



IVP
CLASSICS

Escape
from Reason
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In **Chapter 3**, Schaeffer summarized that following the Renaissance-Reformation period, the problem of Nature and Grace turned into a problem instead of Nature and Freedom.

He believed autonomous Nature ate up Freedom as well, and he illustrates this as he runs quickly through the philosophies of Kant, Rousseau, de Sade, Hegel, and Kierkegaard.

Thus he closes the chapter with his frequently purported “**line of despair**” which “arises from the abandonment of the hope of a unified answer for knowledge and life.”

“Christianity was necessary for the beginning of modern science for the simple reason that Christianity created a climate of thought which put men in a position to investigate the form of the universe. Jean-Paul Sartre (b. 1905) states that the great philosophic question is that **something exists** rather than **nothing exists**. No matter what man thinks, he has to deal with the fact and the problem that there is something there.

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Christianity gives an explanation of why it is objectively there. In contrast to Eastern thinking, the Hebrew-Christian tradition affirms that God has created a true universe outside of himself. When I use this term “outside of himself,” I do not mean it in a spatial sense; I mean that the universe is not an extension of the essence of God. It is not just a dream of God. There is something there to think about, to deal with and to investigate which has objective reality. Christianity gives a certainty of objective reality and of cause and effect, a certainty that is strong enough to build on. Thus the object, and history, and cause and effect really exist.

Further, many of the early scientists had the same general outlook as that of Francis Bacon (1561-1626), who said, in *Novum Organum Scientiarum*: “Man by the Fall fell at the same time from his state of innocence and from his dominion over nature. Both of these losses, however, can even in this life be in some part repaired; the former by religion and faith, the latter by the arts and sciences.” Therefore, science as science (and art as art) was understood to be, in the best sense, a religious activity. Notice in the quotation that Schaeffer noted that Francis Bacon “did not see science as autonomous, for it was placed within the revelation of the Scriptures at the point of the fall.”

[Schaeffer, Francis A. *Escape from Reason* (IVP Classics) (p. 41-42). InterVarsity Press]

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Francis Bacon, 16th century English philosopher and statesman was credited with developing the scientific method and was very influential through the scientific revolution.

The 16th century was part of the Renaissance (14th to 17th C) which classified as the rebirth following the Middle Ages

- This shift was truly a move from Darkness to Light
- There were few advances in science and art during this time that began with the fall of Rome in 476 A.D. all the way to the 14th Century.

The Middle Ages is also known as the “**Dark Ages**,” is often branded as a time of war, ignorance, famine and pandemics such as the **Black Death**.

Some historians acknowledge that such grim depictions of the Middle Ages were greatly exaggerated, as the tag was assigned by Renaissance scholar Petrarch, who viewed ancient Greece and Rome as the pinnacle of human achievement.

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During the 14th century, a cultural movement called humanism began to gain momentum in Italy.

Among its many principles, humanism promoted the idea that man was the center of his own universe, and people should embrace human achievements in education, classical arts, literature and science.

One more thing on the Middle Ages -- The Church replaced the Roman Empire as the most powerful force in Europe, redefining the relationship between church and state.

The medieval Church grew into the most powerful institution in Europe, partly due to the rise of monasticism (Monkhood), which would rise to its most influential point in the latter part of the Middle Ages (1000-1300 A.D.)

Kings, queens and other rulers during the early medieval period drew much of their authority and power from their **relationship with the Church.**

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The rise of a strong papacy meant that European monarchs could not monopolize power, unlike in the days of the Roman Empire.

It was the dominance of the Church during the Early Middle Ages which was a major reason later scholars—specifically those of the Protestant Reformation (16th C) and the Enlightenment in the 17th and 18th centuries—branded the period as “**unenlightened**” (otherwise known as dark).

- They believed the clergy repressed intellectual progress in favor of religious piety.
- But early Christian monasteries encouraged literacy and learning – one of the most influential in this manner was Benedict of Nursia (480-543 AD).
- Benedict’s insistence that “Idleness is the enemy of the soul” and his rule that monks should do manual as well as intellectual and spiritual labor anticipated the famous Protestant work ethic by centuries.

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The Middle Age idea of limits on royal power would continue into the High Middle Ages, influencing such milestones as the Magna Carta (1215 A.D.) and the birth of the English Parliament.

The Renaissance was a period of European cultural, artistic, political and economic “rebirth,” prompting the rediscovery of classical philosophy, literature and art.

Some of the greatest thinkers, authors, statesmen, scientists, and artists in human history thrived during this era, while global exploration opened new lands and cultures to European commerce.

The invention of perhaps the most life changing occurrence of the period, the Gutenberg printing press (1450), allowed for improved communication throughout Europe and for ideas to spread more quickly.

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As a result of this advance in communication, texts from early humanist authors such as Petrarch and Boccaccio, promoted the renewal of traditional Greek and Roman culture and values, were printed and distributed to the masses.

Additionally, many scholars believe advances in international finance and trade impacted culture in Europe and set the stage for the Renaissance.

