
Appendix 5.18

Ancient & Modern Testimonies of *Virtue Apologetics*

Because of our belief in how biblical and powerful *virtue apologetics* is for the Christian faith, we wanted to collect testimonies of this very thing here. Some of these have already been shared elsewhere in *Knowing Our God*

Archibald Alexander (1752-1871)

Persons of all ages, of all conditions of life, and of both sexes, exhibited under protracted and cruel torments, a fortitude, a patience, a meekness, a spirit of charity and forgiveness, a cheerfulness, yea often a triumphant joy, of which there are no examples to be found in the history of the world. They rejoiced when they were arrested; cheerfully bade adieu to their nearest and dearest relatives; gladly embraced the stake; welcomed the wild beasts let loose to devour them; smiled on the horrible apparatus by which their sinews were to be stretched, and their bones dislocated and broken; uttered no complaints; gave no indication of pain when their bodies were enveloped in flames; and when condemned to die, begged of their friends to interpose no obstacle to their felicity (for such they esteemed martyrdom), not even by prayer for their deliverance. By what spirit were these despised and persecuted people sustained? (*Evidences of the Christian Religion*, 1832, online at www.ccel.org)

Justin Martyr (c. 100-165)

Since our persuasion by the Word . . . we who formerly delighted in fornication now cleave only to chastity. We who exercised the magic arts now consecrate ourselves to the good and unbegotten God. We who valued above all else the acquisition of wealth and property now direct all that we have to a common fund, which is shared with every needy person. We who hated and killed one another, and who, because of differing customs, would not share a fireside with those of another race, now, after the appearance of Christ, live together with them. We pray for our enemies, and try to persuade those who unjustly hate us that, if they live according to the excellent precepts of

Christ, they will have a good hope of receiving the same reward as ourselves, from the God who governs all.

(Justin Martyr, *The First Apology of Justin to the Roman Emperor Antoninus Pius* I.14; online at www.ccel.org).

Aristides (died c. 134)

Other than Him, no god do they [the Christians] worship. They have the commandments of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself impressed upon their hearts, and they observe them, awaiting the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. They do not commit adultery nor fornication, nor do they bear false witness, nor covet the goods of other men. They honor father and mother and love their neighbors; and they render just judgment. What they would not want done to them, they do not do to another. They make appeal to those who wrong them, and win them to themselves as friends.

They hasten to do good to their enemies. They are gentle and reasonable. They abstain from every unlawful exchange and from all uncleanness. They despise not the widow, nor do they distress the orphan. Whoever has, distributes liberally to him that has not. Should they see a stranger, they take him under roof, and rejoice over him as over a blood brother. For not after the flesh do they call themselves brethren, but after the spirit. For the sake of Christ they are ready to lay down their lives. They keep His commands without wavering, living holy and just lives as the Lord God commanded them; and they give thanks to Him every hour for all their food and drink and for the rest of their goods.

(*The Apology of Arrestees the Philosopher to the Roman Emperor Hadrian*; online at www.ccel.org)

Athenagoras of Athens (c. 133-190)

We are so far from practicing promiscuous intercourse, that it is not lawful among us to indulge even a lustful look. . . . [Christians] are to be called to account for their very thoughts, how can any one doubt that such persons practice self-control? For our account lies not with human laws, which a bad man can evade, but we have a law which makes the measure of rectitude to consist in dealing with our neighbor as ourselves.

(*Plea for Christians to the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius*, 32; online at www.ccel.org)

Theophilus of Antioch (c. 185)

But far be it from Christians to conceive any such deeds [as performed by Roman society in general]; for with them temperance dwells, self-restraint is practiced, monogamy is observed, chastity is guarded, iniquity exterminated, sin extirpated, righteousness exercised, law administered, worship performed, God acknowledged: truth governs, grace guards, peace screens them; the holy word guides, wisdom teaches, life directs, God reigns.

(*To Autolycus*, II.15; online at www.ccel.org)

Minucius Felix (c. 220)

If we Christians be compared to you [Roman society in general], although some of us may not be equal to our standards, we shall be found to be much better than you. You forbid adultery, yet you do it. We, however, are known as men only to our wives. You punish crimes when they have been committed. With us, it is a sin even to consider a crime. You fear witnesses. We fear even our own conscience, which we cannot escape. And finally, the jails are full of your people; but there is no Christian there, unless his crime be his religion. Otherwise, he is an apostate.

(*Octavius*, 35.5-6; excerpted from *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, William A. Jurgens [Liturgical Press, 1970], 110)

Tertullian (c. 160-c. 220)

"We are not recognized in any other way than by the reformation of our former vices."

(*To Scapula*, 2.10; online at www.ccel.org)

Chrysostom (c. 345-407)

"There would be no more heathen if we would be true Christians."

(Quoted by Kenneth Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, 2 volumes, [Hendricksen, 1975], 99)

Martin Luther (1483-1546)

[Saving] Faith, however, is a divine work in us which changes us and makes us to be born anew of God, John 1[:12-13]. It kills the old Adam and makes us altogether different men, in heart and spirit and mind and powers; and it brings with it the Holy Spirit. It is a living,

busy, active, mighty thing, this [saving] faith. It is impossible for it not to be doing good works incessantly. It does not ask whether good works are to be done, but before the question is asked, it has already done them, and is constantly doing them. Whoever does not do such works, however, is an unbeliever. . . . Because of it [saving faith], without compulsion, Christians are ready and glad to do good to everyone, to serve everyone, to suffer everything, out of love and praise to God who has shown them this grace.

(*Preface to the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans*; online at www.ccel.org)

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

I shall consider Christian practice and holy life, as a manifestation and sign of the sincerity of a professing Christian, to the eye of his neighbors and brethren. . . . And that this is the chief sign of grace in this respect, is very evident from the word of God. . . . Now from all that has been said, I think it to be abundantly manifest, that Christian practice is the most proper evidence of the gracious sincerity of professors, to themselves and others; and the chief of all the marks of grace, the sign of signs, and evidence of evidences, that which seals and crowns all other signs.

(*Religious Affections*, II.12.1, 2.5; online at www.ccel.org)

If those who call themselves Christians, thus walked in all the paths of virtue and holiness, it would tend more to the advancement of the kingdom of Christ in the world, the conviction of sinners, and propagation of religion among unbelievers, than all the sermons in the world.

