



IVP  
CLASSICS

Escape  
from Reason  
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# ESCAPE FROM REASON

**Politics, philosophy, science and communications** in Europe were radically altered during the **elongated 18th century** (1685-1815) as part of a movement referred to by its participants as the **Age of Reason**, or simply **the Enlightenment**.

Enlightenment thinkers in Britain, in France and throughout Europe questioned ***traditional authority*** and embraced the notion that **humanity could be improved** through **rational change**.

Out of the Enlightenment came numerous books, essays, inventions, scientific discoveries, laws, wars and revolutions.

The **American and French Revolutions** were directly inspired **by Enlightenment ideals** and respectively marked the peak of its influence and the beginning of its decline.

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- **The Early Enlightenment: 1685-1730**

- ❖ The Enlightenment's important 17th-century precursors included the Englishmen **Francis Bacon** and **Thomas Hobbes**, the Frenchman **René Descartes** and the key natural philosophers of the Scientific Revolution, including **Galileo Galilei**, **Johannes Kepler** and **Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz**.
- ❖ Its roots are traced to 1680s England, Isaac Newton published his "**Principia Mathematica**" (*laws of motion and gravitation*; 1686) and English philosopher and physician John Locke his "**Essay Concerning Human Understanding**" (1689)
- ❖ Locke argued that **human nature** was **mutable** and that knowledge was gained through **accumulated experience** rather than by accessing some sort of outside truth.
- ❖ Newton's calculus and optical theories provided the powerful Enlightenment metaphors for precisely **measured change and illumination**.

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- ❖ These two works provided the scientific, mathematical and philosophical toolkit for the Enlightenment's major advance
- ❖ In his essay '**What Is Enlightenment?**' (1784), the German philosopher Immanuel Kant summed up the era's motto in the following terms: 'Dare to know! Have courage to use your own reason!'\*

There was no single, unified Enlightenment, rather it was cultural presenting the opportunity to it speak of the **French** Enlightenment, the **Scottish** Enlightenment and the **English, German, Swiss or American** Enlightenment.\*

Individual Enlightenment thinkers often had very different sources of inspiration:

- a) Locke differed from David Hume
- b) Jean-Jacques Rousseau from [Voltaire](#)
- c) Thomas Jefferson from Frederick the Great

Their differences and disagreements emerged out of the common Enlightenment themes of **rational questioning** and belief in **progress through dialogue**.

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- **The High Enlightenment: 1730-1780**

- ❖ This centered on the dialogues and publications of the French “philosophes” (Voltaire, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Buffon and Denis Diderot)
- ❖ The High Enlightenment might best be summed up by one historian’s summary of Voltaire’s “**Philosophical Dictionary**”: **“a chaos of clear ideas.”**
- ❖ Foremost among these was the notion that everything in the universe could be rationally **demystified and cataloged**.
- ❖ The signature publication of the period was Diderot’s “Encyclopédie” (1751-77), which brought together leading authors to produce an ambitious compilation of human knowledge.\*

It was an age of enlightened despots like Frederick the Great, who unified, rationalized and modernized **Prussia** (*Germany, Lithuania, Poland & Russia*).

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The influence of this high enlightenment fueled the ideals of revolutionaries like Thomas Paine (author of *Common Sense* & *The American Crisis*) and Thomas Jefferson (scribe of the *Declaration of Independence*); was highly impacted by Locke's writings. \*

- John Adams said: "Without the pen of the author of *Common Sense*, the sword of Washington would have been raised in vain"

The High Enlightenment era was also a time of religious (and anti-religious) innovation, as **Christians** sought to reposition their faith along **rational lines** and **deists and materialists** argued that the universe seemed to determine its own course without God's intervention.

In recent decades, many Evangelical and/or "traditional" Protestants have claimed that Christianity was central to the early history of the United States and that the nation was founded on Judeo-Christian principles.

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They point to the use of prayer in Congress, national days of prayer and thanksgiving and the invocation of God as the source of our “unalienable rights” in the Declaration of Independence.

The truth is, there was a religious amalgamation that formed the founding framers of America’s institutional documentation – even secularist like Deist

The basis for the latter’s objection to the “Christian ethical” assertion is the utter **absence of biblical references** in the principal founding documents and note that the God of the Declaration of Independence is not “God the Father” but instead in deistic terms as a “**Creator**” and “**supreme judge of the world.**”

Among the contributors to the American Constitutional ideal were

- ▶ 7 Congregationalist
- ▶ 8 Presbyterians
- ▶ 2 Dutch Reformed
- ▶ 2 Roman Catholics
- ▶ 28 Episcopalians
- ▶ 2 Lutherans
- ▶ 2 Methodist
- ▶ 3 Deists

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[The three Desists Hugh Williamson of NC, James Wilson of PA and Ben Franklin of PA where are raised in staunch Calvinist homes and all three studied for ministry]<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Christianity and the Constitution by James Eidsmoe

It was Locke, along with French philosopher Pierre Bayle, who began to champion the idea of the separation of Church and State—an ideal Jefferson wrote about in a letter to a committee of the Danbury Baptist association of Connecticut – **It is not in the Constitution**

During this era, secret societies—like the **Freemasons**, the **Illuminati** and the **Rosicrucian** flourished, offering European men (and a few women) new modes of fellowship, esoteric ritual and mutual assistance.\*

- Coffeehouses, newspapers and literary salons emerged as new venues for ideas to circulate.

