all to read and understand, brought a transformation to....

- Optimism (hope, potential)
- Arts (affirmation of the value of creativity and beauty)
- Human Dignity (of ALL individuals)
- Human Compassion (Orphanages, hospitals, etc)
- Human Rights
- Justice
- Political Freedom (democracy, accountability & limited power)
- Rationality
- Science (Natural Order)
- Technology
- Economic Progress
- Family
- Education (Knowledge as positive and for all)
- Heroism

These qualities which we generally take for granted as part of life...and the life we desire...were not a common part of life. They found their foundations in a Biblical view of life...which shaped the soul of western modern world.

**This is why the 18<sup>th</sup> century philosopher Immanuel Kant wrote,**  
*“The existence of the Bible, as a book for the people, is the greatest benefit which the human race has ever experienced. Every attempt to belittle it is a crime against humanity.”* [4]

**I just want to consider a few very quickly...**

Most of the world the ancient world was shaped by the myths of either capricious gods who played unpredictably with human life....for which one felt powerless or tried to appease. So the revelation of one true living God who rooted the world in order ... bore a radical change to every aspect of human life.

It was quite a change for the people with whom God first began to speak to...it was a process of change in ethical and relational life.... But it also held the power to change the wider cultures where it became increasing understood and embraced. [5]

**In essence, the Bible reveals a way of knowing what the world is and who we are...which changes how people begin to live. People could begin to think:**

*“If this is what our world is truly ordered by...and this is who we are ... then this is how we should live.”*

As such,

**The Bible, when released for all to read and understand, brought a transformation to....**

### **Optimism (Hope, Potential)**

Fatalism gave way to hope and optimism and potential. When the common life believes that they are powerless to change their fate under the capricious gods of the myths.... Or that their lives have been cast as peasants to serve the royal lines... there is little to drive the common man towards change. But when the common culture understands that there is a God who has a purpose for all life...and a plan...that is good....it awakens the human spirit. [6]

With this comes...

### **Arts (Affirmation of creativity and beauty)**

While all cultures have shown creativity in drawing and music... it has often been countered by beliefs that such was creativity was not a proper reflection of anything virtuous.

But to discover that the very first revelation given to Moses begins with God declaring that HE CREATED...and that creating was divine...good powerful...and that it was “beautiful”...pleasing to the eye.

And that we bear His image.

It becomes clear that **creativity and the arts are not vain...but virtuous.**

To **be creative...to capture beauty...is not a waste...but a way to honor God.** And that gave rise to the prolific art and music that was birthed throughout Europe and the west.

### **Human Dignity (of ALL individuals)**

At the very point at which those first bore the life and message of Christ began to gather in the cities of the Roman Empire.... That empire was carrying on the low view of human life in the most dramatic of ways. The mythical gods were seen as treating humans as mere pawns...so the human rulers who claimed to be like gods... had no reason to see human life as anything different. Infanticide..the killing of unwanted children...was a common practice throughout much of the world...including the Roman Empire. It was the new Christians... bearing a new understanding of what life represented...that began not only speaking against such practice....but offering to care for the unwanted babies... and the sick and disabled. Those that were deemed to be cursed were being blessed...because that is what Jesus did.

When one begins to understand the significance of such change...they can begin to understand what is at hand when we begin to reject such a source of meaning....and accept that we are mere biological material machines... with no soul or “free will”...who function a simply a part of a closed, deterministic system of causes and effects. [7]

## **Human Compassion (Orphanages, hospitals, etc)**

Vishal notes that, “

Traveling through Africa and Asia, and especially seeing the work of Mother Teresa, the late British journalist Malcolm Muggeridge noted that faith in Christ’s incarnation had inspired many Christians to give up their comforts and risk their lives to serve the poorest of the poor. Even though Muggeridge was an atheist at the time, he observed that atheistic humanism had not inspired anyone to devote his or her life to serve the dying destitute of Calcutta.” [8]

The west had birthed a quality of compassion and humane care rooted in Jesus. Such compassion is deeply rooted in the incarnation. The fact that God would come inhabit and embody human life...declares that human bodily life matters. And when that life was among those who had no earthly power...and blessed those diseased and disabled...it declares a new understanding about the value of every life. Those deemed cursed by gods...and now to be blessed.

