
BELIEF
+
=REASONABLE

Jesus Christ

HIS IMPACT
ON HISTORY



(A SMALL BUT
DIZZYING SAMPLE)


Review: Apologetics
Christians owe it to God
to be an explanation of Jesus
to those who need to know about him.

1. Believers: Salt, Light

You are the salt of the earth;

but if the salt has become **tasteless**, how can it be made salty again? It is **no longer good** for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.

You are the light of the world.

A city set on a hill cannot be **hidden**; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket,

but on the lampstand, and **it gives light to all** who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that **they may see your good works, and glorify your Father** who is in heaven.

Jesus (Matt 5:13-14 NASB)



"Salt enhances the positive sensory attributes of foods, even some otherwise unpalatable foods"

from *Strategies to Reduce Sodium Intake in the United States*. Institute of Medicine (US) Committee on Strategies to Reduce Sodium Intake; Henney JE, Taylor CL, Boon CS, editors. Washington (DC): National Academies Press (US); 2010.

Some Books I Read ...Retitled (jokingly)

v *Jesus Skeptic*, John S. Dickerson †	*That "Primary Sources" Pastor*
v *Bullies and Saints*, John Dickson †	*Christians Sin. (Sorry!) ...but then Jesus*
v *Dominion*, Tom Holland*	*Haha: You Think You're Not Christian*
v *Who is this Man?* John Ortberg †	*Counterintuitive Truth*
v *The Air We Breathe*, Glen Scrivener †	*(good title, no notes)*
v *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, Jared Diamond*	*Taking Liberal Arts For Granted*

Things *everyone* takes for granted

Freedom, lack of open slavery, people cannot be property

Equality, lack of open classism, lack of enforced classism, lack of variance in human worth, women's rights in the workplace, voting booth, property market, marriage

Hospitals, world-leading hospitals, safety for hospital workers, hospital design

Universities, freedom of thought, freedom to study, freedom of belief

Charity, human worth of the less fortunate, welfare programs

Human worth of children and babies, orphanages, child murder laws, child neglect laws

Religious freedom, freedom from state religion, no conversion by force, no religious killings

Things Christians don't like to own

Scripture does not clarify how Christians should

- Be in power, and when in power,
- deal with invasive violent threats
- deal with church vs state
- deal with insurrection
- deal with dissent
- address atrocities by other countries/powers/forces

That *was* us. “No True Scotsman.” Cover-ups.

Hierarchical “Natural Law,” the enemy of Jesus, has often been adapted by Christians for power and winning



Imago Dei

Genesis 1:27

God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.




Childhood

Are Bluey, Batman, Pooh, and Toy Story ...Christian?








GOOD BOY. YOU'RE A GOOD BOY.

Is Respect for Childhood …*Christian*?

"Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" [Jesus] called a child to Himself...

- Matthew, quoting Jesus and his disciples
Matthew 18:1-6 (NASB 1995)

"Leave the children alone, and do not forbid them to come to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."
- Jesus
in Matthew 19:14 (NASB 1995)

Pooh's morality teaches us to be "childlike" . . . "about the passage of childhood . . . 'I would have liked it to go on longer,' Pooh muses. Wouldn't we all."

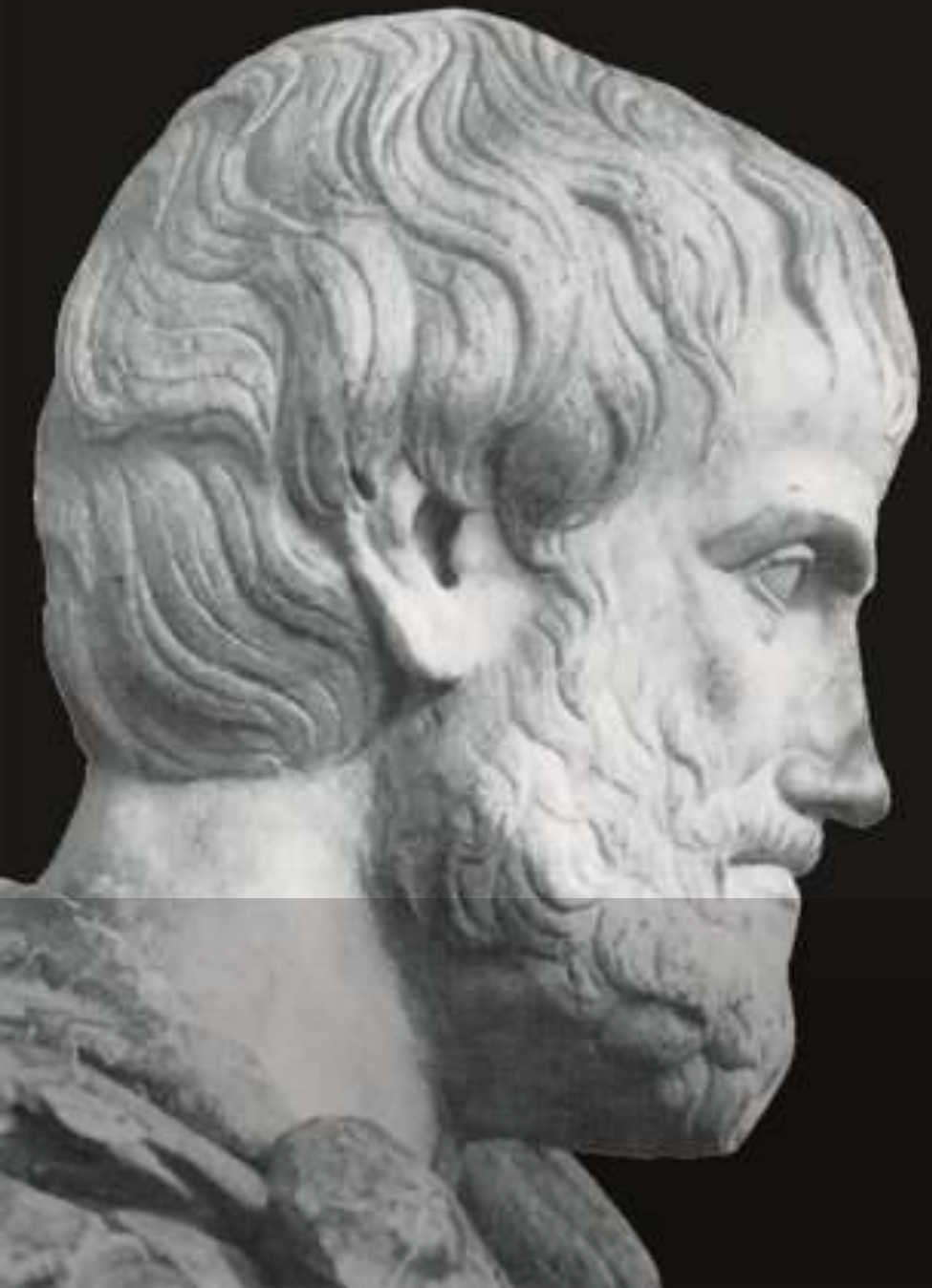
- Robin Wright, "The Moral Clarity of 'Christopher Robin'"
New York Times (2018)

