

**Title:** *The Better Hour*  
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For almost 2,000 years, Christians have been the primary shapers of Western culture.

In the sixth-eighth centuries, it was the Irish monks who copied the Scriptures—and other manuscripts of the Western world—and preserved them, and Western learning along with them. It was Christians who founded the great medieval universities at Bologna, Paris, Oxford, and Cambridge, where students and faculty explored the wonders of creation. In the 16th century, John Calvin introduced universal education in Geneva. The great scientists—Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Kepler—all were believers.

And there is no denying the influence of Christianity on America. You know the story of the Pilgrims, the appeals to providence by our founding fathers; and the fact that the great American universities—Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Dartmouth, and Brown—all were established as Christian institutions. Who were the leaders of the abolitionist movement in Britain and America? That's right, Christians. And as I have said on "BreakPoint" before, at its core, the great Civil Rights movement of the 1960s was fueled by Christians and Christian convictions about the equality of all people before God.

But judging by the landscape of 21st-century America—from our schools to our airwaves, from the Internet to the halls of government—we might wonder whether Christians have abandoned their influence over culture. Have we gone from being shapers of culture to being shaped by it? Do we nurture the culture, or have we become mere consumers of culture? Tough questions.

Scripture makes it very clear, however, what we ought to be doing. In addition to the Great Commission, God has given us a cultural commission: Not only are we to be agents of God's saving grace—bringing others to Christ—we are also agents of His common grace. We are to sustain and renew His creation (as I have written so often about biblical worldview); we are to defend the created institutions of family and society, and critique false worldviews. We are to become, as Jesus put it, salt and light in the world.

That is exactly what the great British Parliamentarian William Wilberforce did in 18th- and 19th-century England. Not only did he and his close associates put an end to the British slave trade, they literally transformed the manners and morals of English society—a story I tell in my new book, *The Faith*.

And how Wilberforce did it is the subject of a marvelous documentary film called *The Better Hour: The Legacy of William Wilberforce*. It is being rebroadcast nationally on public television on June 27th, 28th, and 29th. If you are unable to watch it then, come to [BreakPoint.org](#) to find out how you can get a DVD of the film.

I have asked the 400 Centurion graduates that we have trained to take the DVD and show it in high schools for students, teachers, and parents. I have also asked them to invite their friends, neighbors, community leaders, and the press to engage in small group discussions about how they can make their communities more just and more humane—better places to live.

Why don't you do the same thing? The historical record of Christian influence on Western culture is as undeniable as it is amazing. But it is not just history. It is a living legacy. Gather a group of friends who want to be shapers of culture—who want to be salt and light—and watch *The Better Hour* this week.