(Quoted from John Gerstner, *The Rational Biblical Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 3 vols. [Berea, 1991], III.128-9)

Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892)

The Almshouses and the orphanage were, of course, the fruit of Christianity, and they stood out in sharp contrast to the lack of such institutions among the unbelievers. England had then its 'Free Thinkers' Societies and its Agnostic Associations, but those organizations did nothing to help the poor and the suffering. They labored to denounce Christianity, but they knew nothing of self-sacrifice for the sake of the needy. Like the Levite in the parable, they "passed by on the other side."

But evangelical Christians had long been associated with the building of homes for the aged and for orphaned children. Professor

Francke had erected and maintained a great orphanage in Germany, and George Whitefield had molded his life around such a project in the American colony of Georgia. George Müller was conducting an orphanage that was home to more than two thousand youngsters in England. Dr. Barnardo gave up his medical practice to devote himself to aiding homeless children.

To an agnostic who one day accosted him and challenged his Christian beliefs, Spurgeon pointed out the failure of the unbelievers' organizations to take on any definite and sustained program of help to the thousands of needy around them. In contrast he pointed to the works that sprang from evangelical Christianity, and he closed the conversation by paraphrasing the triumphant cry of Elijah, vigorously asserting, as well he might, "The God who answereth by Orphanages, let Him be God."

(Arnold Dallimore, *Spurgeon: A New Biography* [Banner of Truth Trust, repr. 1999], 129-30)

The Hottentots

While we are speaking about barbaric customs, let us mention in passing what Christianity has done for barbaric peoples generally. Christlieb was one of the most comprehensive students of missions among primitive peoples. He tells us, among many other things, what Christ has done for the Hottentots. . . .

[T]hirty years ago, [a Portuguese] might express a doubt as to whether the Gospel could elevate and heal the most degraded heathen [i.e. the Hottentots]. But today the Portuguese can no longer maintain that the Hottentots are a race of apes, incapable of Christianization. You can no longer find written over church doors in Cape Colony, "Dogs and Hottentots not admitted," as at the time when Dr. Van der Kemp fought there for the rights of the downtrodden natives. (John Gerstner, *Reasons for Faith* [Harper & Row, n.d.], 222)

Madagascar

Today no one could be found to agree with the French governor of the island of Bourbon, who called out to the first missionary to Madagascar, "So you will make the Malagasy Christians? Impossible. They are mere brutes, and have no more sense than irrational cattle"; since there are hundreds of evangelical congregations established there.

(John Gerstner, *Reasons for Faith* [Harper & Row, n.d.], 222)

D. James Kennedy (1930-2007),

Despite its humble origins [one man and a few disciples], the Church has made more changes on earth for the good than any other movement or force [let alone religion] in history. To get an overview of some of the positive contributions Christianity has made through the centuries, here are a few highlights:

Hospitals, which essentially began during the Middle Ages. Universities, which also began during the Middle Ages. . . . Literacy and education for the masses. . . . Representative government . . . Civil liberties. The abolition of slavery, both in antiquity and in more modern times. . . . The elevation of women. Benevolence and charity; the good Samaritan ethic. Higher standards of justice. The elevation of the common man. The condemnation of adultery, homosexuality, and other sexual perversions. This has helped to preserve the human race, and it has spared many from heartache. High regard for human life [like working against abortion]. The civilizing of many barbarian and primitive cultures. The codifying and setting to writing of many of the world's languages. Greater development of art and music. . . . The countless changed lives transformed from liabilities into assets to society because of the Gospel. The eternal salvation of countless souls!

(What if Jesus Had Never Been Born?: The Positive Impact of Christianity in History [Thomas Nelson, 1997], 3-4)

Fiji Islands

The morality of any society can be easily judged by the view it holds of human life. In 1844, H. L. Hastings visited the Fiji Islands. He found there that life was very cheap and that it was held in low esteem. You could buy a human being for \$7.00 or one musket! That was cheaper than a cow. After having bought him you could work him, whip him, starve him, or eat him, according to your preference—and many did the latter.

He returned a number of years later and found that the value of human life had risen tremendously. One could not buy a human being for \$7.00 to beat or eat. In fact, you could not buy one for seven million dollars. Why? Because across the Fiji Islands there were 1,200 Christian chapels where the Gospel of Christ had been proclaimed, and people had been taught that we are not our own; that we have been purchased with a price, not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

(What if Jesus Had Never Been Born?: The Positive Impact of Christianity in History [Thomas Nelson, 1997], 27)

Charles Darwin

In the last century, there was a great attack on foreign missionaries in the *London Times*. An experienced traveler wrote a letter to the editor in which he criticized this attitude. The letter writer said that such an attitude on the part of a voyager was particularly inexcusable-for should he happen to be cast ashore on some uncharted island, he would devoutly pray that the lesson of the [Christian] missionary had preceded him! The writer of the letter was no less than Charles Darwin, later an enemy of the Christian faith. Nonetheless, he recognized the utilitarian value of the faith.

(What if Jesus Had Never Been Born?: The Positive Impact of Christianity in History [Thomas Nelson, 1997], 157)

The Vikings

The religion of Jesus Christ has done more to elevate moral standards than any other force in history. Had Jesus never come, it's unlikely the Ten Commandments would be known beyond the Jews. Had Jesus never come, many of us-those who are of Anglo-Saxon stock-might still be drinking out of human skulls as they used to. Had Jesus never come, the Scandinavians might still be out plundering and terrorizing their neighbors as their ancestors, the Vikings, used to, until the Gospel of Christ took hold. Had Jesus never come, many of the formerly cannibalistic tribes of Africa, Asia, or the Americas would no doubt still be gorging on human flesh.

But Jesus did come, and He elevated morality and life on earth to a much higher level than ever before. . . . As many in the West continue to reject Him and His standards of right and wrong, we seem to be regressing to the vile and unspeakable sins that besmirched the ancient pagan world.