"Sometimes,' said Pooh, 'the smallest things take up the most room in your heart."

- Winnie the Pooh, apocryphal lore, most likely *mis*attributed to A.A. Milne (per Uri Bram, "Misquoting Winnie the Pooh," Dirt.FYI (2022), citing William Levack's blog, Misquoting Pooh

1 Cor. 1:27

God has **chosen the weak** things of the world to shame the things which are strong



Classical Philosophy on Infant Worth

"Plato and Aristotle, as well as the Stoics, Epicurus, and presumably Plotinus, accept the morality of the exposure of infants…on eugenic or sometimes on purely economic grounds…We see here further clear evidence of the ancient view that somehow value is acquired, either by the development of intelligence or by the acceptance into society."

– Human Value: A Study in Ancient Philosophical Ethics, John M. Rist, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1982, pg. 9.

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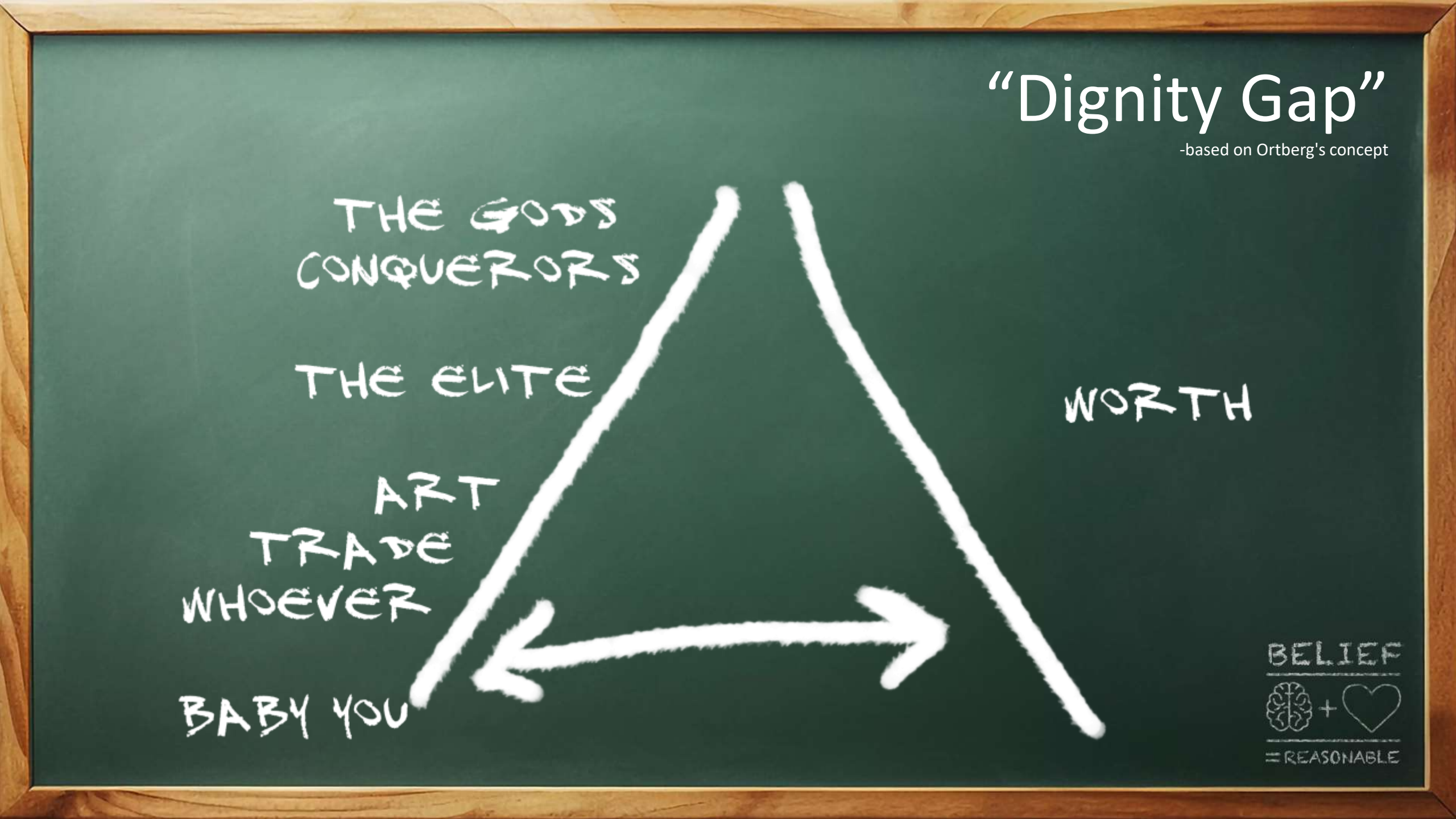
“Dignity Gap”

-based on Ortberg's concept




baby
GAP

Dignified.

