

Standing on the Shoulders of Christendom

By Greg Witherow

Off to the secular university, young Christians are quickly hit with a jolting world view. They are informed that the smart people, the elites, those who are highly educated and who run the world, do not believe in religious myths. Instead they are told, the advancement of civilization is solely driven by a secular world view and religion is bad. But this ignores the past. Democratic governments, higher education and modern Science exist because of Christianity. Neither Atheistic governments nor world religion - be it Islam, Hindu, Buddhist or any other can match the record of Christendom. Let's see why.

The Magna Carta (1215) was a charter meant to bring order, peace and the rule of law to England. It guaranteed trial by jury, private property, the rights of the Church and other civil liberties. It is regarded by many to be a precursor to the United States Constitution and Bill of Rights. It is not a Christian document per se, but it was authored by men steeped in the Christian world view. It was drafted by the Archbishop of Canterbury and guided through political waters by Pope Innocent III. It incorporated Christian presuppositions like "Thou shalt not steal" and the dignity of the person, as outlined in the gospels. It incorporated ideals **not universally observed even today**. Democracy was a natural next step of the Magna Carta. While the Greeks invented Republics, Christendom adopted democratic theory and transformed it into just **and humane societies**. With the acceptance of Christianity in the Roman Empire, hospitals (rare in antiquity) were built in cathedral cities¹ and the poor cared for. Orphanages were widely established, protected by each local bishop and paid for by the Church². In time slavery was abolished under the Christian banner. The advances of Christendom **were unprecedented**. Its legacy is found on national flags³, just laws, institutions and the freedom of millions.

The modern university is the invention of the Christendom. Universities evolved from the Cathedral schools in the middle ages. The first universities were the University of Bologna (1088) – which established the concept of academic freedom, the University of Paris (1150) and the University of Oxford (1167)⁴. All were developed by means of a papal bull called "studia generalia". It required the schools to have at least one of the higher faculties; Theology, Law or Medicine, in addition to the arts⁵.

At the universities, Science flourished. Father Jean Buridan, a philosophy professor at the University of Paris, developed a theory of motion called the Impetus Theory. Because Buridan presupposed the Church was right (that time had a beginning) he was able develop his theory, while rejecting Aristotle's notion on the eternity of the world⁶. His theory was later used by Copernicus, Galileo and Newton. The Big Bang is a theory on the origins of the universe, developed in 1927. It was developed by Father Georges Lemaitre, a Belgian priest, astronomer and professor of physics at the Catholic University of Leuven. He is one of hundreds of Christian scientists who have advanced modern Science⁷. Christendom made mistakes with Science⁸, but in creating universities she caused it to flourish.

Today the West is secular, rejecting Christianity. But history demonstrates Christendom established a civilization of democracy, freedom, a humane society and the advancement of knowledge. The feats of the West are because of its Christian past, not in spite of it. **The world can only mimic them**. While its history is not unsoiled, the trajectory was good. No culture built on secularism⁹ or other world religion can make such claims. Proof? Given the choice people flee to the West; not China, India or Iran. Christendom has given the elites what they have. In denial, they stand on her shoulders.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_hospitals. (Accessed on March 28, 2017).

² <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11322b.htm> (Accessed on March 30, 2017).

³ Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Iceland, England, Scotland, United Kingdom, Switzerland, Greece and others have crosses on their flags.

⁴ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University>. (Accessed on March 26, 2017).

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Studium_generale. (Accessed on March 26, 2017).

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Buridan. (Accessed on March 26, 2017).

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Catholic_scientists. (Accessed on March 26, 2017).

⁸ <http://tinyurl.com/k9pzk4f>. (Accessed March 28, 2017). Pope Saint John Paul II apologized for the Galileo affair.

⁹ Secular societies **founded** on atheism (think Communism) have proven to be brutal. If you can think of one you'd like to live in, please raise your hand.