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The question is: what constitutes a church being called Christian?

- ANSWER: This is not a reference to any particular denomination but to the "body" or "group" of believers, both defined in various ways (*denominations anomalies*)
- The **Anglican Church** splintered from **Catholicism** for politics more than doctrine [Anglican tradition is based on a “three-legged stool” of “**scripture, tradition, and reason**”]
- Over time the **Dutch Reformed Church** drifted into [theological liberalism](#). [Abraham Kuyper wanted Christians to understand that each worldview has unique philosophical assumptions, and that Christian assumptions shape the way believers should act in every area of life]
- One of the tenets of **Methodism** is that **people must use logic and reason** in all matters of faith.
- **Deists** insisted that religious truth should be **subject to the authority of human reason** rather than divine revelation.

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DENOMINATION	LEADERSHIP	WORSHIP	SACRAMENTS	TRADITION	THEOLOGY
<b>Episcopal</b>	Bishops/ No Pope	Common Prayer	7 Sacraments/ anyone	Anglican	Trinity
<b>Presbyterians</b>	Self-Governance	Indigenous	Baptism / Communion	Protestant	Trinity
<b>Catholics</b>	Pope; No women	Liturgical	Confession	Catholic	Trinity
<b>Lutheran</b>	Biblical Example	Liturgical	Baptism / Communion	Apostle Creed	Trinity
<b>Congregationalist</b>	Self-Governance	Indigenous	Baptism / Communion	From Within	Trinity
<b>Dutch Reformed</b>	Self-Governance	Fixed Liturgy	Exclude human decision	Westminster	Calvinistic
<b>Methodist</b>	Hierarchal	Combination	Var. Baptism / Communion	Apos. & Nicene	Trinity
<b>Deist</b>	No Fellowship	No Worship	No Sacraments	Bible not Word	Rational

[<https://www.quora.com/What-are-the-primary-differences-between-Anglicans-Episcopalians-and-Lutherans-ELCA>]

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Deism or “the religion of nature” was a form of rational theology that emerged among “freethinking” Europeans in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Deists insisted that religious truth should be subject to the authority of human reason rather than divine revelation.

Consequently, they denied that the Bible was the revealed word of God and rejected scripture as a source of religious doctrine.

As devotees of natural religion, they rejected all the supernatural elements of Christianity. Miracles, prophecies, and divine portents were all proscribed as residues of superstition, as was the providential view of human history.

The doctrines of original sin, the account of creation found in *Genesis*, and the divinity and resurrection of Christ were similarly castigated as irrational beliefs unworthy of an enlightened age.

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For Deists, God was a benevolent, if distant, creator whose revelation was nature and human reason.

Applying reason to nature taught most deists that God organized the world to promote **human happiness** and our greatest religious duty was to further that end by the practice of morality.

[<http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/eighteen/ekeyinfo/deism.htm#:~:text=Deism%20or%20%E2%80%9Cthe%20religion%20of,reason%20rather%20than%20divine%20revelation>]

In the age after the high influence of Enlightenment, (1780-1815), the French Revolution of 1789 brought the age to a close the vision of throwing off old authorities to remake society along rational lines.\*

Society devolved into bloody terror that showed the **limits of its own ideas** and led, a decade later, to the rise of Napoleon.

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Still, its goal of egalitarianism (*all people are equal and deserve equal rights*) attracted the admiration of the early feminist like author Mary Shelley and inspired both the Haitian war of independence and the radical racial inclusivism of Paraguay\*.

**The Enlightenment** ultimately gave way to 19th-century **Romanticism**, Liberalism and Classicism—not to mention 20th-century [Modernism](#)\*.

\*History -- <https://www.history.com/topics/british-history/enlightenment>; “Enlightenment”; [History.com Editors](#); December 19, 2020; A&E Television Networks-- February 21, 2020; Original Publish Date -- December 16, 2009

Unfortunately, we are now living in a **post modern** and **neo-post-modern** age, and it is here we have come face to face with “alternative truth” (or ***alternative facts*** as coined by Kelly Ann Conway, Counselor to President Donald Trump (January 22, 2017 – Meet the Press))

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There was a time when truth was based on reason – but no more. What we *feel* is now – what is dictated by **passion and emotion**—is now the source of reality.

- Despite our obsession with the emotive and the experiential, we still face anxiety, despair, and purposelessness. How did we get here? And where do we find a remedy?