~~THE GODS~~

CONQUERORS

THE ELITE

ARTISTS
TRADESPERSONS
WHOEVER

BABY YOU

THE SOUL
FELT ITS

WORTH



James 1:27

Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means **caring for orphans**

Children

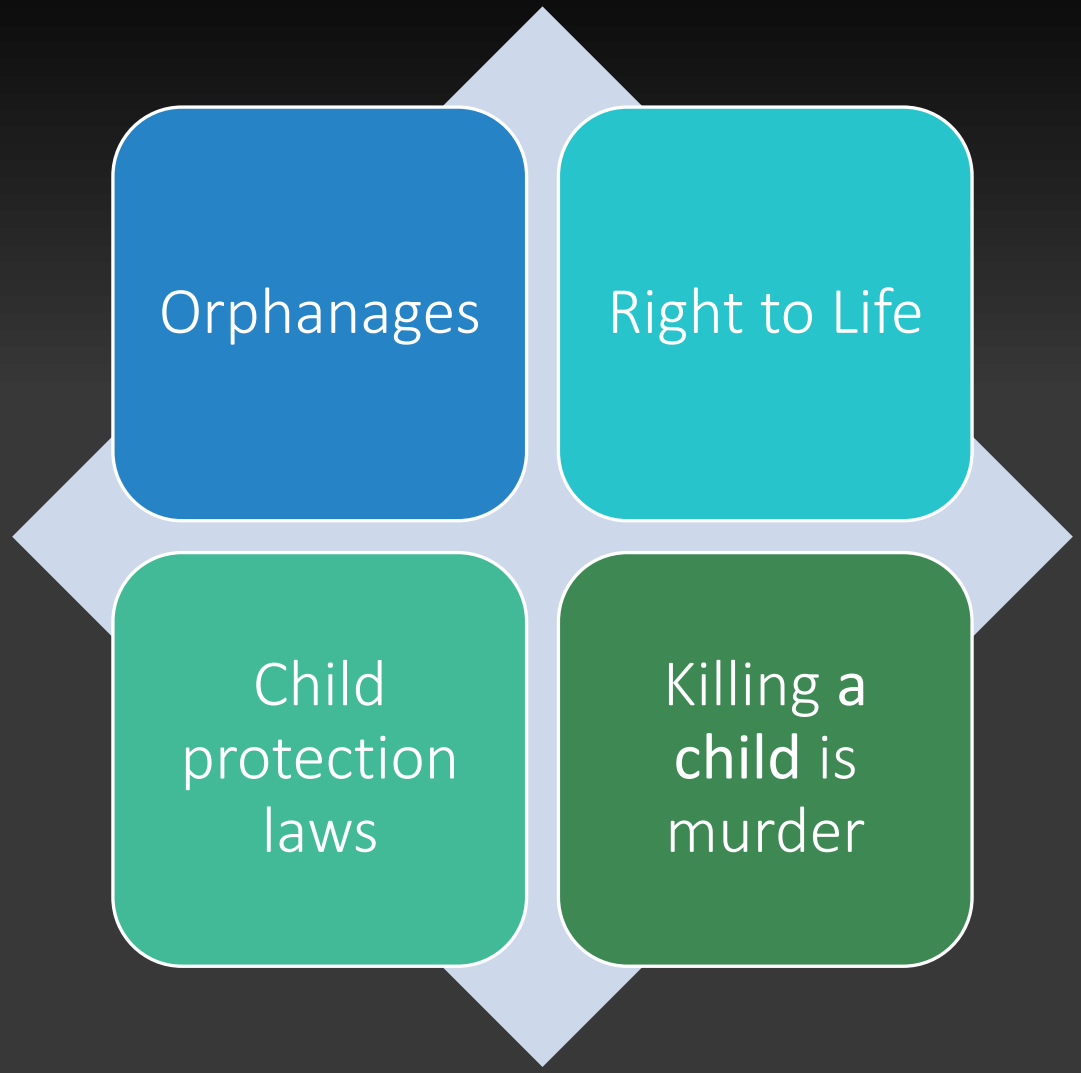
BEFORE JESUS

- Power is divine, the weak expendable
- Kept if “accepted” (health, ability, gender)
- Potential workforce
- Commonly aborted, “exposed”
- Wrong end of the “dignity gap” (Ortberg)

AFTER JESUS

- Especially the weak have *Imago Dei*
- Like the Messiah in the manger
- Objects of love
- Commonly rescued from exposure
- Adoption, orphanages surged into society

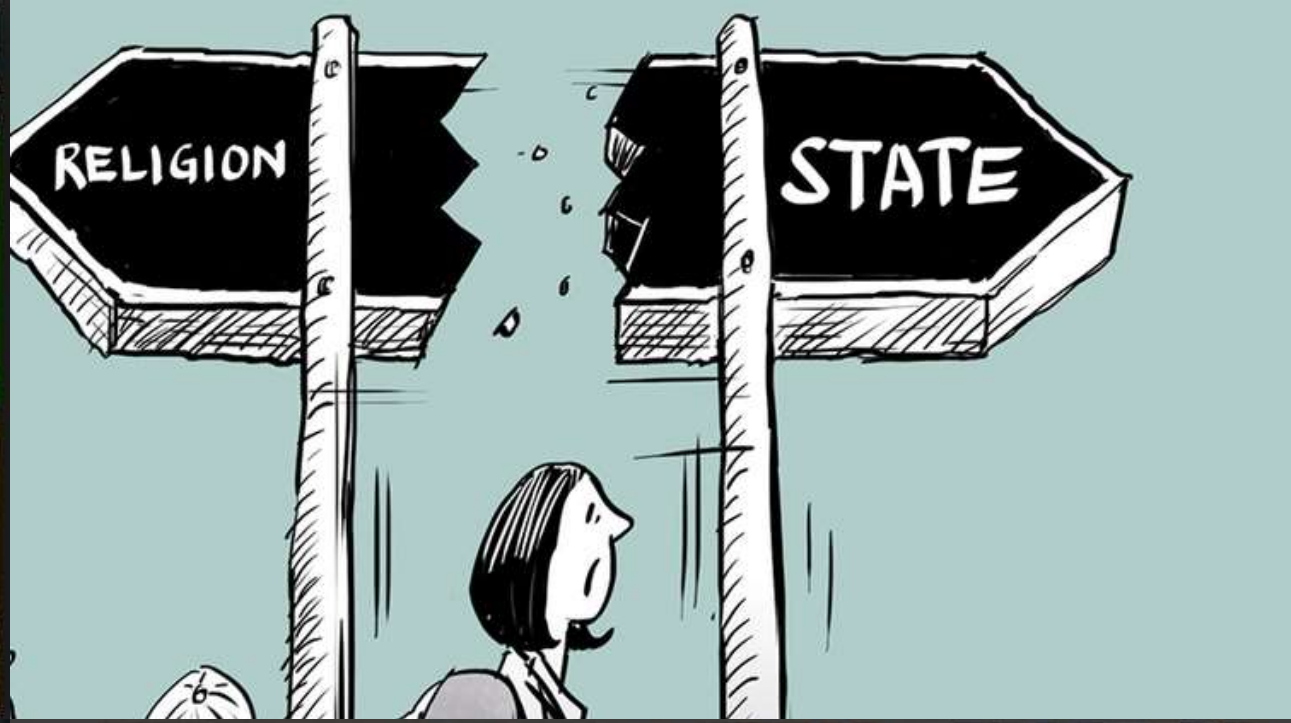
Results of Christian Interference on Behalf of Children



