

D. JAMES
KENNEDY
MINISTRIES
EDITION

WHAT IF
JESUS
HAD NEVER
BEEN BORN?



D. JAMES
KENNEDY
AND JERRY NEWCOMBE

Dear Friend,

Recently, a doctoral student in “religious studies” at a major public university in California was asked what he would do if he had a time machine. His answer was that he would “assassinate Jesus of Nazareth.” Somehow, in his thinking, the world would be better off without Jesus and the movement He has spawned. Indeed, what if Jesus had never been born?

Dr. D. James Kennedy and I asked that question more than a quarter century ago, and we produced the book by that title. *What If Jesus Had Never Been Born?* ended up becoming a best-seller.

In effect, the premise of this book is that *because* Jesus was born, look at all these incredible things that have happened—and continue to happen—because of Christian influence.

The doctoral student and his ilk might say, “Well, if it weren’t for Christianity we would have been spared the Crusades, the Inquisition, the Salem Witchcraft Trials.” That seems fair enough, but as Dr. Kennedy and I emphasized in addressing these and other “sins of the church,” these aberrations are contrary to the teachings of Jesus.

In contrast, many positive things came directly because of the love of Jesus as the Gospel spread around the world.

For instance, the Christian church created the phenomenon of the hospital and has erected hospitals all over the world. Christianity has inspired some of the world’s greatest art and music. That includes beautiful Christmas music. The “Hallelujah Chorus” by George Frideric Handel from his *Messiah* is among the greatest and most widely recognized pieces of music the world over. And, of course, it extols the day when the kingdom of this world shall become “the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. And He shall reign forever and ever.”

Also, Christianity has expanded education from the elites only to the masses—even creating the phenomenon of the university around the year 1200.

Prior to the coming of Jesus Christ, human life on this planet was exceedingly cheap. Even today, in parts of the world where the Gospel of Christ or Christianity has not penetrated, life is often exceedingly cheap. Christianity bridged the gap between the Jews—who first received the divine revelation that man was made in God’s image—and the pagans, who attributed little value to human life. Meanwhile, as we in the post-Christian West continue to abandon our Judeo-Christian heritage, life is again becoming cheap.

Also, Christianity and the Bible even helped give birth to modern science, beginning in the late Middle Ages. The belief that a rational God had created a rational universe inspired so many scientists to engage in scientific exploration, looking to catalogue the laws that the Creator had impressed upon His own creation. The early scientists thought of themselves as “thinking God’s thoughts after Him” (in the words of Christian astronomer Johannes Kepler).

These are just a few examples of Christianity’s influence through the ages. To paraphrase C. S. Lewis, if Jesus had never come, it would be “always winter, but never Christmas.”

Perhaps American author James Russell Lowell put it best, when, about a 100 years ago, he said this: “I challenge any skeptic to find a ten-square-mile spot on this planet where they can live their lives in peace and safety and decency, where womanhood is honored, where infancy and old age are revered, where they can educate their children, where the Gospel of Jesus Christ has not gone first to prepare the way.”

Your generosity is what makes it possible for us to share the Gospel across America every week. Because of you, D. James Kennedy Ministries proclaims Biblical truth for all of life—and applies it to the issues you and I face today.

Thank you for your generous friendship. Our prayer is that God will use *What If Jesus Had Never Been Born?* to encourage you and strengthen your confidence in Jesus Christ—God incarnate and the greatest man who ever lived!

Jerry Newcombe, D.Min.

WHAT IF
JESUS
HAD NEVER
BEEN BORN?

THE POSITIVE IMPACT
OF CHRISTIANITY IN
HISTORY

D. JAMES KENNEDY

AND JERRY NEWCOMBE



THOMAS NELSON
Since 1798

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*Dedicated to Jesus Christ
King of kings and
Lord of lords*

C O N T E N T S

Acknowledgments	ix
Introduction	xi
Chapter 1	CHRIST AND CIVILIZATION 1 <i>A Quick Overview of Christ's Impact on World History</i>
Chapter 2	IN THE IMAGE OF GOD 9 <i>Christianity's Impact on the Value of Human Life</i>
Chapter 3	COMPASSION AND MERCY 28 <i>Christianity's Contribution to Helping the Poor</i>
Chapter 4	EDUCATION FOR EVERYONE 40 <i>Christianity's Contribution to Education</i>
Chapter 5	GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE 57 <i>Christianity's Impact on the Founding of America</i>
Chapter 6	FREEDOM FOR ALL 77 <i>Christianity's Contribution to Civil Liberties</i>
Chapter 7	THINKING GOD'S THOUGHTS AFTER HIM 91 <i>Christianity's Impact on Science</i>
Chapter 8	FREE ENTERPRISE AND THE WORK ETHIC 107 <i>Christianity's Impact on Economics</i>

