



ISRAEL'S IMPACT ON MODERN SOCIETY

Despite the small number of Jewish people in the world, Judaism has dramatically impacted the western world (and now, nonwestern societies to a lesser extent), through the values that Christianity inherited from Judaism.

Ethical Values

a. Jesus gave the Golden Rule as one of the two greatest commandments; this was a verse from the Jewish scriptures (Leviticus 19.18). This background in the Old Testament was carried over into the early Christian era, when the early church decided to include the Old Testament scriptures in the canon.

b. One can see how Jewish values have impacted societies by looking at the behavior of various nations and tribes before they became Christian. People fought to the death in ancient Rome until the 300s AD, when Christian emperors on several occasions, banned gladiator combats. Infants throughout many cultures were exposed or sacrificed in religious rituals. This was rather common in the Greco-Roman world. There is archaeological evidence of infant sacrifices in temples in Carthage; and there were mass numbers of human sacrifices in indigenous American temples. These practices ended when Christians acquired political power in these parts of the world.

Social Reforms

Without saying that Christians were the only group pushing these reforms, Christians have historically supported many efforts to better society, foremost through:

EDUCATION: Christians have been instrumental in promoting education wherever they have gone in the world, establishing the first universities in Europe and America (for instance, the early Ivy League universities, and the College of William and Mary in Virginia, were founded for the purposes of providing instruction and education to Christian ministers). In some cases, Christian missionaries put a people's language into writing for the first time, or at least created an alphabet for the purpose, such as with the translations into Gothic, in the 300s AD, and into Armenian, in the early 400s AD.

ABOLITION: The abolition of slavery was promoted by predominantly Christian nations in the late 1700s and 1800s. The United States fought a civil war to end slavery in its own nation, and Britain prompted other nations into allowing it to end the Atlantic slave trade, both in the mid-1800s.