Self-Determination









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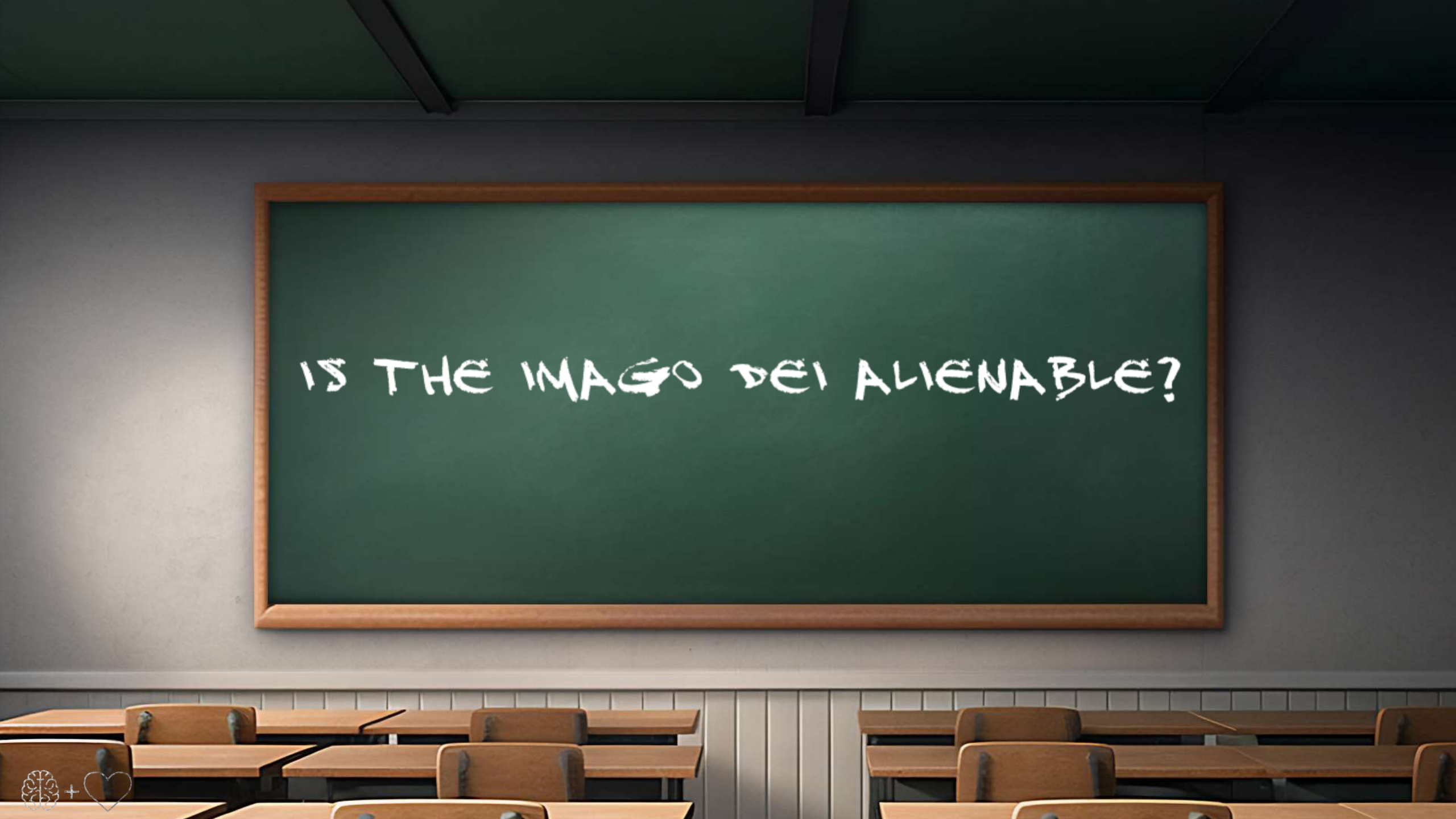
Alienable

able to be transferred to new ownership.

"it was in the interest of the public and the landowners to make land freely alienable"


IS THE IMAGO DEI ALIENABLE?

Church and Slavery: Presumed

"Gregory of Nazianzus reasoned that slavery was nothing more than an unfortunate ... aspect of the human condition."

"Basil of Cesarea [said] slavery was good for slaves because of their inferiority...in intelligence and [they] should be grateful...because they could not otherwise survive.

"This is a position that Augustine (c. 354-430) advocated in City of God (19.15)."