- Chapter 9 THE BEAUTY OF SEXUALITY 123
Christianity's Impact on Sex and the Family
- Chapter 10 HEALING THE SICK 141
Christianity's Impact on Health and Medicine
- Chapter 11 THE CIVILIZING OF THE UNCIVILIZED 157
Christianity's Impact on Morality
- Chapter 12 INSPIRING THE WORLD'S GREATEST
ART 172
Christianity's Impact on the Arts and Music
- Chapter 13 AMAZING GRACE 189
Lives Changed by Jesus Christ
- Chapter 14 THE SINS OF THE CHURCH 205
Negative Aspects of Christianity in History
- Chapter 15 A CRUEL WORLD 224
What Happens When Christian Restraints Are Removed
- Chapter 16 WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? 239
Fulfilling Our Purpose in the Twenty-First Century
- Notes 247
- Index of Proper Names 269
- About the Authors 276

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

We live in an age in which only one prejudice is tolerated—anti-Christian bigotry. Michael Novak, the eminent columnist, once said that today you can no longer hold up to public pillorying and ridicule groups such as African-Americans or Native Americans or women or homosexuals or Poles, and so on. Today, the only group you can hold up to public mockery is Christians. Attacks on the Church and Christianity are common. As Pat Buchanan once put it, “Christian-bashing is a popular indoor sport.”

But the truth is this: Had Jesus never been born, this world would be far more miserable than it is. In fact, many of man’s noblest and kindest deeds find their motivation in love for Jesus Christ; and some of our greatest accomplishments also have their origin in service rendered to the humble Carpenter of Nazareth. To prove that truth is the purpose of this book.

C H A P T E R 1

CHRIST AND CIVILIZATION

A Quick Overview of Christ's Impact on World History

The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.

—Jesus Christ (Matt. 13:31–32)

Some people have made transformational changes in one department of human learning or in one aspect of human life, and their names are forever enshrined in the annals of human history. But Jesus Christ, the greatest man who ever lived, changed virtually every aspect of human life—and most people don't know it. The greatest tragedy of the Christmas holiday each year is not so much its commercialization (gross as that is), but its trivialization. How tragic it is that people have forgotten Him to whom they owe so very much.

Jesus says in Revelation 21:5, “Behold, I make all things new.” (Behold! [*idou* in Greek]: “Note well,” “look closely,” “examine carefully.”) Everything that Jesus Christ touched, He utterly transformed. He touched time when He was born into this world; He had a birthday and that birthday utterly altered the way we measure time.¹

Someone has said He turned aside the river of ages out of its course and lifted the centuries off their hinges. Now, the whole world counts time as B.C., Before Christ, and A.D. Unfortunately, in most cases, our illiterate generation today doesn't even know that A.D. means *anno Domini*, "in the year of the Lord."

It's ironic that the most vitriolic atheist writing a propagandistic letter to a friend must acknowledge Christ when he dates that letter. The atheistic Soviet Union was forced in its constitution to acknowledge that it came into existence in 1917, in the "year of the Lord." When you see row after row of books at the library, every one of them—even if it contains anti-Christian diatribes—has a reference to Jesus Christ because of the date.

THE GROWTH OF THE MUSTARD SEED

Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which is tiny in and of itself, but, when fully grown, it provides shade and a resting place for many birds. This parable certainly applies to an individual who embraces Christ; it also applies to Christianity in the world.

Christianity's roots were small and humble—an itinerant rabbi preached and did miracles for three and a half years around the countryside of subjugated Israel. And today there are more than 1.8 billion professing believers in Him found in most of the nations on earth!² There are tens of millions today who make it their life's aim to serve Him alone.

Emperors and governors were the men with power in Christ's day. But now their bodies rot in their sepulchres, and their souls await the Final Judgment. They have no followers today. No one worships them. No one serves them or awaits their bidding.