This is what leads to the orphanages that still to this day are giving a home to every child without a family. And it gave rise to hospitals.... Which now fill our world... and all of which flowed from the Bible’s view of sickness and suffering.

## **Human Rights**

Justice now stands outside the rights of those who hold power...either by virtue of their royal line...their military might...their wealth...or their privileged education.

“*With liberty and justice for all*”... is a declaration that we take for granted. It’s now a declaration that rings out through the whole world... in a way that it never had.

It’s why we can speak of one’s “God-given” rights. It is why we can speak root our country in what are referred to as “unalienable rights.”

## **Justice**

The revelation of the one true creator God establishes the basis for the rule of law.... whereby God stands over and above His creation, and establishes immutable laws that are equally applicable to all people without exception. [9]

Justice is now rooted in that which **every life must be weighed evenly**. Laws are not for kings to write to serve their power and pleasure...but **laws are rooted in the will and goodness of God alone**.

## **Political Freedom (democracy, accountability & limited power)**

The Scriptures speak profoundly into the nature of human governing. Every culture had it’s sources of kings...empowers...chiefs...some better than others.

But Israel was clearly called out to understand life is under God... and all human is never to be trusted to act like a god.

- SO when the Israelites ask God to raise up a king for their new nation...God warned them about the dangers of kings beginning to serve for their own gain.

- Jesus spoke of the ways that the world’s leaders “Lord” themselves over others...but they were not to do so.
- He taught them that the greatest is the least...and is the one who comes not to be served but to serve.
- And he placed a priority on the least and left out.

This is what his followers began to live out...and this is what provided the basis for political freedom... in which there must be limited power...accountability...and **every life must matter and be counted. These are the roots of democracy.**

## **Rationality**

The west became a rational thinking civilization... in part because it no longer believed that the world was run by fatalism for which everybody was like an ant whose only strength was it’s ability to carry some weight around. Nor is the goal to become mindless in order to connect with some impersonal consciousness.[10]

Rather there is a personal loving God who **became a “living Word”...able to communicate in rational ideas.**

*It is not our rational nature that can save us ... but it can serve us.*

And this allows for the scientific, technological, military, and economic success of the West.

## **Science (Natural Order)**

While **some degree of observation and exploring of natural medicines** had probably had some **place in every culture...** it was the **cultural discovery of the Biblical mandate** to have **dominion over nature** that **created a new and larger endeavor.**

**The first historian of the Royal Society of Science,** Thomas Sprat (1635–1713), explained that the society’s objective was to enable mankind to reestablish **“Dominion over Things.”**

As Vishal describes, “until the nineteenth century, science was “natural philosophy” or “natural history,” a subdivision of theology: “natural theology” or “general revelation.” The **scientific method of studying nature grew out of theology,** out of a particular way of viewing the material world based on the Bible. This way **assumed** that the **physical universe was real.** It was **neither a Platonic “shadow” nor a Hindu maya (illusion).** The pioneers of science believed that the material realm was real, not magical, enchanted, or governed by spirits and demons. **They assumed it was understandable because God created it as rational, ordered, and regulated by natural laws.** Those pioneers invested their time, effort, resources, and their lives studying the physical universe because they believed that God created it good. [11]

## **Technology**

The underlying beliefs of the west developed the basis for pioneering technological creativity.

The bible as noted...affirmed that **God created and we have been endowed to do the same.** It also affirms that we **should use the earth well...**and that **time is valuable and should be used wisely.**

**While it's uncertain who first began to use the wheel and wheelbarrow...it it was in 13<sup>th</sup> century Europe that it became popular...and wheels began radically reducing the physical toll of labor and raising the socioeconomic potential.**

**Later came the flywheel...** flywheel multiplies the power of a laborer. A flywheel stores rotational momentum, which makes better use of fluctuating energy. It makes it possible, for example, to pedal a bicycle once and get the wheel to rotate many times. This ingenious invention **first appeared in a book** called De diversis artibus (1122–23) by Theophilus, a **technologically oriented theologian and Benedictine monk.** His book was **motivated by his faith.** It codifies the skills needed to embellish a great church for the glory of God. These skills that became the key to the economic success of the West came out of religious motivations. [12]

### **Economic Progress**

The **Biblical mandate and morals** created that which **served to bring prosperity...**not because it affirmed that prosperity was the greatest goal...but because it didn't. It created **a life of mutual service ....and trust... and collaboration...in which all could gain.**

### **Family**

**Family bonds** were **not new...**but when it was understood that those **bonds were sacred...**it changed the very nature of family and power of marriage. **Marriage** was **not just a convenience** but a **covenant,,,** a reflection of God's covenant.

Family was not defined just by **survival...**and served only by self-serving needs...it was **sacred.**

### **Education (Knowledge as positive and for all)**

**The Reformation in Europe** played a role in **breaking the power** of controlling knowledge and education.... As it declared that the state and the church leaders should not be having authority...the Bible does...and **all must learn to read and reason.**

This would be foundational in the founding of America.

**In 1647 the Massachusetts Colony** enacted a **law asserting that all children must attend school.** It required that in any township having fifty households, one person must be appointed to teach the children to read and write, with the teacher's wages to be paid either by parents or by the inhabitants in general. In any township having a hundred or more households, a school must be established, "the master thereof being able to instruct youth so far as they may be fitted for the university."

Much the same took place in Canada, and by the end of the eighteenth century North America had by far the world's most literate population.

Even **prior to the revolution** there were there were **ten universities**... compared to **two in England**...and **before 1800 there were 20 more**...nearly every one founded by the church. [13]

## **Heroism**

What is heroism referring to?

It refers to the quality which is deemed the greatest role one could play.

Again, drawing from Vishal, he asks...

**Is a hero the man who dies while saving people from a burning building? Or the person who dies while blowing up a building filled with ordinary people?**

**God knows that the west has a history of heroes** that led to the **domination of others**. But the **more that the Scriptures began to immerse themselves** into the **cultural collective**... we find that the **role of the hero changed**.

**“Today few can imagine the world's sole superpower electing an Alexander the Great to colonize other nations?**

That is not to say American or European Foreign Policy is not governed by their national self-interest. The question is, why do we expect and demand “civilized” nations to send their troops only to liberate the oppressed, but not to exploit them? What changed us? The answer is that we expect America to follow not Alexander, Augustus, or Adolf Hitler, but the Bible and its definition of heroism. “The Bible replaced the classical idea of the hero as a world conqueror and the medieval idea of the hero as a courageous knight with the idea of a hero as someone who sacrifices himself for the good of others.”

**In Jesus, self-sacrifice challenges the value of world conquest or knightly prowess.**

Its supreme manifestation was **the cross: sacrificing oneself for others**, including one's enemies. Jesus' heroism replaced brutality with love, pride with meekness, and domination over others with self-sacrificing service. [14]

He who had all power... Washed the feet of his followers...and gave his life as an act of serving others.

---

**As we consider** how the Bible changed the world...we **can appreciate why those who lived in the height of that transformations**, declared how essential it was.

*“Hold fast to the Bible. To the influence of this Book we are indebted for all the progress made in true civilization and to this we must look as our guide in the future.” - Ulysses S. Grant*

*“All the miseries and evils which men suffer from vice, crime, ambition, injustice, oppression, slavery and war, proceed from their despising or neglecting the precepts contained in the Bible. “- Noah Webster*

So what does this all speak to us today? What is it we must grasp?

**The Bible provides the foundation of truth about the world and who we are that creates the very qualities we long for.**

**We cannot stop culture from trying to eat the fruit while cutting off the roots and branches...but we can recognize it for what it is.**

George Orwell, an atheist, in a 1940

**“...For two hundred years we had sawed and sawed and sawed at the branch we were sitting on. And in the end, much more suddenly than anyone had foreseen, our efforts were rewarded, and down we came. But unfortunately there had been a little mistake. The thing at the bottom was not a bed of roses after all, it was a cesspool full of barbed wire.” [15]**

Orwell seemed to grasp... that when we seek freedom from the roots...we will find that the fruit we valued will be lost...and what will emerge is unimaginable.

Orwell recognized the cost of secularization.

The Bible tells us **that wanting the fruit without the source is the very nature of the human posture.....**

- **Genesis...** depicts how human creatures decided that **we’ll take over the world and rule.**
- **Jesus...** tells us that our story can be summed up in the parable of the Prodigal Son.... Son wants the goods...but not the giver...until he finds he lost everything he valued most.

**This is the position we stand in today as a culture.**

So we must grasp...that the very fruit of life is at hand.

Something that we should find rather telling... is that **the very book that changed the world...** is also deemed the **most threatening** Book to those who want to control the world.

- Genesis 3:1 – **Satan has one central goal...**to get you to doubt God’s word. And we have always had one central temptation....to be the gods of our own life.
- **Europe – the CHURCH tried to ban it...**because the Bible is dangerous to those who want to have power over people

- Today.....The Bible is **one of the most banned books in the world**. It is banned in **6 countries**...and **restricted** in as many as **40 countries**.  
Notably...it is countries where there is tyranny...that are most threatened by the Bible.
- In the most recent annual **list of “most challenged” books in America** by the **American Library Association**... books that have had requests the most for restriction.... For the first time the Bible reached the top ten at number 6. [16]

### **Conclusion:**

Do you understand what this book is to you?

If you we reading the Bible is simply a good religious duty... we don't grasp what is really at hand. The Bible is the foundation and will determine what world we build.

So I want to invite us to consider the words of the Psalmist....who speaks of the position we have before us. [17]

### **Psalm 1:1-3 (GW)**

Blessed is the person who does not follow the advice of wicked people, take the path of sinners, or join the company of mockers. Rather, he delights in the teachings of the LORD and reflects on his teachings day and night. He is like a tree planted beside streams— a tree that produces fruit in season and whose leaves do not wither. He succeeds in everything he does.

What will the Bible be to you....where do you sit?

**Resources:** The assessment of various aspects of the Bible's influence on the world drew largely from the great work of Vishal Mangalwadi entitled “**The Book that Made Your World: How the Bible Created the Soul of Western Civilization.**” I have included large sections of quoted portions both in the message notes and more in the footnotes. I neither memorize nor read from notes...so most of this may not have ever been stated in full. However, I wanted to provide the reader the full detail of Vishal's thoughts. The other book which I only read a small portion of, but which is deemed valuable on this topic, is that of Rodney Stark - How the West Won: The Neglected Story of the Triumph of Modernity

Some other sources that may be of interest:

<http://www.provethebible.com/changed-the-world.html>

Paul Backholer How Christianity Made the Modern World

Vishal Mangalwadi: The Book that made your world -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5nHV3j8InRQ>

The Influence of Christianity on Western Civilization - <http://crossandquill.com/journey/the-influence-of-christianity-on-western-civilization/>

### **Notes:**

1. The idiom *you reap what you sow* is mostly likely directly referencing one of two verses in the New Testament. One is [2 Corinthians 9:6](#), “Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.” The other is [Galatians 6:7](#), “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.” As a general principle, it is definitely true that sowing leads to reaping. It’s true in agriculture, it’s true in charitable giving, and it’s true in life choices. So, “you reap what you sow” is biblical.

There are Old Testament verses that also refer to the principle that we reap what we sow. “Those who plant injustice will harvest disaster,” says King Solomon ([Proverbs 22:8](#)). “You have planted wickedness, you have reaped evil,” says the prophet ([Hosea 10:13](#)). “They will eat the fruit of their ways and be filled with the fruit of their schemes,” says Wisdom in [Proverbs 1:31](#). In each case, the law of sowing and reaping goes back to God’s justice. From - <https://www.gotquestions.org/you-reap-what-you-sow.html>

## 2. Ideas Matter

*Ideas matter*; people act upon their beliefs, which are an outgrowth of the key assumptions forming the intellectual foundation for their worldview. According to W. Andrew Hofferger, “One’s worldview gives coherence to how one thinks and lives, provides moral parameters, and directly motivates behavior.”<sup>2</sup> People from different cultures see and respond to the world around them in different ways. For example, Americans view cheating on a test as categorically wrong (even if often done), but for the Chinese, *refusing* to do so for a friend might be viewed as immoral. The following section on monotheism highlights perhaps the most important of those key assumptions contributing to any given worldview: a culture’s understanding of the nature of divinity. – **From How Christianity Shaped Western Civilization**, April 27th, 2015 *Today's guest article was written by Dr. Andrew Stebbins.* <http://www.reasons.org/blogs/reflections/how-christianity-shaped-western-civilization>

"There is a fundamental conviction which some people never acquire, some hold only in their youth, and a few hold to the end of their days-the conviction that ideas matter . . . . That ideas matter means that knowledge matters, that truth matters, that one's mind matters . . ." - [Ayn Rand](#)

3. The influence of the Bible on culture is reflected in how China is currently dealing with it’s influence.

*The following article notes that rapid spread of Christianity is forcing an official rethink on religion*

<http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21629218-rapid-spread-christianity-forcing-official-rethink-religion-cracks>

There were perhaps 3m Catholics and 1m Protestants when the party came to power in 1949. Officials now say there are between 23m and 40m, all told. In 2010 the Pew Research Centre, an American polling organisation, estimated there were 58m Protestants and 9m Catholics. Many

experts, foreign and Chinese, now accept that there are probably more Christians than there are members of the 87m-strong Communist Party. Most are evangelical Protestants.

Predicting Christianity's growth is even harder. Yang Fenggang of Purdue University, in Indiana, says the Christian church in China has grown by an average of 10% a year since 1980. He reckons that on current trends there will be 250m Christians by around 2030, making China's Christian population the largest in the world. Mr Yang says this speed of growth is similar to that seen in fourth-century Rome just before the conversion of Constantine, which paved the way for Christianity to become the religion of his empire.

Some Chinese also discern in Christianity the roots of Western strength. They see it as the force behind the development of social justice, civil society and rule of law, all things they hope to see in China. Many new NGOs are run by Christians or Buddhists. There are growing numbers of Christian doctors and academics. More than 2,000 Christian schools are also dotted around China, many of them small and all, as yet, illegal.

One civil-rights activist says that, of the 50 most-senior civil-rights lawyers in China, probably half are Christians. Some of them have set up the Association of Human Rights Attorneys for Chinese Christians.

Many officials see advantages in Christianity's growth. Some wealthy business folk in Wenzhou have become believers—they are dubbed “boss Christians”—and have built large churches in the city. One holds evening meetings at which businessmen and women explain “biblical” approaches to making money. Others form groups encouraging each other to do business honestly, pay taxes and help the poor. Rare is the official anywhere in China who would want to scare away investors from his area.

In other regions local leaders lend support, or turn a blind eye, because they find that Christians are good citizens. Their commitment to community welfare helps to reinforce precious stability.

Increasingly, the party needs the help of religious believers. It is struggling to supply social services efficiently; Christian and Buddhist groups are willing, and able, to help. Since about 2003, religious groups in Hong Kong have received requests from mainland government officials to help set up NGOs and charities. In an age of hedonism and corruption, selfless activism has helped the churches' reputation; not least, it has persuaded the regime that Christians are not out to overthrow it. For the Catholic church, though, the situation is trickier: allegiance to Rome is still seen by some officials as a sign of treachery.

4. From - <http://www.whatchristianswanttoknow.com/how-does-the-bible-influence-society/#ixzz4YRiInYcW>

5. The idea that there is only one God “may well have been the single most important innovation in history.”<sup>3</sup> For our purposes monotheism's importance lies primarily in the fact that it is the

only viable source of absolute truth. Only a single creator God can establish such truths. Monotheism also allowed for the formation of the rule of law, whereby God stands over and above His creation, and establishes immutable laws that are equally applicable to all people without exception.<sup>4</sup> With no such conception of God and His law, individual people or cultures occupy God's throne, dispensing justice as they see fit. Man-made laws are as changeable as the human mind and may not be applicable to the ruling power.

For example, God commanded people to not murder one another. This command may seem "self-evident" to most yet in many non-Western cultures female infanticide has long been a common and accepted practice. Only absolute truths based on an objective foundation (a single creator God) can help us determine if it is right or wrong to kill female infants.

From *How Christianity Shaped Western Civilization*, April 27th, 2015 *Today's guest article was written by Dr. Andrew Stebbins.* <http://www.reasons.org/blogs/reflections/how-christianity-shaped-western-civilization>

6. Vishal Mangalwadi notes the difference between two musical figures – that of Kurt Cobain and Johann Bach. The following is my personal recollection of Cobain and Vishal's insights adapted

I can still remember the day of April 8<sup>th</sup>, 1994...driving up the coast to spend a couple days in reading and reflection...radio began to break the story.... an electrician accidentally discovered a dead body in Seattle, Washington. It was the body of Kurt Cobain....who over the past two years had become the most iconic figure that any generation had known. It was clear that he had committed suicide a few days earlier.

As the lead singer, songwriter, and guitarist for the rock band Nirvana, captured his generation's loss of anchor, center, or soul so effectively that their album *Nevermind* sold ten million copies, displacing Michael Jackson at the top of the charts.

There was a desperate cry within his songs and life...

The phrase "never mind" means "don't bother," "don't concern yourself." Why should you mind, if nothing is true, good, or beautiful in any absolute sense?

Nirvana is the Buddhist term for salvation. It means permanent extinction of one's individual existence, the dissolution of our illusory individuality into *Shoonyta* (void, nothingness, or emptiness). It is freedom from our misery-causing illusion that we have a permanent core to our being: a self, soul, spirit, or Atman.

As Vishal notes... the disillusionment had grown out of the anti-establishment 1960s. At that time, Stanford students were chanting "Hey, hey, ho, ho, Western Civ has got to go!".... they chanted for the demise of the Western civilization ... disgusted with hypocrisy and injustices in the West. "Yet, their rejection of the soul of their civilization yielded something very different

from the utopia they sought. Diana Grains, in Rolling Stone, noted that prior to the 1960s, teenage suicide was virtually nonexistent among American youth. By 1980 almost four hundred thousand adolescents were attempting suicide every year. By 1987 suicide had become the second largest killer of teens, after automotive accidents.”

Vishal notes how different was the life of Johann Sebastian Bach and the birth of music’s greatest wonder. Bach and Cobain shared more in common than their talent for music. They both lost their parents when they were nine years old, Cobain’s parents to divorce and Bach’s to death. But they were rooted in a different understanding about music and life.

When Bach was born...his whole province had become deeply rooted in the understanding of the Scriptures...and of the view “that music mirrors the divinely ordained mathematical harmony of the universe. Bach was a musical genius because he was a mathematical genius who received as a part of his education this (non-polytheistic) biblical outlook of an orderly creation. In that mind-set, aesthetics was inseparable from ultimate harmony. One of his biographers, Wilfrid Mellers said, “At the school which Bach attended ...music was second in importance only to theology, and was taught by the same master, who believed that music makes the heart ready and receptive to the divine Word and truth, just as Elishus [Elisha] confessed that by harping he found the Holy Spirit.” For Bach, “true music” pursues as its “ultimate end or final goal . . . the honor of God and the recreation of the soul.”

Bach believed that music was a “harmonious euphony for the glory of God.”

Philosophically speaking, Bach’s inner power to cope with his parents’ death came from his belief in a sovereign and loving God. His life and his compositions were saturated with the book that had given him profound personal and social hope. Life taught him that evil was real and powerful, but the Bible taught him that God was at work redeeming the world, working all things together for good.

Drawn from Mangalwadi, Vishal. *The Book that Made Your World: How the Bible Created the Soul of Western Civilization* (pp. 3-19). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition. He adds,

7. In regards to modern views regarding man;;s dignity, Vishal also notes:

“Behaviorism presupposes that there is neither God nor soul. Consequently, human beings are chemicals-turned-animals, qualitatively no different from dogs. Chemistry has no soul or “free will.”\* It functions as a closed, deterministic system of causes and effects. Behaviorists used Pavlov’s dog experiments to explain how human beings are conditioned and could be reconditioned. They reduced human beings to psychochemical machines determined by environment, chemistry, chance, and cultural conditioning. Machines can be damaged, repaired, and reprogrammed, but they are still just machines.

The biblical words made sense because they were true to what I knew about myself. Machines produce. Human beings create. What's the difference? We create what we choose to create. Freedom, or choice, is the essence of creativity. Determinism explains only a part of me. I eat food when I am driven by the chemistry of hunger pangs. But I can choose to fast. I can choose to fast unto death or choose to break my fast. At the core of my being, I am free.

Jesus called his disciples to be the light in their dark world. How can we change our world if we are merely a part of it? My professors couched these ideas in scientific/academic terminology. Did that make these ideas any better than traditional fatalism? Fatalism is a worldview with huge social consequences that I could see all around me: poverty, disease, and oppression. Cultures like mine had historically resigned themselves to their "fate." Western civilization, on the other hand, believed that human beings were creative creatures and therefore could change "reality" for the better. This enabled the West to virtually eliminate many of the ills that still plagued my people.

Far from violating God's dignity, the incarnation was to be the ultimate proof of man's dignity: of the possibility of man's salvation, of a man or a woman becoming a friend and child of God. The incarnation would make human beings of greater worth than the angels."

From Mangalwadi, Vishal. *The Book that Made Your World: How the Bible Created the Soul of Western Civilization* (chapetr4). Thomas Nelson.

8. From Mangalwadi, Vishal. *The Book that Made Your World: How the Bible Created the Soul of Western Civilization* (pp. 75-76). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition. He adds... "The West became a humane civilization because it was founded on the precepts of a teacher who insisted that man was valuable. Jesus challenged the inhumanity of his intellectual and religious culture ... The West became humane because the original humanists believed that Christ's incarnation and death defined what a human being is."

9. From *How Christianity Shaped Western Civilization*. April 27th, 2015 by Dr. Andrew Stebbins. <http://www.reasons.org/blogs/reflections/how-christianity-shaped-western-civilization>

The idea that there is only one God "may well have been the single most important innovation in history."<sup>3</sup> For our purposes monotheism's importance lies primarily in the fact that it is the only viable source of absolute truth. Only a single creator God can establish such truths. Monotheism also allowed for the formation of the rule of law, whereby God stands over and above His creation, and establishes immutable laws that are equally applicable to all people without exception.<sup>4</sup> With no such conception of God and His law, individual people or cultures occupy God's throne, dispensing justice as they see fit. Man-made laws are as changeable as the human mind and may not be applicable to the ruling power.

For example, God commanded people to not murder one another. This command may seem "self-evident" to most yet in many non-Western cultures female infanticide has long been a

common and accepted practice. Only absolute truths based on an objective foundation (a single creator God) can help us determine if it is right or wrong to kill female infants.

10. Drawn from Mangalwadi, Vishal. *The Book that Made Your World: How the Bible Created the Soul of Western Civilization* (pp. 77-78). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.

11. From Mangalwadi, Vishal. *The Book that Made Your World: How the Bible Created the Soul of Western Civilization* (pp. 221-223). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.

12. Drawn from Mangalwadi, Vishal. *The Book that Made Your World: How the Bible Created the Soul of Western Civilization* (p. 105). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.

13. Drawn from Stark, Rodney. *How the West Won: The Neglected Story of the Triumph of Modernity* (Kindle Locations 6549-6566). Intercollegiate Studies Institute. Kindle Edition.

14. From Mangalwadi, Vishal. *The Book that Made Your World: How the Bible Created the Soul of Western Civilization* (pp. 134-135). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition. He adds,

The classical Greco-Roman world would have never offered the Nobel Prize for Peace to Jimmy Carter, a defeated president. To be a classical hero he would have needed to strategize, forge alliances, plot assassinations, and bounce back to power. A hero was a person who had the power to conquer and rule over others. The Greek model was Alexander the Great (356–323 BC), one of history's most ruthless conquerors, who marched from Greece to India. He considered himself divine, as did his contemporaries, and he ordered Greek cities to worship him as god. He left his empire, in his own words, "to the strongest," unlike Jesus, who said that the poor and the meek would inherit the kingdom of God that he was ushering in. Alexander's invitation to the strongest ensured conflicts among his lieutenants, and they tore his kingdom apart within half a century. Augustus Caesar (63 BC–AD 14) was the ideal Roman hero. He consolidated his power by killing three hundred senators and two hundred knights, including the aging orator Cicero. Augustus made himself and his successors gods on earth. The classical idea of heroism became so deeply embedded in Western consciousness that Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821) tried to revive the Roman Empire, modeling his rule on that of Augustus. Napoleon's quest for power and glory plunged Europe into terrible and mindless wars. William Blake (1757–1827) lamented, "The strongest poison ever known came from Caesar's laurel crown."<sup>9</sup> This classical understanding of a hero as a person with power is almost universal. It is the core of the Hindu idea of a hero. That is why most Hindu gods and goddesses are depicted with weapons in their many hands. That also explains why well-known criminals can win democratic elections in India. Once they win, their guilt is written off. Hinduism requires that a spiritual hero must also conquer his own body by controlling his eating, drinking, sexuality, and involuntary actions such as breathing. An Islamic hero is also an individual with power, as long as it is coupled with piety and prayer. That is the chief reason why a terrorist can be a devout Muslim and a hero in the eyes of orthodox clergy.

15. [http://orwell.ru/library/articles/notes/english/e\\_notew](http://orwell.ru/library/articles/notes/english/e_notew)

16. According to the American Library Association's latest "[State of America's Libraries](#)" report, *The Holy Bible* [was ranked as the sixth most challenged](#) book in America

17. A similar call is made by Joshua,

Joshua 1:8 (NIV)

Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

## How the Bible Changes the World

Series: Getting to Know THE BOOK that Knows Me/ Brad Bailey – February 19, 2017

We are concluding our series this week on “Getting to Know THE BOOK that Knows Me.” This week we’re exploring the Bible’s profound impact on Western Civilization. We began this series with the question: What are you building your life upon? What is the foundation? Every culture has foundations...and those foundations shape what is built.

1. How has your foundation in life changed? In what ways had it been built upon cultural values and norms and how has the foundation shifted and built more upon Jesus and the Word?

2. The Bible has impacted and changed the world in many astounding ways. Of the list explored on Sunday, which was most surprising to you? Which most meaningful?

3. Why do you believe the Bible has had such influence?

Read Psalm 1:1-3 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup> Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers,

<sup>2</sup> but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night.

<sup>3</sup> That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither— whatever they do prospers.

4. Psalm 1 describes a person who is blessed. In our culture, what does it mean to have a blessed or good life?

5. What significance do you see in the progression in vs.1 from walk to stand to sit?

6. The “law of the Lord” is contrasted with the words counsel, way and seat. What does this contrast bring out?

7. This Psalm portrays two different pictures of life – a tree/righteous way or a chaff/wicked way. Tree/Righteous - Chaff/Wicked

Contrast these two ways of life. How is each way of life is described in the text?

8. How does Psalm 1 redefine what it means to be blessed?

9. What are we missing when we approach reading the Bible as simply religious duty?

10. How could you focus more on delighting or meditating on the law of the Lord?

Some other sources that may be of interest:

<http://www.provethetbible.com/changed-the-world.html>

Paul Backholer How Christianity Made the Modern World

Vishal Mangalwadi: The Book that made your world

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5nHV3j8InRQ>

The Influence of Christianity on Western Civilization -

<http://crossandquill.com/journey/the-influence-of-christianity-on-western-civilization/>