- Kimberly Flint –Hamilton, Associate Professor and Chair of Sociology and Anthropology at Stetson University in DeLand, Florida. "Gregory of Nyssa and the Culture of Oppression." Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University (2010)

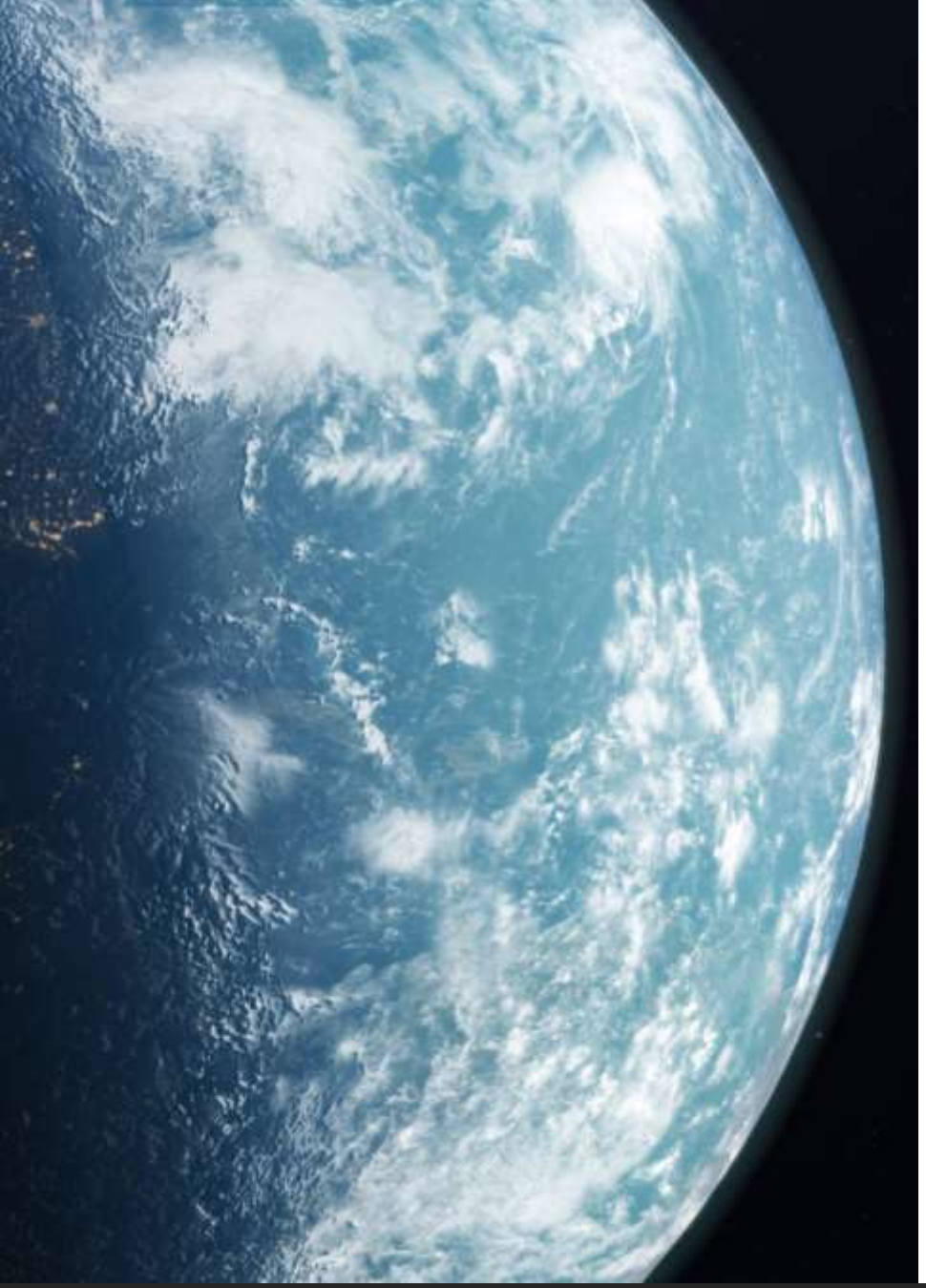
Church and Slavery: Complicit

American churches were
"the bulwark of American slavery"

- Frederick Douglass (per Dickson)

"Southern ministers had written the majority of all published defenses of slavery."

- Jemison, Elizabeth L. "Proslavery Christianity After the Emancipation." Tennessee Historical Quarterly 72, no. 4 (2013): 255–68.



Slavery is *Human.*

[Statistically, throughout the history of the human experience,]

“No matter your race or skin color there is a good chance you are a slave.

(This was true on every continent; between one and seven out of every ten people in the ancient world was a slave.)”

- Dickerson



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Slavery is *Human.*

"If you're looking for a human universal [trait], slavery is a much stronger candidate [than human rights]"

- Scrivener

"All known societies above the very primitive level have been slave societies."

- Rodney Stark, sociologist of religion, from *The Triumph of Christianity* (2012) as quoted by Scrivener

"Freedom, not slavery, was the peculiar institution."

- Seymour Drescher, cited as "one of the leading historians of global slavery and abolition" by John Hillen, "Don't Take Political Freedom for Granted"(2021) Duke Magazine. Dickerson also used this quote.

Doesn't the Bible Endorse Slavery?

No. There is no endorsement.

Rules for when it can be tolerated, and how, are in the Old Testament and in the New Testament.

Rules Depict the Governed, not the Ideal

Things they had to be told:

"And if someone strikes the eye of his male or female slave and destroys it, he shall let the slave go free on account of the eye." Exodus 21:26

"You shall not hand over to his master a slave who has escaped . . . He shall live with you in your midst, in the place that he chooses . . . you shall not mistreat him." Deuteronomy 23:15-16

"And if he does not do these three for her, then she shall go out free, without paying money." Exodus 21:11

Things *God Never Says* in the Bible

Slavery is part of my long-term plan

Slavery is good

I approve of slavery

Abolition of slavery is bad

Some people are worth more than others

Slaves are dumb and owe gratitude to their masters

Slaves are slaves because they are inferior

Slaves are inferior because they are slaves

Jesus: The Law ≠ God's Ideal

"Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way." Jesus, Matthew 19:8

REVEAL!

There were evils in the law that displeased God!

NOTE:

Divorce and slavery rules were related.