Not so with Jesus! Napoleon, who was well accustomed to political power, said that it would be amazing if a Roman emperor could rule from the grave, and yet that is what Jesus has been doing. (We would disagree with him, though, in that Jesus is not dead; He's alive.) Napoleon said: "I search in vain in history to find the similar to Jesus

Christ, or anything which can approach the gospel. . . . Nations pass away, thrones crumble, but the Church remains.”³

A QUICK OVERVIEW

Despite its humble origins, the Church has made more changes on earth for the good than any other movement of force 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. In addition, most of the world’s greatest universities were started by Christians for Christian purposes.
- Literacy and education for the masses.
- Capitalism and free enterprise.
- Representative government, particularly as it has been seen in the American experiment.
- The separation of political powers.
- Civil liberties.
- The abolition of slavery, both in antiquity and in more modern times.
- Modern science.
- The discovery of the New World by Columbus.
- 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.
- 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 inspiration for the greatest works of art.
- The countless changed lives transformed from liabilities into assets to society because of the gospel.
- The eternal salvation of countless souls.

The last one mentioned, the salvation of souls, is the primary goal of the spread of Christianity. All the other benefits listed are basically just by-products of what Christianity has often brought when applied to daily living. The rest of this book is devoted to demonstrating how all of these benefits to mankind have their origins in the Christian faith.

When Jesus Christ took upon Himself the form of man, He imbued mankind with a dignity and inherent value that had never been dreamed of before. Whatever Jesus touched or whatever He did transformed that aspect of human life. Many people will read about the innumerable small incidents in the life of Christ while never dreaming that those casually mentioned “little” things were to transform the history of humankind.

IF JESUS HAD NEVER BEEN BORN

Many are familiar with the 1946 film classic *It's a Wonderful Life*, wherein the character played by Jimmy Stewart gets a chance to see what life would be like had he never been born. In many ways this terrific movie directed by Frank Capra is the springboard for this book. The main point of the film is that each person's life has impact on everybody else's life. Had they never been born, there would be gaping holes left by their absence. My point in this book is that Jesus Christ has had enormous impact—more than anybody else—on history. Had He never come, the hole would be a canyon about the size of a continent.

Christ's influence on the world is immeasurable. The purpose of this book is to glimpse what we can measure, to see those numerous areas of life where Christ's influence can be concretely traced.

BUT SOME PEOPLE WISH CHRIST HAD NEVER BEEN BORN

Not all have been happy about Jesus Christ's coming into the world. Friedrich Nietzsche, the nineteenth-century atheist philosopher who coined the phrase "God is dead," likened Christianity to poison that has infected the whole world.⁴ He said of Jesus: "He died too early; he himself would have revoked his doctrine had he reached" greater maturity.⁵

Nietzsche said that history is the battle between Rome (the pagans) and Israel (the Jews and the Christians);⁶ and he bemoaned the fact that Israel (through Christianity) was winning and that the cross "has by now triumphed over all other, nobler virtues."⁷ In his book *The AntiChrist*, Nietzsche writes:

I *condemn* Christianity; I bring against the Christian Church the most terrible of all accusations that an accuser has ever had in his mouth. It is, to me, the greatest of all imaginable corruptions; it seeks to work the ultimate corruption, nothing untouched by its depravity; it had turned every value into worthlessness, and every truth into a lie, and every integrity into baseness of soul.⁸

Nietzsche holds up as heroes a "herd of blond beasts of prey, a race of conquerors and masters."⁹ According to Nietzsche, and later Hitler, by whom or what were these Teutonic warriors corrupted? Answer: Christianity. "This splendid ruling stock was corrupted, first by the Catholic laudation of feminine virtues, secondly by the Puritan and plebeian ideals of the Reformation, and thirdly by inter-marriage with inferior stock."¹⁰ Had Jesus never come, wailed Nietzsche, we would never have had the corruption of "slave morals" into the human race. Many of the ideas of Nietzsche were put into practice by his philosophical disciple, Hitler, and about 16 million died as a result.¹¹

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler blamed the Church for perpetuating the ideas and laws of the Jews. Hitler wanted to completely uproot Christianity once he had finished uprooting the Jews. In a private

conversation “shortly after the National Socialists’ rise to power,”¹² recorded by Herman Rauschning, Hitler said:

Historically speaking, the Christian religion is nothing but a Jewish sect. . . . After the destruction of Judaism, the extinction of Christian slave morals must follow logically. . . . I shall know the moment when to confront, for the sake of the German people and the world, their Asiatic slave morals with our picture of the free man, the godlike man. . . . It is not merely a question of Christianity and Judaism. We are fighting against the most ancient curses that humanity has brought upon itself. We are fighting against the perversion of our soundest instincts. Ah, the God of the deserts, that crazed, stupid, vengeful Asiatic despot with his powers to make laws! . . . That poison with which both Jews and Christians have spoiled and soiled the free, wonderful instincts of man and lowered them to the level of doglike fright.¹³