In this modern classic written in 1968, Francis A. Schaeffer traces trends in 20<sup>th</sup> century thought, examining key ideas which have shaped our society.

- In *Escape from Reason*, Schaeffer examines philosophy, science, art and popular culture to identify **dualism, fragmentation** and the decline of reason.

Schaeffer's work takes on a newfound relevance today, so as we scan his predictive outlook of the contemporary postmodern ethos, the shades of shades were already rising in the late 60's to a new purpose and hope in future generations.

Schaeffer spends most of the book tracking how societies worldviews change and who were some of the primary influences/people that caused this.

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He starts with Thomas Aquinas and proceeds from there, covering all expressive elements in pop-culture -- art, music, poetry and more.

One key point Schaeffer makes is that we must understand our current culture so that we can communicate the gospel more clearly.

- Therefore, it is not just a good history lesson study, but determinative observation

He also addresses some of the mistakes Christians have made in the process in the past such that we can learn from them.

*Escape from Reason* delivers a challenging decree to true believers to not only understand thought-forms that permeate our cultures, but we must also engage those thought-forms in honest debate, pitting such ever-evolving philosophies against the ever-stable Word of God.

There is an interesting statement by Shaeffer in chapter 4 which serves as an impetus for our examination of this classic work. Schaeffer says in Chapter 4:

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*“The Reformation and the Scriptures say that man cannot do anything to save himself, but he can, with his reason, search the Scriptures which touch not only ‘religious truth,’ but also history and the cosmos. He not only is able to search the Scriptures as the whole man, including his reason, but he has the responsibility to do so.”*

[Schaeffer, Francis A. *Escape from Reason* (IVP Classics) (p. 66). InterVarsity Press]

At first glance it seems peculiar that Schaeffer, a Presbyterian minister, would make such a startling claim regarding the responsibility of man in his own search for salvation.

For Reformed theology would teach that a dead man cannot choose God or (*as the new anti-buzzword might suggest*) “accept Christ.”

Contrarily, such a fallen person not only is able to seek God, but he also has the responsibility to do so. This viewpoint is buoyed by scriptures like:

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- **Isaiah 55:1** Ho, **every one** that thirst, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.
- God is calling everyone to Himself -- *Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters he says; what a splendid image!*
- ❖ **Don't miss everyone**—After the *special* privileges of Israel (Isa. 54:1–17) there consequentially follows the *universal* invitation to the Gentiles (Luke 24:47; Rom 11:12, 15).
- ❖ Think for a moment what a cup of cool, clear water tastes like when we are really, thirsty. This is what God is offering in spiritual sense.  
[Water covers about **71%** of the earth's surface yet only **3%** of the earth's water is fresh -- **2.5%** of the earth's fresh water is unavailable: locked up in glaciers, polar ice caps, atmosphere, and soil; highly polluted; or lies too far under the earth's surface to be extracted at an affordable cost and only 0.5% of the earth's water is available fresh water

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- ❖ **To thirst** carries with it a keen sense of need (Matt. 5:6 – *thirst for righteousness*).
- ❖ **waters ... wine and milk** provide a gradation. Not merely *water*, which is needed to maintain life at all, but *wine and milk* to strengthen, cheer, and nourish
- the spiritual blessings of the Gospel are meant (Isa 25:6; SOS 5:1; John 7:37). “**Waters**,” *plural*, to denote abundance (Isa. 43:20; 44:3).
- ❖ **no money**—stands in contrast to Isa 55:2, it is said, “ye spend money.” Man, without God is truly spiritually bankrupt -- but thinking themselves to have money, namely, a devotion to making more money , they lavish it on that “which is not bread,” that is, on idols, whether literal or spiritual.
- **Isaiah 55:6-7** Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: <sup>7</sup> Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.
- The text indicates that a satisfying life is potentially available to every one of us.

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❖ **II Peter 3:9** The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

- In every generation, and the present is no exception, life apart from God proves unsatisfying or incomplete; **we thirst** for something more.

Over the years, many others have made the same discovery as Isaiah inclusive of the famous quote from **Blaise Pascal** *“There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing but only by God the Creator, made know through Jesus Christ.”*

- Paraphrased by H.G. Wells as ‘there is a God-shaped hole in each person’s heart’
- All are invited to the great feast of heaven and one does not have to be perfect to get in.

The prophet speaks God’s word that his welcome is completely beyond any legalistic requirement; God’s kingdom is open to everybody and without payment

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- God's salvation is open to the most sinful; and yes, salvation is free and can't be bought
- Don't misunderstand, I didn't say it was without cost, it just didn't cost us anything

But is it reason that brings us to this conclusion from Isaiah --A dead or fallen man can search and understand and, with the Holy Spirit's drawing, choose.

- This in no way minimizes the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration!
- Instead, this seems to defend His marvelous work in the life of a sinner, even allowing a dead man to make active steps in the direction of Life.

# Man 2 Man

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