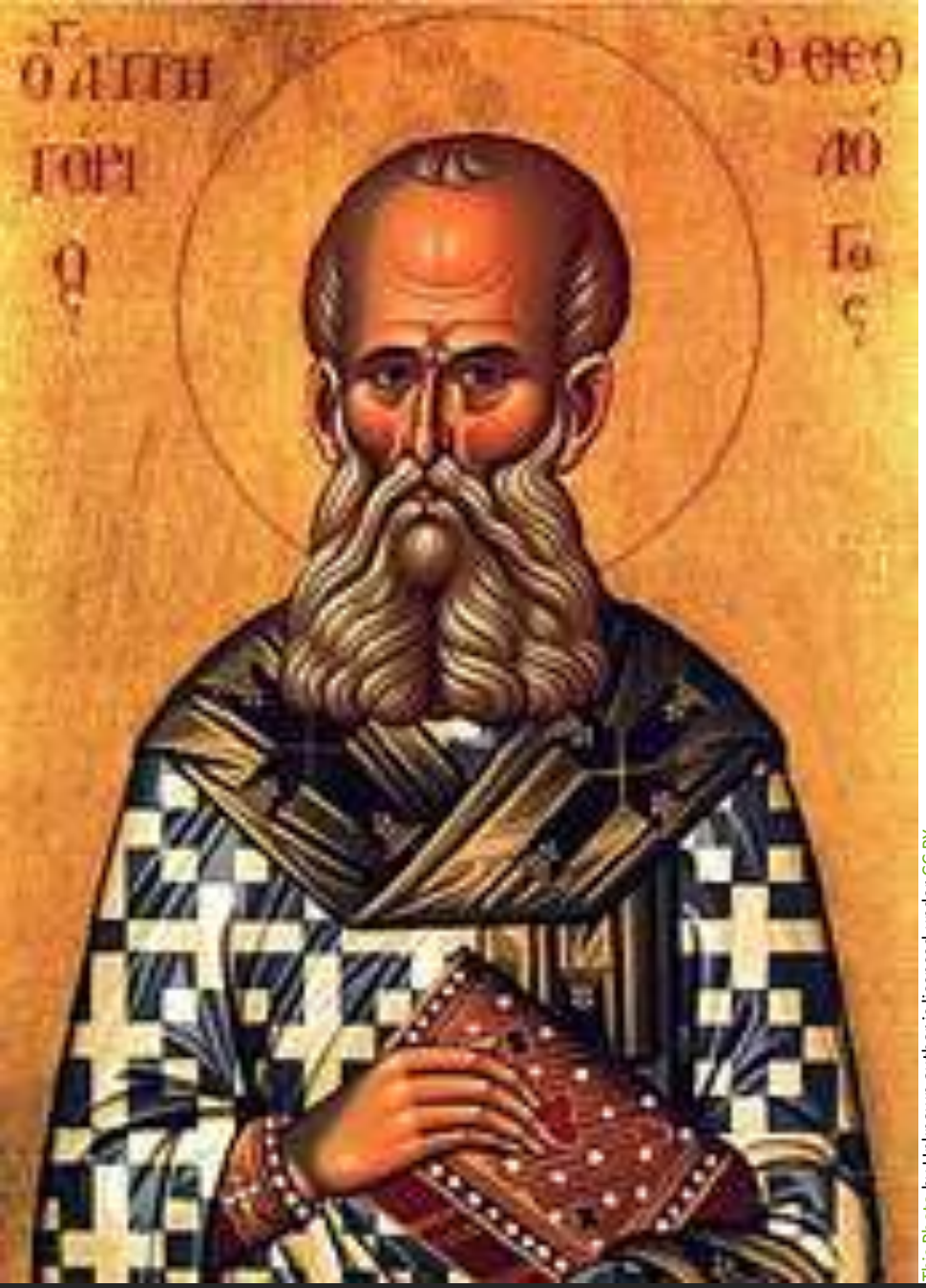
Abolition of Slavery is *Christian.*

"It is clear [Douglass] was calling such churches . . *back* to their foundational doctrine."
- Dickson

"Prior to the Civil War southern slavery was America's most profound and vexatious social problem. More than any other problem, slavery nagged at the public conscience; offering no easy solution...."
- Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution*

"The difference is: the arguments *against* slavery were almost entirely [Christian]...the arguments *for* slavery were economic, scientific, and pragmatic, as well as religious."
- Dickson

"If the abolition of slavery had been left to enlightened secularists...we would still be waiting."
- Professor Rowan Williams of Cambridge, former Archbishop of Canterbury



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Abolition is *Christian.*

"You condemn a person to slavery whose nature is free and independent, and you make laws opposed to God and contrary to His natural law. For you have subjected one who was made precisely to be lord of the earth, and whom the Creator intended to be a ruler, to the yoke of slavery, in resistance to and rejection of His divine precept."

- Gregory of Nyssa (335-394 AD)
(possibly the first known call for abolition)

Key Abolitionists Cited their Faith in Jesus

Numerous Quaker activists in Britain and the U.S.

Harriet Tubman regularly prayed for slavers to be saved and repent

Frederick Douglass cited his decision to “cast all my care upon God” as increasing his “love for all mankind, slaveholders not excepted” and his determination to abolish slavery

William Wilberforce did not care about slavery until he got saved and began studying scripture. His book against slavery was called *Real Christianity*



Christian Jihad?

Conversion by the sword among Germanic tribes in the late 700s

Murderous, repeated religious Crusades against Jerusalem, Egypt, and other targets

Coerced conversion of Jews in 15th century Spain, and resulting Inquisitions

History shows that the people doing these things *were* Christian, and often had (erroneous) *religious reasons*



Religious Force is *Human*.

Wars normally need to be justified, and from Rome to Hitler, many claimed gods or God were driving it

Cyrus of Persia cited his faithfulness to Marduk for his success in war

The next best deed, besides belief, according to Mohammed, is Jihad

Roman Emperor Julian the Apostate cited Christian Rome's turn from the gods for their increasing losses



Religious Freedom is a *Christian* Concept.

Constantine saw no point in punishing other religions

"religion cannot be imposed by force."
- Lactantius (240-320 AD),
(Christian advisor to Constantine)

The Gospel convinced Charlemagne to reverse his campaign of forced conversion

"A person can be drawn into the faith,
not forced into it."
- Alcuin of York (735-804 AD)
(Christian advisor to Charlemagne)



Religious Freedom is a *Christian* Concept.

John Calvin ”set a premium on every Christian's freedom to both join [the Church] and leave”
- Holland

“For over the soul God can and will let no one rule but Himself.

Therefore, where temporal power presumes to prescribe laws for the soul it encroaches upon God’s government and only misleads and destroys the souls”
- Martin Luther

Secular Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed (1523)
as cited by Joseph Loconte, “Luther’s Challenge to the Conscience of the West” (2016) Religious Freedom Institute (website)



Self-Evident?