Both Nietzsche and Hitler wished that Christ had never been born. Others share this sentiment. For example, Charles Lam Markmann, who wrote a favorable book on the history of the ACLU, entitled *The Noblest Cry*, said, “If the otherwise admirably civilized pagans of Greece and their Roman successors had had the wit to laugh Judaism into desuetude, the world would have been spared the 2000-year sickness of Christendom.”¹⁴

Interestingly, people living under Nazi oppression, under Stalin’s terror, under Mao’s cultural revolution, and the reign of the Khmer Rouge were all spared “the 2000-year sickness of Christendom.” As we’ll see in chapter 6, contrary to Markmann’s armchair philosophizing, civil liberties have been bequeathed by Christianity and not by atheism or humanism.

Stalin and Mao both tried to destroy Christianity in their respective domains.¹⁵ In the process, they slaughtered tens of millions of professing Christians, but they utterly failed in their ultimate objective.

In one sense, the point of this book is to say to Nietzsche, Freud, Hitler, Robert Ingersoll, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, the ACLU, anti-faith college professors, Hollywood leaders who constantly denigrate Christianity, and other leading anti-Christians of the past and present,

that the overwhelming impact of Christ's life on Planet Earth has been positive, not negative.

The next twelve chapters will look at a dozen areas where Christianity has made important contributions to world civilization. Then, after that, we'll deal with the negative aspects of the Church's track record in history. We'll deal with the sins of the Church, trying to come to grips from a Christian perspective with the Crusades, the Inquisition, and anti-Semitism by the Church. In the following chapter, we will deal with the sins of atheism. We will show how the post-Christian West ventured into a much more bloody history precisely because the restraints of Christianity were removed. We'll also put to rest the myth so often repeated that "more people have been killed in the name of Christ than in any other." Then, finally, we will close with a brief chapter on where we go from here.

Church history books generally catalog the influence of Christianity century by century. I have chosen instead to catalog Christianity's influence *issue by issue*. From transforming the value of human life to transforming individual lives, the positive impact of Jesus Christ is felt around the globe.

Dr. James Allan Francis puts Christ's life and influence into perspective so well in his famous narrative:

One Solitary Life¹⁶

He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another village, where He worked in a carpenter shop until He was thirty. Then for three years He was an itinerant preacher. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family or owned a home. He didn't go to college. He never visited a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place where He was born. He did none of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but Himself.

He was only thirty-three when the tide of public opinion turned against Him. His friends ran away. One of them denied Him. He was turned over to His enemies and went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves.

While He was dying, His executioners gambled for His garments, the only property He had on earth. When He was dead, He was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend. Nineteen centuries have come and gone, and today He is the central figure of the human race.

All the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man on this earth as much as that one solitary life.

“In a day when many professing Christians appear blissfully unaware of their ‘cultural mandate,’ the authors remind us that the Church is to bear the glory of God in every sphere of life. This book is a compelling call to vigilance.”

CHARLES COLSON, Prison Fellowship Ministries

“James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe bring a mind and heart to spiritual and political issues that are a welcome relief from the predictable and familiar.”

CAL THOMAS, Syndicated columnist



Seldom in history has the clamor of anti-Christian sentiment grown more vocal than today as followers of Christ are often characterized as hypocrites, legalists, and zealots. Entering this challenging arena, D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe speak out on the tremendously positive impact Christ has made upon humanity.

Embracing the entire spectrum of our existence—civil liberties, medicine, the arts, economics, sexuality, education, morality—this compelling narrative presents substantive arguments to respond to the charges of caustic and often misinformed critics. In a fascinating, highly readable manner, the authors introduce the results of their extensive research, well-equipped with biblically sound, historically correct information.

DR. D. JAMES KENNEDY remains one of the most listened-to Christian ministers in America. The long-time senior pastor of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church, Dr. Kennedy was the author of more than 70 books and founder of Evangelism Explosion International, through which millions come to faith in Jesus Christ every year.

JERRY NEWCOMBE, D.MIN., is Senior Producer and On-Air Personality at D. James Kennedy Ministries. He is an ordained PCA minister and has written or co-written 32 books, including *The Book That Made America: How the Bible Formed Our Nation*, and the bestselling *George Washington's Sacred Fire* (with Dr. Peter Lillback).



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