(What if Jesus Had Never Been Born?: The Positive Impact of Christianity in History [Thomas Nelson, 1997], 170-71)

Mary Slessor of Calabar (1848-1915)

She was converted in her teens, and after doing mission work in the slums of Dundee, she felt the call of God to serve as a missionary to Africa. In 1876, she left for Nigeria. She learned that beyond Okoyong, deeper in the heart of Africa, around Calabar, was an area in which lived four million savages so ferocious, so fierce, that even the government soldiers feared to penetrate the land. These four million

cannibals were so degraded, their customs so vile, that it stretches the imagination to consider the types of things they did.

Witchcraft and drunkenness were rampant. The savages worshiped fetishes; they murdered twins; they turned the mother of twins out into the jungle to be devoured by beasts because they believed twins were brought about by a conjunction with a demon. Almost half of the population was slaves. When a man died, they would eat fifty slaves; twenty-five more would have their hands tied behind them and their heads would be whacked off. Unmarried women were chattel. They could be raped, tortured, or murdered at will. . . . Children were considered no better than animals, often simply left to die.

Mary's heart was touched by the plight of twins always left to die or ground to pieces in a pot. She would snatch them up and take them in. At first the people were astonished because they believed that anybody who touched a twin would die, but Mary didn't die. So she gathered around her over the years many of these young "bairns," as she called them, to nurture them. . . .

Perpetual warfare among the different tribes had continued for innumerable centuries, but when she would hear of a tribe of warriors going out to attack another tribe, she would run barefoot through the jungle, where there were poisonous snakes and plants. She would head them off, standing in front of a whole host of armed cannibals with outstretched arms to demand that they stop. They did!

In incredible ways, by her faith in God, in her prayer, her winning countenance, the love she demonstrated, she was accepted. People milled around her and looked. . . . She began to teach them about the Son of God who had loved them enough to die for their sins. Astonishingly, God opened up their hearts. They became very willing to hear.

One after another the chiefs of the various villages yielded their lives to Christ. One after another the tremendously horrible customs plaguing these people for years were abolished; the murder of twins, infanticide, the slaughter of wives and slaves, the trial by poison and boiling oil, and all other terrible customs. Through her ministry, thousands from the Ibo tribe became Christians and abandoned their degrading ways. Indeed, the moral standards of many parts of the world have risen dramatically because of Christianity.

(What if Jesus Had Never Been Born?: The Positive Impact of Christianity in History [Thomas Nelson, 1997], 167-9)

There is no other religion in the world that can boast, or will ever be able to boast, that it has even *one* Mary Slessor. Neither Buddhism, Hinduism, Humanism, Islam, Marxism, or New Age. And the history of Christianity can boast of a multitude more, both those who are well known, and those who are not. (*Knowing Our God*, 2.3.F)

C. S. Lewis (1898-1963)

When we Christians behave badly, or fail to behave well, we are making Christianity unbelievable to the outside world. . . . Our careless lives set the outer world talking; and we give them grounds for talking in a way that throws doubt on the truth of Christianity itself.

[T]he new men are dotted here and there all over the earth. . . . Every now and then one meets them. Their very voices and faces are different from ours: stronger, quieter, happier, more radiant. . . . They love you more than other men do, but they need you less. (*Mere Christianity* [Harper Collins, 2001], 208, 223)

Josh McDowell

After I prayed [to receive Christ], nothing happened. There was no bolt of lightning. I didn't sprout angel wings. If anything, I actually felt worse after I prayed, almost physically sick. I was afraid I had made an emotional decision that I would later regret intellectually. . . . I really felt I had gone off the deep end.

But over the next eighteen months my entire life was changed. . . . One of the biggest changes occurred in how I viewed people. . . . [A]fter I placed my trust in Christ, my thinking changed. Instead of using others to serve me, I wanted to be used to serve others. Becoming other-centered instead of self-centered was a dramatic change in my life.

Another area that started to change was my bad temper. I used to blow my stack if somebody just looked at me wrong. I still have the scars from almost killing a man during my first year in the university. My bad temper was so ingrained that I didn't consciously seek to change it. But one day, when faced with a crisis that would ordinarily have set me off, I discovered that my bad temper was gone. I'm not perfect in this area, but this change in my life has been significant and dramatic.

Perhaps the most significant change has been in the area of hatred and bitterness. I grew up filled with hatred, primarily aimed at one man whom I hated more than anyone else on the face of this earth. I despised everything this man stood for. I can remember as a young boy lying in bed at night plotting how I would kill this man without being caught by the police. This man was my father.

While I was growing up, my father was the town drunk. I hardly ever saw him sober. My friends at school would joke about my dad lying in the gutter downtown, making a fool of himself. Their jokes

hurt me deeply, but I never let anyone know. I laughed along with them. I kept my pain a secret.

I would sometimes find my mother in the barn, lying in the manure behind the cows where my dad had beaten her with a hose until she couldn't get up. My hatred seethed as I vowed to myself, "When I am strong enough, I'm going to kill him." When Dad was drunk and visitors were coming over, I would grab him around the neck, pull him out to the barn, and tie him up. Then I would park his truck behind the silo and tell everyone he had gone to a meeting, so we wouldn't be embarrassed as a family. When I tied up his hands and feet, I looped part of the rope around his neck. I just hoped he would try to get away and choke himself.

Two months before I graduated from high school, I walked into the house after a date to hear my mother sobbing. I ran into her room, and she sat up in bed. "Son, your father has broken my heart" she said. She put her arms around me and pulled me close. "I have lost the will to live. All I want to do is live until you graduate, then I want to die."

Two months later I graduated, and the following Friday my mother died. I believe she died of a broken heart. I hated my father for that. Had I not left home a few months after the funeral to attend college, I might have killed him.

But after I made a decision to place my trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord, the love of God inundated my life. He took my hatred for my father and turned it upside-down. Five months after becoming a Christian, I found myself looking my dad right in the eye and saying, "Dad, I love you." I did not want to love that man, but I did. God's love had changed my heart.

After I transferred to Wheaton University, I was in a serious car accident, the victim of a drunk driver. I was moved home from the hospital to recover, and my father came to see me. Remarkably, he was sober that day. He seemed uneasy, pacing back and forth in my room. Then he blurted out, "How can you love a father like me?"

I said, "Dad, six months ago I hated you, I despised you. But I have put my trust in Jesus Christ, received God's forgiveness, and He has changed my life. I can't explain it all, Dad. But God has taken away my hatred for you and replaced it with love.'

We talked for nearly an hour, then he said, "Son, if God can do in my life what I've seen Him do in yours, then I want to give Him the opportunity." He prayed, "God, if You're really God and Jesus died on the cross to forgive me for what I've done to my family, I need You. If Jesus can do in my life what I've seen Him do in the life of my son, then I want to trust Him as Savior and Lord.'" Hearing my dad pray this prayer from his heart was one of the greatest joys of my life.

After I trusted Christ, my life was basically changed in six to eighteen months. But my father's life was changed right before my

eyes. It was like someone reached down and switched on a light inside him. He touched alcohol only once after that. He got the drink only as far as his lips, and that was it-after forty years of drinking! He didn't need it any more. Fourteen months later, he died from complications of his alcoholism. But in that fourteen-month period over a hundred people in the area around my tiny hometown committed their lives to Jesus Christ because of the change they saw in the town drunk, my dad.

You can laugh at Christianity. You can mock and ridicule it. But it works. If you trust Christ, start watching your attitudes and actions-Jesus Christ is in the business of changing lives.

(Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* [Josh McDowell, 1999], xxv-xxvii)

New Age guru

During a long dinner conversation I had with a senior researcher from a large New Age think tank, we discussed the idea of this impersonal force. For fifteen years this man had been deeply immersed in Eastern philosophy. He had been researching, writing and advising on radio and television specials about New Age topics. He had been brought up in a Christian church, and he came to me because he was considering returning to his roots. One reason he gave for his desire was that he couldn't find a home in any of the Eastern philosophies. He had tried them all and found that they didn't fit what he had discovered about the universe. Above all, he had met the top Eastern gurus and New Age advocates and was profoundly disappointed. He described them as narcissistic.

(Arthur Lindsey, *Love the Ultimate Apologetic: The Heart of Christian Witness*. [Intervarsity, 2008, 22])

Sai Baba

Tal Brooke, president of the Spiritual Counterfeits Project based in Berkeley, California, spent years in India being groomed as a Western spokesman for Sai Baba, the guru of gurus in India. Sai Baba is the guru most respected by adherents to New Age spirituality. He is the one whom many other gurus visit to be blessed. Thousands go to catch even a distant glimpse of him, for there are many stories of his miracle-working powers. Tal Brooke had numerous private audiences with Sai Baba.

During his time in India, Tal also met a Christian missionary couple. He tried to use his brilliant mind and his skills in logic to convert them to Hinduism, but they put some dents in his arguments.

What he noticed about them over time was that they seemed to care more for him than they did for themselves. Later he described their attitude as other-centered, or agape love. Though other Hindu disciples were gentle, Tal noticed that they lacked the quality of genuine other-centered love. Above all, after numerous private audiences with Sai Baba, Tal realized that the guru himself utterly lacked this other-centered love. Tal Brooke began to understand what Jesus meant when he said, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35 NRSV). (Arthur Lindsey, *Love the Ultimate Apologetic: The Heart of Christian Witness*. [Intervarsity, 2008, 24])

Nigeria

Sometimes it is a silent love. I recently heard of a tribe in Nigeria that approached a missionary who didn't know them. The chief said, "We all want to believe in Jesus. What do we do?" The missionary was confused and asked if someone had preached to them. They said no but again stated that the whole tribe wanted to follow Jesus. When the missionary asked why, the chief explained.

Apparently some Christian believers had been coming to their village regularly over a number of years and had built a school, some wells, a hospital and other things to help them. The villagers said that no one else had done anything for them. They were attracted to the loving attitudes and actions of these believers.

(Arthur Lindsey, *Love the Ultimate Apologetic: The Heart of Christian Witness*. [Intervarsity, 2008, 28])

Richard Wine, a murderer forgiven

I met Richard Wine when I visited a prison in southern Florida. His story is unique. He came to believe in Christ because of the mother of the man he murdered!

You can imagine Judy Lawson's anger and bitterness toward this man who murdered her son. Judy was a Christian and even involved in prison ministry, but she was consumed by her anger toward Richard. Finally one day she knelt down and gave her anger to God. She prayed that Richard, the killer of her son, would come to believe in Jesus. That was a major victory.

But Judy didn't stop there. She decided to write to Richard in the maximum-security prison where he was serving a life sentence. She wrote something to the effect that she was praying for him and that if he asked for forgiveness for his sins, including the murder of her son, Christ would forgive him.

When Richard got Judy's first letter, he threw it away, thinking she was crazy. But Judy persisted. Over the next five years she wrote occasional letters to the same effect. It started to get under Richard's skin and really bother him. While he spent two weeks in solitary confinement, he decided to read through the Bible. When he got to the book of Isaiah, something started to happen in his heart. By the time he had finished the New Testament, he had committed his life to Christ.

The first thing Richard did when he got out of the "hole" was write to Judy and tell her that he had made the commitment to follow Christ. He wanted her to be the first to know.

Judy decided to visit him in that prison. You can imagine their first meeting, when Richard asked Judy for forgiveness for the murder of her son, and she granted it!

Richard knew that he needed to grow in Christ, so he enrolled in a Bible correspondence course. He didn't know how to type, so Judy would occasionally type his papers. Their relationship developed to the point where she would regularly worship at her church and then drive down to worship with Richard in the prison chapel. As I spoke in the chapel one Sunday morning, the two were sitting together, a visible witness to the power of Christ to reconcile even the worst bitterness.

Just before I arrived at the prison, Judy Lawson had presented a Bible to Richard Wine. Inside the front cover she had inscribed, "To Richard, my beloved adopted son, from your adopted mother."
(Arthur Lindsey, *Love the Ultimate Apologetic: The Heart of Christian Witness*. [Intervarsity, 2008, 108-9])

Ancient Roman culture

It may be well for us to remember the background against which these transformations took place. To get an insight into Christianity's contribution to Roman moral culture generally we need only remember what that culture was at the time Christianity reached it.

The Colosseum was called the "most characteristic relic of Pagan Rome." In each of twelve spectacles given by Aediles, from one hundred to five hundred pairs of gladiators appeared, to fight to the death with net, dagger, lances and trident, or with straight or curved blades, ground to the finest edge and point. At the triumph of Aurelian, later, eight hundred pairs of gladiators fought ten thousand men during the games of Trajan. Sometimes female gladiators fought, sometimes dwarfs, as under Domitian.

And the condemned were sometimes burned in shirts of pitch to illuminate the gardens, or were hung on crosses and left to be torn by famished bears before the populace.

The combats of animals, with each other or with men, was always refreshing to this horrid thirst for cruel excitement. Criminals, dressed in the skins of wild beasts, were exposed to tortured and maddened bulls. Under Nero, four hundred tigers fought with elephants and bulls. At the dedication of the Colosseum, by Titus, five thousand animals were killed. The rhinoceros, the hippo, the stag, the giraffe, even the crocodile and the serpent were introduced in what Tertullian fitly called "this Devil's pomp" and there is scarcely one element of horror, which can be conceived in man's wildest dreams, which was not presented as a matter of luxury to make complete the "Roman holiday" at the time when Christianity entered the capital. (John Gerstner, *Reasons for Faith* [Harper & Row, n.d.], 155-6)

Early Martyrs

Its sheer manliness leaves the world amazed. One martyr was afraid that he would be unable to face the flames. He tried to steel himself for the torment by holding his finger in the flame of a candle but could not endure even that. Yet when the time came for him to be burned alive, he went serenely and bravely to his death. Another martyr temporarily lost his courage and signed a recantation. Later he not only corrected his failure, but when he was burned, placed first in the fire the hand which had signed the recantation, holding it there until it was consumed.

Again they have been surprisingly joyful in these most unpropitious moments when the last thing to be expected would be joy. Perhaps they could be courageous, and perhaps they could even forgive, but how could they possibly be happy? Nevertheless, they have been happy and have died with joy in their hearts and songs on their lips. And this has often been the case.

In Montpellier in southern France one can see an open park area where multitudes of men and women were put to death for their faith in Christ. One learns from history that when these people died, they sang Psalms as the fires rose about them. They sang so happily and so lustily that the authorities were obliged to hire a band to play music that would drown out their joyful songs of praise. Such is the spirit of the martyrs of Jesus Christ, for whom "to live is Christ and to die is gain."

(John Gerstner, *Reasons for Faith* [Harper & Row, n.d.], 230)

Harry Ironside (1876-1951)

[T]he words of God are converting. They change lives as no other power on earth can. Harry Ironside, a great preacher and evangelist

from an earlier generation, was in San Francisco once taking part in a Salvation Army sidewalk meeting when he was challenged to debate the subject "Agnosticism versus Christianity" by a well-known socialist of that era. He replied like this:

"I will be glad to agree to this debate on the following conditions: namely, that in order to prove that Mr. _____ has something worth debating about, he will promise to bring with him to the Hall of Science next Sunday [the place and time of the proposed debate] two people whose qualifications I will give in a moment, as proof that agnosticism is of real value in changing human lives and building true character.

"First, he must promise to bring with him one man who was for years what we commonly call a 'down-and-outer'. . . a man who for years was under the power of evil habits from which he could not deliver himself, but who on some occasion entered one of Mr. - _____'s meetings and heard his glorification of agnosticism and his denunciations of the Bible and Christianity, and whose heart and mind as he listened to such an address were so deeply stirred that he went away from that meeting saying, 'Henceforth, I too am an agnostic!' and as a result of imbibing that particular philosophy found that a new power had come into his life. The sins he once loved he now hates, and righteousness and goodness are now the ideals of his life. He is now an entirely new man, a credit to himself and an asset to society—all because he is an agnostic.

"Secondly, I would like Mr. _____ to promise to bring with him one woman . . . once a poor, wrecked, characterless outcast, the slave of evil passions, and the victim of man's corrupt living [but who also] entered a hall where Mr. _____ was loudly proclaiming his agnosticism and ridiculing the message of the Holy Scriptures.

As she listened, hope was born in her heart and she said, 'This is just what I need to deliver me from the slavery of sin!' She followed the teaching and became an intelligent agnostic or infidel. As a result, her whole being revolted against the degradation of the life she had been living. She fled from the den of iniquity where she had been held captive so long; and today, rehabilitated, she has won her way back to an honored position in society and is living a clean, virtuous, happy life, all because she is an agnostic.

"Now," he said, addressing the gentleman who had presented him with his card and the challenge, "if you will promise to bring these two people with you as examples of what agnosticism can do, I will promise to meet you at the Hall of Science at four o'clock next Sunday, and I will bring with me at the very least one hundred men and women who for years lived in just such sinful degradation as I have tried to depict, but who have been gloriously saved through believing the gospel which you ridicule. I will have these men and women with me on the platform as witnesses to the miraculous saving

power of Jesus Christ and as present-day proof of the truth of the Bible." The debate never took place.

(James M. Boice, *Ephesians: An Expositional Commentary* [Baker, 1998], 255-6)

Augustus H. Strong (1836–1921)

The first Moravian missionaries to the West Indies walked six hundred miles to take ship, worked their passage, and then sold themselves as slaves, in order to get the privilege of preaching to the negroes. . . .

The father of John G. Paton was a stocking weaver. The whole family, with the exception of the very small children, worked from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., with one hour for dinner at noon and a half hour each for breakfast and supper. Yet family prayer was regularly held twice a day. In these breathing spells for daily meals John G. Paton took part of his time to study the Latin Grammar that he might prepare himself for missionary work. When told by an uncle that, if he went to the New Hebrides, the cannibals would eat him, he replied: "You yourself will soon be dead and buried, and I [might as well] be eaten by cannibals as by worms."

The Aneityumese raised arrow-root for fifteen years and sold it to pay the £1200 required for printing the Bible in their own language. Universal church attendance and Bible study make those South Sea Islands the most heavenly place on earth on the Sabbath-day.

In 1839, twenty thousand negroes in Jamaica gathered to begin a life of freedom. Into a coffin were put the handcuffs and shackles of slavery, relics of the whipping post and the scourge. As the clock struck twelve at night, a preacher cried with the first stroke: "The monster is dying!" and so with every stroke until the last, when he cried: "The monster is dead!" Then all rose from their knees and sang: "Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

"What do you do that for?" said the sick Chinaman whom the medical missionary was tucking up in bed with a care which the patient had never received since he was a baby. The missionary took the opportunity to tell him of the love of Christ. . . .

The aged Australian mother, when told that her two daughters, missionaries in China, had both of them been murdered by a heathen mob, loudly replied: "This decides me; I will go to China now myself, and try to teach those poor creatures what the love of Jesus means." . . .

Dr. William Ashmore: "Let one missionary die, and ten come to his funeral."

A shoemaker, teaching neglected boys and girls while he worked at his cobbler's bench, gave the impulse to Thomas Guthrie's [famous Scottish preacher, 1803-1873] life of faith.

When the microscopic search of scepticism, which has hunted the heavens and sounded the seas to disprove the existence of a Creator, has turned its attention to human society and has found on this planet a place ten miles square where decent man can live in decency, comfort, and security, supporting and educating his children, unspoiled and unpolluted; a place where age is revered, infancy protected, manhood respected, womanhood honored, and human life held in due regard—when sceptics can find such a place ten miles square on this globe, where the gospel of Christ has not gone and cleared the way and laid the foundations and made decency and security possible, it will then be in order for the sceptical literati to move thither and to venerate their views.

But so long as these very men are dependent upon the very religion they discard for every privilege they enjoy, they may well hesitate before they rob the Christian of his hope and humanity of its faith in that Savior who alone has given that hope of eternal life which makes life tolerable and society possible, and robs death of its terrors and the grave of its gloom.

(*Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. [Judson, 1907, 1953], I:195)

John Owens (1616–1683)

Yea, of all the external arguments that are or may be pleaded to justify the divine authority of the Scripture, there is none more prevalent nor cogent than this of its mighty efficacy in all ages on the souls of men, to change, convert, and renew them into the image and likeness of God, which hath been visible and manifest.

(*A Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit*; online at www.ccel.org, VI.6)

William Barclay

In Brazil Signor Antonio of Minas bought a New Testament which he took home to burn. He went home and found the fire was out. Deliberately he lit it. He flung the New Testament on it. It would not burn. He opened out the pages to make it burn more easily. It opened at the Sermon on the Mount. He glanced at it as he consigned it to the flames. His mind was caught; he took it back. "He read on, forgetful of time, through the hours of the night, and just as the dawn was breaking, he stood up and declared, 'I believe'."

Vincente Quiroga of Chile found a few pages of a book washed up on the seashore by a tidal wave following an earthquake. He read

them and never rested until he obtained the rest of the Bible. Not only did he become a Christian; he devoted the rest of his life to the distribution of the Scriptures in the forgotten villages of northern Chile.

One dark night in a forest in Sicily a brigand held up a colporteur at the point of a revolver. He was ordered to light a bonfire and burn his books. He lit the fire, and then he asked if he might read a little from each book before he dropped it in the flames. He read the twenty-third psalm from one; the story of the Good Samaritan from another; from another the Sermon on the Mount; from another 1Cor.13. At the end of each reading, the brigand said: "That's a good book; we won't burn that one; give it to me." In the end not a book was burned; the brigand left the colporteur and went off into the darkness with the books. Years later that same brigand turned up again. This time he was a Christian minister, and it was to the reading of the books that he attributed his change.

(Daily Study Bible [Liguori, 1996], 2 Tim 3:15-17)

Okinawa

Many years ago the report by a war correspondent who followed the United States Forces as they stormed and occupied Okinawa was filed and released. Thirty years before this invasion, a missionary came through Okinawa on his way to Japan. He had but a little while to stay, but in that brief period of time, in a little Okinawan village called Shimmabuke, he preached the gospel. He won two young men to Christ and left them with a Bible.

One of those men was named Shosei Kina. He later became the head man, the mayor, of the village. The other man was Mojon, and he became the headmaster of the school in the village. In those thirty years, with only the witness of the Bible, they built that school. Mojon was the teacher. They had one text; it was the Book. They taught and learned the Bible in that school. They prayed to the Lord Jesus. They found through the Word of God the will of the Lord for their lives. Shosei Kina, the mayor of the little town, led the people into the ways of the Lord. Those two men won everyone in the village to faith in Christ, and they built the government of their village around the Word of God.

When America stormed Okinawa, this village, Shimmabuke, was in the path of the advance of the American forces. And this war correspondent was with those GI's storming that island. When the forces of America came to Shimmabuke, they came with artillery, machine guns, and rifles. They were met by these two old men, Shosei Kina and Mojon. They welcomed the GI's because they had heard that they were Americans. They had known only one American, and he had led them to the Lord. They said that these Americans were somewhat different from the one they had seen before, but they

were welcoming the Americans anyway! They welcomed them in the name of the Lord and in the name of the Holy Book around which they had centered their lives and constructed their city government.

Those GI's were overwhelmed. They did not know what to think. They called the chaplain. The chaplain called the commanding officers. Those two godly old men accompanied the officers through the streets of their little village. The other villages of Okinawa were filled with filth and dirt, and the people were ignorant and untaught, but this little town was spotless. Its streets were perfectly kept. Its homes were clean. The people were genteel and gracious. The officers expressed amazement at what they were seeing. Those two elderly Christian men thought the Americans were disappointed and they bowed saying: "You must pardon us. We are a backward people and all we know is the Bible. We have done nothing else but follow the teachings of Jesus. You must forgive us!"

Then the correspondent closed that report with this. He said: "I was walking through the streets of Shimabuke with a tough old American sergeant, and he said to me, 'Look at this. I am beginning to wonder if we are not using the wrong weapons to change the world!'"

(W. A. Criswell, vol. 1: *Bibliology in Great Doctrines of the Bible*, 8 vol [Zondervan, 1982), 80-1)

1/17/09

Africa

From The London Times, Matthew Parris, December 27, 2008

As an atheist, I truly believe Africa needs God. Missionaries, not aid money, are the solution to Africa's biggest problem - the crushing passivity of the people's mindset

Before Christmas I returned, after 45 years, to the country that as a boy I knew as Nyasaland. Today it's Malawi . . . [T]ravelling in Malawi refreshed another belief, too: one I've been trying to banish all my life, but an observation I've been unable to avoid since my African childhood. It confounds my ideological beliefs, stubbornly refuses to fit my world view, and has embarrassed my growing belief that there is no God.

Now a confirmed atheist, I've become convinced of the enormous contribution that Christian evangelism makes in Africa: sharply distinct from the work of secular NGOs, government projects and international aid efforts. These alone will not do. Education and training alone will not do. In Africa Christianity changes people's hearts. It brings a spiritual transformation. The rebirth is real. The change is good.

I used to avoid this truth by applauding - as you can - the practical work of mission churches in Africa. It's a pity, I would say, that

salvation is part of the package, but Christians black and white, working in Africa . . . do teach people to read and write; and only the severest kind of secularist could see a mission hospital or school and say the world would be better without it. . . .

We had friends who were missionaries, and as a child I stayed often with them; I also stayed, alone with my little brother, in a traditional rural African village. In the city we had working for us Africans who had converted and were strong believers. The Christians were always different. Far from having cowed or confined its converts, their faith appeared to have liberated and relaxed them. There was a liveliness, a curiosity, an engagement with the world - a directness in their dealings with others - that seemed to be missing in traditional African life. They stood tall.

At 24, travelling by land across the continent reinforced this impression. From Algiers to Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon and the Central African Republic, then right through the Congo to Rwanda, Tanzania and Kenya, four student friends and I drove our old Land Rover to Nairobi. . . .

Whenever we entered a territory worked by missionaries, we had to acknowledge that something changed in the faces of the people we passed and spoke to: something in their eyes, the way they approached you direct, man-to-man, without looking down or away. They had not become more deferential towards strangers - in some ways less so - but more open.

This time in Malawi it was the same. I met no missionaries. You do not encounter missionaries in the lobbies of expensive hotels discussing development strategy documents, as you do with the big NGOs. But instead I noticed that a handful of the most impressive African members of the Pump Aid team (largely from Zimbabwe) were, privately, strong Christians. "Privately" because the charity is entirely secular and I never heard any of its team so much as mention religion while working in the villages. But I picked up the Christian references in our conversations. One, I saw, was studying a devotional textbook in the car. One, on Sunday, went off to church at dawn for a two-hour service. . . .

I observe that tribal belief . . . suppresses individuality. People think collectively; first in terms of the community, extended family and tribe. This rural-traditional mindset feeds into the "big man" and gangster politics of the African city: the exaggerated respect for a swaggering leader, and the (literal) inability to understand the whole idea of loyal opposition.

Anxiety - fear of evil spirits, of ancestors, of nature and the wild, of a tribal hierarchy, of quite everyday things - strikes deep into the whole structure of rural African thought. Every man has his place and, call it fear or respect, a great weight grinds down the individual spirit,

stunting curiosity. People won't take the initiative, won't take things into their own hands or on their own shoulders. . . .

Christianity, post-Reformation and post-Luther, with its teaching of a direct, personal, two-way link between the individual and God, unmediated by the collective, and unsubordinate to any other human being, smashes straight through the philosophical/spiritual framework I've just described. It offers something to hold on to to those anxious to cast off a crushing tribal groupthink. That is why and how it liberates.

Those who want Africa to walk tall amid 21st-century global competition must not kid themselves that providing the material means or even the knowhow that accompanies what we call development will make the change. A whole belief system must first be supplanted.

And I'm afraid it has to be supplanted by another. Removing Christian evangelism from the African equation may leave the continent at the mercy of a malign fusion of Nike, the witch doctor, the mobile phone and the machete.

Bill Moyers

World Magazine, 3/14/09, p. 25

[During] the 1960s served as White House press secretary in the Johnson administration. He hosted the PBS news program *Bill Moyers Journal* during the 1970s and was a CBS editor and analyst from 1976 through 1986. Over the past two decades courtly correspondent has produced and hosted several PBS series. He has received over 30 Emmys.

"Someone recently asked me what the moment was when I became a Christian. And I told them, I never did become a Christian. I can't turn the other cheek. I can't sell all my possessions and give them away. I can't love my enemy. I am not a Christian because I can't do what Jesus asks. But, I care deeply about that figure. He has instructed my faith; He looms large in my life. But I can't do what He asks me to do, so I can't legitimately claim to be a Christian."

Roman Historian Edward Gibbon on the Early Church and Virtue

Chris Ostom at <http://divorcedchristian.com/?p=13>

Edward Gibbon, in his classic work, the Decline and fall of the Roman Empire, once wrote: "The primitive Christian demonstrated his faith by his virtues..." and as a result, won the heart of the culture. Gibbon wrote that that single factor helped bring cultural influence and

victory to the Church of Christ against the Roman Empire in the 4th Century AD.

1) Christian history and the obedience of Christians: Such obedience rendered to the Lord is designed to actively portray principle and way of life higher and wiser than anything known to mankind naturally. Its values outshine all other systems of "morality" put together.

As a result, Scripture tells us that each Christian is to be a distinct "sign" and a "wonder" of Christ to society round about them. In other words, our Christian life credentials our Christian message, despite our sinful nature. This credentialing has moved our Christian history among the nations for the last 2000 years.

One example: the Christian history of the church records the fact that Afra of Augsburg, a former prostitute, repented of her sinful way of life and embraced Christ, she set up an orphanage for abandoned children of prisoners, smugglers, slaves, and thieves. Later, she became even more efficient in her love for these children by setting up a network through the churches for finding and putting them out for adoption.² She very much represents the adage: "It's not so much the presence of sin in life as it is the absence of repentance in the heart that distinguishes a bad man or woman from an upright one."

The Roman state resented her work, especially since the "perception" was created by the propaganda of state agencies persecuting her saying that she was aiding and abetting "enemies of society" by helping these children... and saving children whom the state could only wish would "better" serve it as "productive" slaves.

So, the reality was that her activities put anything else to shame, including Roman "morality". More to the point, she was caring for children who, in the eyes of slave masters and Roman rulers, could be put to work in places such as the Roman sulfur mines. That was money out of their pockets as far as they were concerned.

Afra was murdered by the Roman police state in the infamous persecution of Diocletian which began in the year 303 A.D. and extended over the next 10 years, the worst persecution to that date in the Christian history of the church.

2) Christian history and cultural institutions: Gibbon's principle described far more than individual heroics throughout Christian history. Christians, he noted, are invariably moved to build institutions which makes their work more efficient and powerful.