"That all men had been created equal, and endowed with an inalienable right...were not remotely self-evident truths.

[The fact that] Americans believed they were

owed less to philosophy than to the Bible"

- Holland



Think About It

If the *Imago Dei* is on every person of any color, origin, language, age, ability, means, class, or power...

...People should have a say in their fate (a vote even).

...Government must be limited to serve that *Imago Dei*

...That *Imago Dei*'s consent must be obtained

...Each *Imago Dei* owes another fair, kind treatment

Think About It

Without the *Imago Dei* concept of inherent human worth, none of these necessarily follow:

Tolerance, Inclusion

Disability Parking, Bathrooms, Test Accommodations

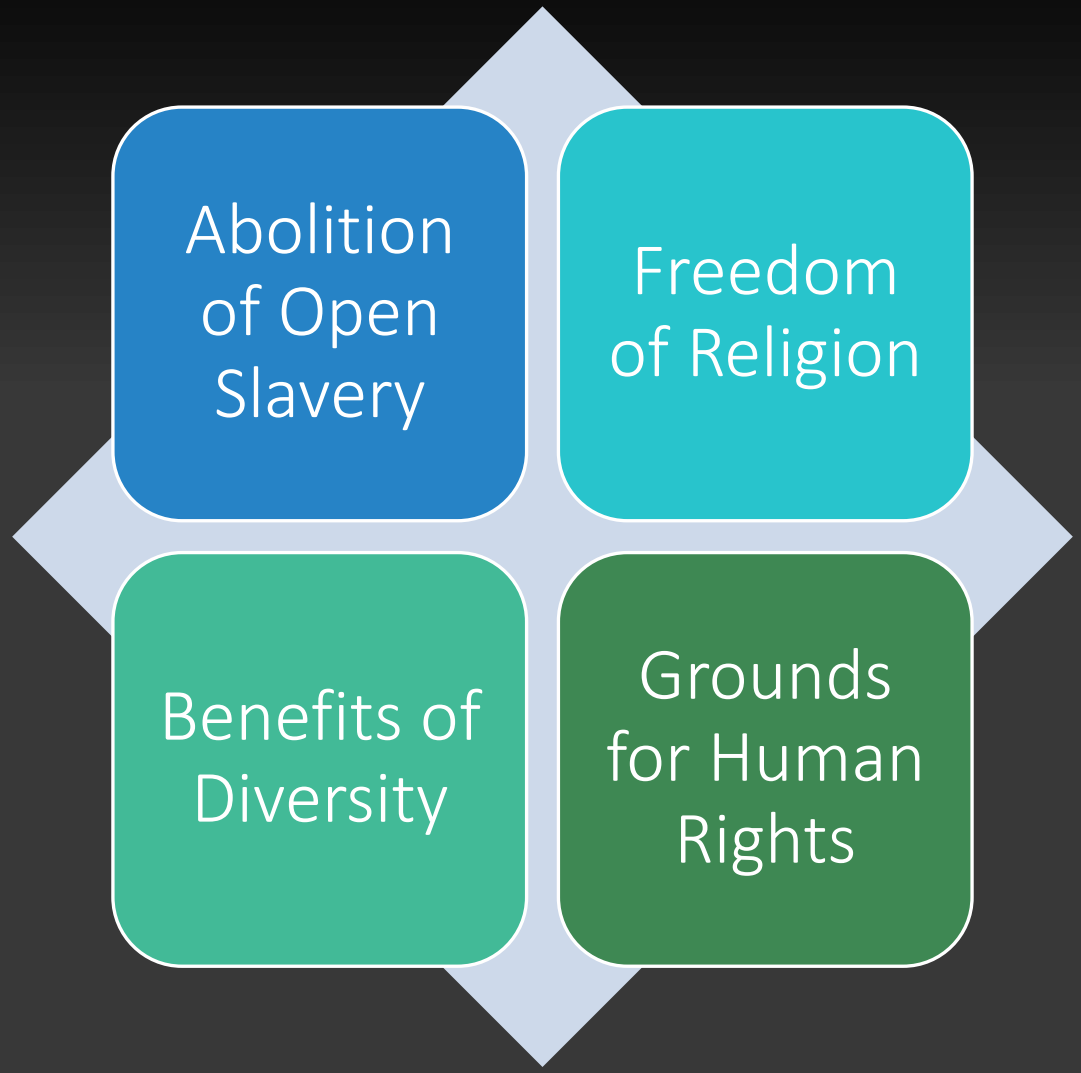
Privacy, Consumer Rights, Labor Rights

Social Entitlement to Resources, anything “for all”

Aristotle, Darwin, Nietzsche, and Carnegie might have been worried by this. Is it good for society to subsidize the weak, the foreign, the poor, the minority?



Results of Christian Thought on Freedom



ASIDE - ADDITIONAL IMPACTS

MOSTLY FROM DICKERSON AND HOLLAND

- HOSPITALS (INVENTION, MODERNIZATION, TOP RANKED)
  (SEE: EARLY CHURCH CHARITY; VICTORIAN ERA FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE, IMAGO DEI REASONS)
- SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION
  (E.G.: NEWTON WROTE VOLUMES OF THEOLOGY, KEPLER WAS A THEOLOGIAN, PASCAL WROTE PERSONAL PSALMS)
- SANITATION, DISINFECTION, IMMUNIZATION
- FOUNDED THE TOP-TEN UNIVERSITIES
  (ALL CHRISTIAN-FOUNDED, EIGHT FOUNDED FOR "OVERTLY" CHRISTIAN REASONS)
- PRESERVED MUCH ANCIENT KNOWLEDGE WE HAVE NOW
  (INCLUDING CHRISTIAN AND SECULAR INSTITUTIONS)
- EDUCATION FOR ALL / PUBLIC EDUCATION / LITERACY
  (DICKERSON SHOWS EVIDENCE THIS ENABLED INDUSTRIALIZATION, EYEGLASSES, WOMEN'S RIGHTS, AND MORE)
- PERSONAL FAITH AND THE IDEA OF "SECULAR"
  (HOLLAND)




Charity

Jesus

John 13:35

“By this all people will know that you are My disciples: if you have love for one another.”

What is Christianity's *Main* Contribution?

"Charity."

