

On one of my overseas ministry trips an in-flight documentary caught my attention. Some anthropologist was waxing eloquent about the **incredibly advanced Mayan civilization** of Central America in the 15th Century. They didn't have a written language, but they were **incredibly advanced**.

Preferring Paganism?

These Mayans built spectacular pyramid like temples - all without the wheel! Of course they did use slave labour to move all those massive stones, but the slaves were captured from neighbouring tribes!

Unfortunately, these impressive temples were used for human sacrifices. The human sacrifices were necessary to make the Sun rise each day! But they only used slaves and prisoners captured from neighbouring tribes!

None of this seems to have dampened the enthusiasm of this anthropologist as he eagerly described the **amazing**, **complex** and **intricate** Mayan civilization. They had a **fascinating** sport which was a cross between our basketball and football, although you could only use your shoulder to score **a goal**. Unfortunately the losing team were all put to death!

And so it carried on. I could only wonder at what mental and ethical gymnastics this anthropologist and film presenter could do in order to praise the **incredibly advanced Mayan Civilization** which had not yet discovered the wheel, did not have a written language, used slave labour, engaged in human sacrifice and routinely executed the losing sports teams!

During a recent visit to a museum I saw a similar display of reverence for paganism. Part of the exhibit included the cover of an old Time magazine cover **Lost Tribes** **Lost Knowledge**. The cover picture was of a primitive tribesman from Papua New Guinea with a bone through his nose. The sub title read: **Treasure troves of scientific knowledge are being lost by tribes going extinct**.

I wondered what scientific knowledge would be possessed by tribes without a written language, but closer examination revealed that these tribes were **going extinct** because of the work of Christian missionaries! As these tribes are evangelized and come to Christ they abandoned their old tribal religions of head hunting, cannibalism, spirit worship and polygamy. To the **scientist** the tribes were **going extinct** because they no longer walked around naked and no longer engaged in body scarification, tattooing and body piercing! Now they wore clothes and glasses, went to the doctor instead of the witchdoctor, had schools, were learning to read, only married once and worshipped in Church!

Being somewhat ignorant of the science of anthropology I would have thought that ending inter-tribal warfare, cannibalism, polygamy and occultism was good. I would have also assumed that giving people the gift of literacy, medicines to improve their health and extend life expectancy, improving people's sight with glasses and bringing them the life transforming Gospel of Jesus Christ was all preferable to allow them to languish in superstition, ignorance and animistic fear.

But NO! As National Geographic articles bemoaning the **cultural genocide** of New Tribes Mission, and other pioneer missions in the Amazon jungle, have pointed out, these missionaries are destroying **the cultural distinctives** of unique tribal cultures.

Apparently, it is preferable to have illiteracy, polygamy, incessant tribal warfare, cannibalism, human sacrifices, slavery, high infant mortality and low life expectancies - not to mention people dying without the knowledge of Christ - just so that journalists and anthropologists can have the more interesting, and financially lucrative, photo ops of naked savages engaging in body scarification and the eating of their neighbours.

For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God, nor

gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. ♦
Romans 1:21</p> <p style="text-align: justify;">Before the advent of Christianity almost every culture practised slavery and human sacrifice even the highly esteemed Greek and Roman civilisations.</p> <p style="text-align: justify;">In the great Roman Empire, abortion was rampant and abandonment of unwanted babies was commonplace. In Ancient Rome, unwanted infants were (legally) abandoned outside the city walls to die of starvation or exposure or from wild animals. Infanticide was not only legal, it was applauded. A father had the legal right to kill his children, to marry them to whomsoever he pleased, or to sell them as slaves. The Greek philosophers Plato, Aristotle and Socrates lived in, and accepted, a culture which practised slavery and human sacrifice and glorified paedophilia (sexual abuse of children).</p> <p style="text-align: justify;">When missionaries went to nineteenth century China, they discovered that baby girls were routinely disposed of by being put out as food for wild dogs and wolves. ♦Baby towers♦ were common, where unwanted babies were left out to die of exposure and starvation, or to be eaten alive by birds of prey. Some towns had ♦baby ponds♦ where unfortunate infants were thrown. Tragically this pagan practice of infanticide has made a comeback under Communism. In Red China every family is restricted to one child. Abortions have been forced upon women when they conceive any more children beyond their quota of one. China also has had a record number of stillbirths. Often baby girls have been drowned in a bucket of water or strangled at birth by parents who would prefer to have a son.</p> <p style="text-align: justify;">Child sacrifice was common amongst the pagan religions. Fertility cults such as those who worshipped Baal and Asherah, the Ammonites who worshipped Molech and the Phoenicians who worshipped Kronos all practised child sacrifice.</p> <p style="text-align: justify;">The Aztec Empire in Mexico and the Inca Empire in Peru engaged in slavery, ritual rapes and mass sacrifice. Slaves were marched up the stairs of the pyramid-type Inca temples in the Aztec Empire. At the top a priest would rip out their beating hearts ♦ one by one.</p> <p style="text-align: justify;">One writer who expressed appreciation for the positive impact of the Judeo-Christian emphasis on the sanctity of life came from an unexpected quarter. Jerry Adler of Newsweek (6 /11/1995) wrote: ♦The Gods Must be Hungry♦ in response to the uncovering by archaeologists of a 12-year-old girl sacrificed by the Incas five hundred years ago. He expressed outrage at the tendency amongst anthropologists to justify barbaric practices such as the ripping out of beating hearts from human offerings by Aztec priests. He quoted the following example of intellectual detachment: ♦A Tulane University anthropologist has written about ritual killings: 'within the context of [Aztec] culture, it all made sense. The sacrifice of human blood, and particularly the heart, was necessary to make the Sun go around every day. It ties in to their stories of creation and myth. It was part of the cultural tradition'.♦ Adler went on to note: ♦ 'The Highest Altar' writer Patrick Tierney documented the prevalence of human sacrifice in cultures from almost every part of the world.♦ Adler's article concluded: ♦The religious tradition of the West begins with a great renunciation of blood offering, when Abraham put down the knife and unbound Isaac. And it proceeds through the glorious sacrifice on Calvary, when God Himself offered up His Son to redeem the world. Modern people know better than to think that the Sun needs a fresh heart to rise each day, or that natural disasters can be bought off with corpses."</p> <p style="text-align: justify;">♦Suttee♦♦the burning of widows on the funeral pyre of their husbands ♦ was common when missionary William Carey arrived in India. Yet with perseverance he succeeded in having that vile practice outlawed. It was the tireless work of Christian missionaries like Anna Bowden, Mary Slessor and Amy Carmichael which saved tens of thousands of abandoned

children. They raised them in their own homes or orphanages. And it was the persistent work of Christians which outlawed abortion, abandonment and infanticide, first in the Roman Empire, then throughout Europe and America.

Similarly, slavery was eradicated as a result of the tireless efforts of Christians such as William Wilberforce, David Livingstone and General Charles Gordon. Respect for life and liberty are a fruit of Christianity. Those promoting abortion, euthanasia and pornography are not offering us progress, but only a return to pre-Christian paganism.

Most in our society do not seem to realise how much we owe to the advent of Jesus Christ. Hospitals as we know them were an innovation of Christianity (hence the universal healing symbol of a cross to represent hospitals). The nursing profession was founded by Florence Nightingale out of devotion to Christ. One of history's greatest humanitarian movements, the International Red Cross, was founded by Christians in response to the Scriptural injunction to care for the sick and suffering. Christians, such as Dr. Louis Pasteur, have fuelled some of the greatest practical advances in medicine. More hospitals have been founded by Christians than by all other religions combined. The Christian Church has been the supreme (and often the only) force restraining man's inhumanity towards man.

The whole concept of charity was a Christian innovation. The Church of Christ has done more than any other institution in history to alleviate poverty and suffering. Before Christ, benevolence to strangers was unknown. Where the Bible became known, compassionate and unselfish sacrifice flourished. Dr. James Kennedy's book ♦What if Jesus Had Never Been Born?♦ documents a wide range of the unparalleled contributions of the Christian Church.

The Christian Church has made more positive changes on earth than any other force or movement in history. Most of the languages of the world were first codified and put into writing by Christian missionaries. More schools and universities have been started by Christians than by any other group. The elevation of women (from the second class status they were assigned to by other religions) was a Christian achievement; as was the abolition of slavery, cannibalism, child sacrifice and widow burning. Those countries which enjoy the most civil liberties are generally those lands where the Gospel of Christ has penetrated the most.

As Noah Webster, the statesman, educator, and author of Webster's Dictionary, wrote: ♦The Bible is the chief moral cause of all that is good and the best corrector of all that is evil, in human society, the best Book for regulating the temporal concerns of men, and the only Book that can serve as an infallible guide . . . The principles of genuine liberty and of wise laws and administrations are to be drawn from the Bible and sustained by its authority. The man, therefore, who (undermines) the Divine authority of that Book may be accessory to all the public disorders which society is doomed to suffer.♦

Christianity gave birth to liberty. Constitutional republics, the separation of powers, limited government and freedom of conscience are a result of the Reformation.

It is the secular humanists who have a heritage of oppression. The 44 secular or atheistic states have caused the deaths of over 160 million people in the 20th century alone. The abuses of human rights, atrocities and massacres in the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, Red China, North Korea, Eastern Europe, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique and Cuba were the inevitable results of rejecting God's Law. Either men will be governed by God's Law or they will be ruled by tyrants.

♦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.♦ (Webster)

We could also recount the unparalleled contributions made by

Our Christian Heritage - Reformation Society

Written by Peter Hammond

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Christians in the fields of science, art, education, economics, civil and human rights and in works of compassion and mercy. The teachings and example of Jesus Christ have inspired the greatest acts of generosity, hospitality, self-sacrifice and service for the sick, poor and needy.

It's easy for opponents of Christianity to criticise, but what are our critics doing for the lonely, the widows, the orphans, the sick, the aged and the refugees?

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