Several such institutions, such as marriage and the family, are second nature to the creative impulse of Christian people. Christians have built schools, businesses, clinics, media, hospitals, charities, ministries of all types.

For example, the great 4th Century minister, Basil of Byzantium, built leper's colonies for the humane medical treatment of lepers. His work drew the ire of many Roman aristocrats but such health care

works undertaken by Christian people and churches glorified the Name of Christ.

In other words, Christianity is a new kind of civilization, not just a way to heaven. But, also, the way to heaven is credentialed by the quality of life and testimony we have shown throughout the Christian history of the church.

3) Christian history and deep societal reform: But Gibbon's observation goes even deeper. Christ's people bring a way of life that exposes and displaces a contrary civilization. For example, Telemachus of Laddia undertook the celebrated reform that eventually brought an end to the cruelties of gladiatorial combat in the arena. He was martyred in the arena for his work.³

The arena was used by the Caesars as a means of "corrupting the masses" for support and power politics. Cicero, the Roman Senator once described the real power and agenda of the arena. He said:

Setting out to seek power, and unable to gain their objectives by their own resources, they use every means to bribe and corrupt the masses. Then again, when they have rendered the many greedy for public benefits through their insane appetite for prestige, it evolves into a state of government by force. Once the people are accustomed to feeding off the property of others...they find a champion who is ambitious and daring, who brings the rule of force to completion carrying out murders, exiles and redistributions of properties – until, having come to live in the manner of beasts - they find a tyrannical master and monarch.

4) Christian history and Christian virtue: Barlaam of Antioch, a humble shoe maker, represents yet another valuable lesson. As an infant boy, he had been rescued by Christians from the horrid Roman practice of placing unwanted children at a place just outside along the wall of the city designated by Roman law. There roving packs of dogs would find an easy meal. The historian puts it this way:

Barlaam of Antioch was a cobbler for the imperial forces who devoted all his free time to the care of orphans and widows in his church. Because he himself had been saved from the infanticide wall outside the city, he was especially concerned for exposed children. Even though he was not a pastor or church leader, his good deeds were so widely known that the enemies of the faith sought to have his witness silenced. During the calamitous persecution in 304, they succeeded in having him martyred.

These virtuous lives – and many like them - won the culture. Such a faith represented a wise and upright view of life in a corrupt world, which even the agnostic Edward Gibbon could see and admire.

Founder of Atheist Church

Article in College Campus newspaper April 2010

"Cover-ups show contradictions" by Marc Perkel, the founder of the Church of Reality

I have a message for my believing friends, and it's something that believers should really listen to and think about. As a realist who doesn't believe in God, I am often challenged to open my heart and let Jesus in.

I am reluctant to do so without any evidence God exists.

I am told that when one becomes a believer, they have a personal relationship with God and then God transforms you and finally you become one with the Lord.

So from my point of view, I should be able to see the difference in the behavior of those who believe as compared to those who don't believe. But I'm not seeing it.

Especially in the latest news coming out about the sexual abuse of children in the Catholic Church.

So let me be clear and direct about this, so you Catholics listen up. If there is an omnipotent God and a person or a religious group has a personal relationship with God then you wouldn't be raping children—period.

The Catholic Church would not be covering up for those priests who are raping children. Admittedly, this doesn't prove that God doesn't exist, but it does prove that the Catholic Church does not have a personal relationship with an omnipotent God, because if they did this sort of thing simply would not occur.

As a member of the reality-based community I am dedicated to believing in anything that is real. If God is real then I will believe.

But how am I to determine if God is actually and truly real and which of the thousands of religions is the true one to follow?

Turning to your Bible, the standard is, "You will know them by their fruits." Clearly the Catholics have failed the "fruit test" because of the pervasive raping of children and the cover-up by the Vatican.

As to the rest of religions and independent Christians, Muslims or other believers, you aren't going to convert atheists unless you can show us God actually has transformed your life in a way that is observable to the reality-based world.

Even if God can't be observed directly, if you claim God has changed your life, then those changes should be observable in your life and in your religious group as a whole.

And if these changes aren't observable, then we in the reality-based community aren't going to listen to what you have to say.

If you are going to convert atheists, you are going to have to pass your "fruit test" to get our attention.

Testimony of atheist Penn Jillette

For a remarkable example of the effect of *virtue apologetics* on an atheist see the rather famous video of the magician Penn Jillette at http://www.crackle.com/c/ComicCon/A_Gift_of_a_Bible/2415037.

Penn is a rather renowned and aggressive atheist. It is instructive to imagine what would have happened if the Christian who spoke with Penn would have come to him with intellectual arguments about Christianity like so many no doubt have. Instead, this brother bypassed all of Penn's intellectual defenses with virtue that was supernatural enough that not even this hardened atheist could deny or ignore it.

Commentary of Albert Barnes (1798–1870) on Col 4:5-6

(1) People of the world judge of religion, not from the profession, but from the life of its friends.

(2) They judge of religion, not from preaching, or from books, or from the conduct of its founder and his apostles, but from what they see in the daily walk and conversation of the members of the church.

(3) They understand the nature of religion so well as to know when its friends are or are not consistent with their profession.

(4) They set a much higher value on honesty and integrity than they do on the doctrines and duties of religion; and if the professed friends of religion are destitute of the principles of truth and honesty, they think they have nothing of any value. They may be very devout on the sabbath; very regular at prayer-meetings; very strict in the observance of rites and ceremonies—but all these are of little worth in the estimation of the world, unless attended with an upright life.

(5) No professing christian can possibly do good to others who does not live an upright life. If you have cheated a man out of never so small a sum, it is vain that you talk to him about the salvation of his soul; if you have failed to pay him a debt when it was due, or to finish a piece of work when you promised it, or to tell him the exact truth in conversation, it is vain for you to endeavor to induce him to be a christian. He will feel, if he does not say—and he might very properly say—that he wants no religion which will not make a man honest.

(6) No person will attempt to do much good to others whose own life is not upright. He will be sensible of the inconsistency, and will feel that he cannot do it with any sense of propriety; and the honor of religion, therefore, and the salvation of our fellow-men, demand that in all our intercourse with others, we should lead lives of the strictest integrity.