"because [Christians] are given such an abundance of [God's] **love**, they can afford to **love** ...with enormous, unreserved generosity. That is a completely different model [from] anything in ancient religious thinking. And with that idea of **love** goes care of the vulnerable."

"Christians create social safety nets. They are the people who are notorious for looking after the widows, the poor, the orphans, the people [otherwise] slung out in the street."

- Teresa Morgan, Professor of Graeco-Roman History at the University of Oxford
as quoted by Dickson

Think About It

If Jesus was able to:

touch the unclean,
not becoming unclean, but cleansing them

touch desperately infectious people,
not becoming infected, but healing them

feed thousands of people
by distributing one person's lunch

lose his life for everyone
and have it restored to Him

What have you got to lose, by obedient good works, donations, generosity, or risk, that He can't restore?



1 John 3:16-17

16 We know love by this, that
He laid down His life for us; and
we ought to lay down our lives for
the brethren.

17 But whoever has the world's
goods, and sees his brother in need and cl
oses his heart against him, how does
the love of God abide in him?



Examples:
Early Church Charity

Christians “were careless of themselves and with exceeding love and filial kindness clung to one another, visiting the sick without regard to the danger, diligently ministering to them, tending to them in Christ; being infected with the disease from others”

- Dionysius (200-264 AD), Archbishop of Alexandria
account of the third-century Cyprian plague, as cited by Dickson

“Roman officials . . . hoping to confiscate hidden valuables . . . uncovered the real ‘treasure’ of the church: its program of charity.”
- Dickson, citing a list of donated clothing for the poor

CHARITY

The Chain of Events

- Jesus' Good Samaritan: outsiders, too! "Go and do likewise."
- Early church's "explosion" of charity transformed society.
- People gravitated toward this humanizing movement.
- Constantine exempted it from taxation.
- Other religion decided to follow suit, to try to compete.

Don't Other Religions Teach Kindness, Generosity?

Yes, perhaps so.

Maybe they could inspire a charity movement that would change a society, and eventually the world, for the better.

But Jesus was the one who *did.*

Wouldn't Humans Have Done All This Good Anyway?

"As the Philosopher says, it is clear that some men are slaves by nature and others free by nature."

- John Mair, citing Aristotle, and cited by Holland as defending Spanish human rights abuses in answer to the horrified Dominican Christians

"Pity on the whole thwarts the law of evolution, which is the law of selection . . . the weak and ill-constituted shall perish, and one shall help them to do so." - Nietzsche

"No one who has attended the breeding of domestic animals will doubt that [helping the weak to survive] must be highly injurious to the race of man." - Darwin

ASIDE - "THE AIR WE BREATHE"

SCRIVENER: CHRISTIANITY IS THE REASON WE CAME TO BELIEVE IN

- **EQUALITY**
  POPULAR OUTRAGE AT THE IDEA OF INEQUAL HUMAN WORTH IS A CHRISTIAN OUTRAGE
- **COMPASSION**
  CARE, FOR WHOEVER NEEDS IT, IS A CHRISTIAN INVENTION
- **CONSENT**
  RACHEL DENHOLLANDER'S "THESE VICTIMS ARE WORTH EVERYTHING" IS A JESUS DECREE
- **ENLIGHTENMENT**
  QUOTING HOLLAND ABOUT BONIFACE AND THE MIDDLE AGES: "TO CONVERT WAS TO EDUCATE"
- **SCIENCE**
  CHRISTIANITY'S PURSUIT OF GOD AND CREATION AS AN INCIPIENT TREK INTO EXPERIMENTATION
- **FREEDOM**
  THE FAITH THAT IMAGO DEI MEANS FREEDOM CONTRASTED AGAINST OTHER CULTURES' NATURAL ORDER
- **PROGRESS**
  JESUS IS THE ORIGIN OF THE IDEA THAT HISTORY IS LINEAR AND OPTIMISTIC





Keystone Species?

Dickerson thinks his research suggests, albeit by association, that Christians are **key to society health.**

EXAMPLE:

In the ten (10) best nations for women's rights, for instance, Dickerson found 75% claimed Christianity

In the ten (10) worst nations for women's rights, he found only 8% claimed Christianity

Seemingly the more Christian, the better for women.



Read On

Ortberg: Jesus invented **servant leadership**, humanized **women**, and reframed **enemies**, the **inner person**, **marriage and intimacy**, **humility**, and other topics

All (except Diamond): **science** and **education** were driven by Jesus-based evolutions of basic assumptions

Holland: the Christian presumptions of "**Woke**" culture

Dickson: many Christian heroes. Also, bullies (**Irish terrorism**? **abuse by clergy?** the **inquisitions**? etc.)

Scrivener: Paul defines abuse and requires consent; the Internet; Jordan Peterson's "Jesus smuggling"

1. Believers are (a) Salt

"You are the salt of the earth;"

"salt ... become **tasteless … is no longer good for anything**."

You, his disciple must taste good.

You have no purpose, otherwise.

Salt is the flavor.

Salt is neither chef, recipe, nor tongue.

Why are Christians warned to be flavor?

1. Believers are (b) Light

"You are the light of the world"

"**gives light to all...**
that they may see"

You, his disciple, must show.

What?

Show what?

"your good works"

Why?

"and glorify your Father who is in heaven"

Why does Jesus say to be the light?

Light is neither lamp, room, nor eye.

First, here's how God says He saved you

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and [a]that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Now, here's why God says He saved you

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and [a]that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.


TASTE AND SEE
THAT THE LORD IS GOOD
PSALM 34:8
God invites
non-believers.

2. Non-Believers: Taste, See



God is good. Jesus' disciples, like salt, should leave a good taste in the mouth of the person invited to taste.



God is light. Jesus says your visible good works, prepared by him for you to do in obedient faith, are light for those trying to see.








HOMELESS

The Books I Used

- *Jesus Skeptic*, John S. Dickerson †
- *Bullies and Saints*, John Dickson †
- *Dominion*, Tom Holland*
- *Who is this Man?* John Ortberg †
- *The Air We Breathe*, Glen Scrivener †
- The Bible (mostly NASB 1995)

Other resources:

JesusSkeptic.com

(bite-size topical reading, book list)

Resource List from this Sermon Series: