

Gregg L. Cunningham, Executive Director

October 2013

Dear Pro-Life Supporter,

At academia.edu, CBR supporters can find an important essay by Derrick M. Nault, a professor at the University of Calgary, in Alberta, Canada, titled “‘At the Bar of Public Sentiment’: The Congo Free State Controversy, Atrocity Tales, and Human Rights History.” I have excerpted below certain portions of the text which can help us better understand the degree to which the church has become indifferent to injustice and human suffering over the last century. Christian higher education is producing Christian leaders whose ministry priorities bear little resemblance to those of the Good Samaritan -- but closely reflect those of the priest and the Levite who passed by “on the other side” of the beating victim in Christ’s salvation parable. We can change this pathetic state of affairs, with your help and God’s blessing.

View CBR’s presentation of abortion video in a large church service (www.youtube.com/watch?v=wxt5sX-tKvs). Send the link to your pastor and urge him to watch and invite Gregg Cunningham to speak.

The tragic saga of the Congo Free State commenced with King Leopold II, who in 1873, after scouring the world for unclaimed territory, hired the Welsh-born explorer Henry Morton Stanley to sign treaties, establish military posts, and seek out economic opportunities in the Congo River Basin.

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Initially the Congo Free State seemed to possess few other exploitable resources than ivory, but with the rubber boom of the early 1890s Leopold and his concessionary companies secured hyper profits through terror and forced labor. Outsiders did not learn of human rights abuses occurring under Leopold’s rule until the 1890s, but as a result of international pressure Leopold was forced to sign over ownership of his personal fiefdom to Belgium in 1908. By that time, between 8 and 10 million Congolese had perished in one of the worst crimes of humanity of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Hochschild, 1999, pp. 3-5), the acts of which were documented and exposed through a wide array of atrocity tale texts.

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... [T]he writer Joseph Conrad, intrigued by the mysteries of central Africa since he was a young boy, also ventured to the region, securing work aboard the steamship *Roi des Belges*. The disturbing scenes he witnessed in his six-month visit in 1890 served as the inspiration for his *Heart of Darkness*, which first appeared in serial form in 1899 in *Blackwoods Magazine* and was published as a novella in 1903 (Conrad, 1987/1903).

* * *

Mark Twain joined the Congo Reform Movement later than Conrad but was more directly involved in the cause, delivering public lectures, granting interviews, and writing letters to newspapers and influential figures. His literary contribution – *King Leopold’s Soliloquy* (1906) – was published in the US and then Europe during the peak of the rubber boom, when conditions had deteriorated beyond what ... Conrad had witnessed.

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A sample from Twains' satirical interview with King Leopold:

In the early years we had no trouble in getting the press to 'expose' the tales of the mutilations as slanders, lies, inventions of busy-body American missionaries

* * *

Then all of a sudden came the crash! That is to say the incorruptible Kodak The only witness ... I couldn't bribe. Every Yankee missionary ... sent home and got one; and now – oh well, the pictures get sneaked around everywhere, in spite of all we can do to ferret them out and suppress them.

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Returning to Nault:

The true turning point in the international human rights campaign, however, occurred in 1903, when public pressure forced Lord Lansdowne, Secretary of the British Foreign Office, to authorize Roger Casement, His Majesty's Consul at Boma, to lead a fact-gathering mission. The resulting *Congo Report* (1904) (aka the "Casement Report"), based on three months of field research, confirmed allegations of forced labor, floggings, kidnappings, murders, and mutilations. Casement concluded that alarming population decreases were due to years of compelling Congolese to gather rubber.

* * *

E.D. Morel, founder of the Congo Reform Association (CRA), aided the humanitarian movement for the Congo through numerous publications, such as the *West African Mail*, the CRA's official newspaper, and his books *King Leopold's Rule in Africa* (1905) and *Red Rubber* (1906). Morel's initial concern was not with Leopold's cruelties but his obstruction of free trade, which not only ran counter to the king's promises to the European powers during the Berlin Conference but also violated Africans' rights to freely sell their labor and resources (Grant, 2001, pp. 36-37, 39). As noted by Grant (2001, p. 41), such rational arguments were less effective in swaying public opinion than emotional appeals using graphic images.

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The international campaign against King Leopold coincided with the improvement of photographic technology as well as invention of techniques to reproduce photographs in publications. The Kodak camera, compact, portable, and simple to use, in particular proved revolutionary for its ability to record images of situations and events.

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The most prominent individuals taking such photographs were Alice Seeley Harris and John Harris, English missionaries who arrived at the Congo Balolo Mission in 1898 (See Sliwinski, 2006, 2010 and Thompson, 2002). One widely circulated photograph from Alice Harris, of a man named Nsala of Wala, shows him gazing at the severed hand and foot of his 5-year-old daughter who had been murdered by sentries of the Anglo-Belgian India Rubber (ABIR) Company (Figure 1). Another features a young man named Mola, who lost both hands when Force Publique soldiers tied them too tightly and crushed them with rifle butts, and a boy named

Yoka, whose right hand was severed by soldiers when his village failed to make their rubber quota (Figure 2). These images and others appeared in Casement's *Congo Report*, Mark Twain's *King Leopold's Soliloquy*, and E.D. Morel's *Red Rubber and King Leopold's Rule in the Congo*. Atrocity photos were also used in 'lantern lectures' delivered by the Harrises and other reformers to packed American and British audiences (Grant, 2001).

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It was atrocity photographs ... that had the most pronounced effect on international public opinion (Sliwinski, 2006, 2010). Until photographs of mutilated Congolese were shown to the world, doubts still remained in some circles that reports of violence in the Congo were overblown. However, after Alice Harris circulated photos in late 1905 with dates, names and other details Leopold found it more and more difficult to refute the charges of abuse against him. The Australian newspaper the *Advertiser* commented that '[T]he Kodak cannot lie' and Harris' photographs proved that the Congo Free State was 'a hell of horrors.' Describing numerous 'heart rending,' 'ghastly,' and 'dreadful' photographs of destroyed villages, women and children with severed limbs, the newspaper spoke of how such images 'make our blood alternately run cold with horror and boil with anger' ('The Kodak on the Congo,' 1905). Also recognizing the importance of atrocity photographs for the reform movement, Twain in *King Leopold's Soliloquy* had Leopold examine photos of mutilated Congolese and sigh that 'The Kodak has been a sore calamity to us. The most powerful enemy that has confronted us, indeed' (Twain, 2005/1906, p. 53).

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In an interview with an unnamed US senator, the *Washington Times* in 1906 inquired as to the correspondence he received 'in this day of typewriters and cheap postage.' He mentioned receiving letters from Americans nearly every day calling for intervention in the Congo 'because some lecturer has been touring my State telling people about the Congo outrages, and in nearly every audience there are a few people who write about it' ('Congressman's Samples,' 1906). On their speaking tour in the US that year, John and Alice Harris, encouraged by large and enthusiastic crowds, informed E.D. Morel that they soon expected the US President to take action as a deluge of letters to elected officials following their lectures was making inaction less and less likely (Hochschild, 1999, pp. 242-243).

Please designate CBR as a beneficiary of your will or trust. The abortion industry receives hundreds of millions of dollars from the estates of their supporters, but we receive very little help from estate planning.

Mark Sealy, director of Autograph ABP (previously named the Association of Black Photographers, a British non-profit organization devoted, among other objectives, to global human rights advocacy) said in 2010:

In the early 1900s, the missionaries Alice Seeley Harris and her husband, Reverend John Harris, produced what was probably the first photographic campaign in support of human rights. A significant moment in the history of photography. The Harris Lantern Slide Collection was, at the time of its presentation in Europe and America, a radical and significant shift in the representation and understanding of the impact of colonial violence in the Congo. Instead of the charade of civilization that masked the Belgians' presence in the Congo, these photographs exposed the deep-rooted hypocrisy of so-called colonial benevolence.

How ironic that the person responsible for the first use of horrifying photos in a campaign of social reform would be a Christian missionary, depicting the severed hand and foot of a child who had been tortured to

death. When CBR displays a horrifying photo depicting the severed hand and foot of a child who has been tortured to death, today's Christian leaders emulate King Leopold and work to suppress the same kinds of disturbing, life-saving images. Alice Harris was in the Congo to spread the Gospel, but she knew the Gospel included a Biblically-mandated duty to intervene in defense of victims of injustice, and to do so as disruptively as possible. By her lights, saving victims of violence was not a departure from her mission, but an opportunity to take the risks and make the sacrifices necessary to convince the world that Christ is real.

Mrs. Harris, unlike her missionary associates (who remained silent as they received subsidies and grants and tax breaks from the Belgian authorities), was willing to expose atrocities by displaying disturbing photos. Today's Christian leaders are not. Mrs. Harris, unlike most other missionaries of her era, was determined to create discomfort in the pursuit of justice. Today's Christian leaders are determined to avoid the creation of any discomfort they deem inimical to their "ministry's" business interests (while pretending that they aren't really wimping out). These misplaced priorities must surely grieve the Spirit of God. One can easily envision a missionary graduate of today's Christian colleges and seminaries arguing that any aggressive intervention to protect victims of systematic butchery could compromise that missionary's ability to preach salvation to the lost. "True," they might concede, "people are being hacked to pieces all around us -- but we boldly preach John 3:16 while they bleed to death." Alice Harris' shocking pictures disturbed a lot of people, but they saved a lot of lives -- and made the Gospel more real by making it more relevant.

Please let us know if you will host a coffee and dessert for friends and family members who might be interested in supporting CBR. Gregg Cunningham is available to make a presentation at your home.

In *National Review* magazine's November 25, 2013 issue, Matthew Scully published an excellent comparative analysis of the animal rights and pro-life movements. Under the headline "Pro-Life, Pro-Animal," he wrote that "In their PR campaigns, it is the all-important mission of both lobbying groups [the meat industry and the abortion industry] to prevent images like those ... [in an abortion video] from getting out. Indeed, it is hard to think of any two enterprises, at least in developed societies, that have more to fear from simple photographic images than abortion and factory farming." He adds that "... livestock interests have leaned on legislators to make it a crime to take pictures of factory-farmed animals, and in some states they have already succeeded." Biola University, along with virtually every other American Christian college, has made it a crime to display abortion pictures, with Biola actually threatening one of its students with arrest and criminal prosecution for holding an abortion picture in the public square on her campus. Planned Parenthood cheered. The school later apologized -- but only after the PR damage became unsustainable. The president promised that no student would again be punished for displaying abortion photos. Our student interns will soon test the sincerity of that claim.

With God's help, we know how to restore the spirit of Alice Harris to today's Christian leadership, but we can't do it alone. Please redouble your CBR support in 2014. We must build on the foundation we laid in 2013.

Lord bless,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gregg Cunningham', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Gregg Cunningham
Executive Director