Some of the most famous and groundbreaking Renaissance intellectuals, artists, scientists and writers include the likes of:

- Dante (1265–1321): Italian philosopher, poet, writer and political thinker who authored “The Divine Comedy.”
- Geoffrey Chaucer (1343–1400): English poet and author of “The Canterbury Tales.”
- Donatello (1386–1466): Italian sculptor celebrated for lifelike sculptures like “David,” commissioned by the Medici family.
- Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519): Italian painter, architect, inventor -- responsible for painting “The Mona Lisa” and “The Last Supper”

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- Desiderius Erasmus (1466–1536): Scholar from Holland who defined the humanist movement in Northern Europe and Translator of the NT into Greek.
- Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543): Mathematician and astronomer who made first modern scientific argument for the concept of a heliocentric solar system.
- Rene Descartes (1596–1650): French philosopher and mathematician regarded as the father of modern philosophy. Famous for stating, “I think; therefore I am.”
- Galileo (1564-1642): Italian astronomer, physicist and engineer whose work with telescopes enabled him to describes the moons of Jupiter and rings of Saturn.
- William Shakespeare (1564–1616): England’s “national poet” and the most famous playwright, celebrated for his sonnets and plays like “Romeo and Juliet.”
- Niccolo Machiavelli (1469–1527): Italian diplomat and philosopher famous for writing “The Prince” and “The Discourses on Livy.”
- William Tyndale (1494–1536): English biblical translator, humanist and scholar burned at the stake for translating the Bible into English.

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Petrarch's Humanism encouraged Europeans to question the role of the Roman Catholic church during the Renaissance.

As more people learned how to read, write and interpret ideas, they began to closely examine and critique religion as they knew it.

Also, the printing press allowed for texts, including the Bible, to be easily reproduced and widely read by the people, themselves, for the first time

There are two major points germane to this examination:

- 1) that Bibles before the Reformation were typically in Latin, and that most ordinary people didn't have access to Bibles.
- 2) But there are obvious reasons for this:
 - a) First, for most of the history prior to the Reformation, the written language for virtually *everything* was Latin (Western Empire) and Greek (Eastern Empire)
 - b) Second, for much of that time, it was also the language commonly spoken by ordinary people.

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Thus, the Bible was in Latin for the sake of the people and to criticize this is to betray a lack of historical understanding, and to attack the Evangelists.

Remember that at the time of Christ, there were a wide variety of spoken languages throughout the Roman Empire, as Acts 2:5-8 makes clear.

- Yet the New Testament was written in Greek, not each local vernacular.
- Why? Because Greek was the standard *written* language.
- If you were literate, there was a good chance that you read Greek.
- By the fourth century, the standard written language in the West was Latin.

To respond to this shift, Pope Damasus (305 – 384 A.D.) ordered the Bible to be translated from the inaccessible Greek into more accessible Latin.

As a result, this Bible became known as the Vulgate (*editio vulgata* – common version), because it was designed to reach the common people.

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In other words, the Bible wasn't in Latin to be inaccessible, but so that any literate Western European could read it.

The fact that the Bible was in Latin rather than the local dialects is no more surprising than that modern Protestants prefer the King James Bible over a Bible written in, say, a southern dialect or Ebonics.

- Latin also ensured that you could reach people who didn't speak your local dialect.
- Latin as the standard language meant, for example, that St. Thomas Aquinas (an Italian) could learn under St. Albert the Great (a German) at the University of Paris.

The universality of Latin is also why many of the most famous writings of the Reformers, like John Calvin's *Institutes of Christian Religion*, were written in Latin.

So, while it's true that most people didn't have a household Bible prior to the Reformation, it was mostly due to the fact that:

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- 1) hand-printed, hand-copied Bibles were extremely time-consuming (and expensive) to produce prior to the printing press, and
- 2) ordinary Europeans were often illiterate and again we state, the printing press in the 15th century, not long before the Reformation made replication more cost efficient

And one of the very first mass-printed works Guttenberg started to churn out was, you guessed it, the Latin Vulgate.

And it was one century later, in the 16th century, **Martin Luther**, a German monk, led the **Protestant Reformation** – a revolutionary movement that caused a split in the Catholic church.

Luther questioned many of the practices of the church and whether they aligned with the teachings of the Bible; and as a result, a new form of Christianity (Protestantism), was formed.

[<https://www.history.com/topics/renaissance/renaissance> -- A&E Television Networks]

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“The early scientists also shared the outlook of Christianity in believing that there is a **reasonable God**, who had created a reasonable universe, and thus man, by use of his reason, could find out the universe’s form.

Early science was **natural science** in that it dealt with natural things, but it was not naturalistic, for, though it held to the uniformity of natural causes, it did not conceive of God and man as caught in the machinery. They held the conviction, first, that God gave knowledge to men—knowledge concerning Himself, the universe and history.

Whereas men had previously spoken of **nature and grace**, by this time there was no idea of grace—the word did not fit any longer. **Rationalism** was now well developed and entrenched; and there was no concept of revelation in any area. Consequently, the problem was now defined, not in terms of “**nature and grace**,” but of “**nature and freedom**”:

[Schaeffer, Francis A. *Escape from Reason* (IVP Classics) (p. 42-44). InterVarsity Press]

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Rationalism is the belief or theory that opinions and actions should be based on reason and knowledge rather than on religious belief or emotional response.

It is usually associated with the introduction of **mathematical methods** into philosophy during this period by the major rationalist figures, Descartes, Leibniz and Spinoza.

- Thus, we can see the conjoining relationship with science and religion

Rationalism is any view appealing to **intellectual** and **deductive reason** (as opposed to sensory experience or any religious teachings) as the source of **knowledge** or justification.

It did not remain a solitary concept, but rather became a hybrid of natural religion, Christianity, and rationalism, in which rationalism is the predominant element.

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Early 20th century systematic theologian Henry Thiessen, stated that theistic rationalism, which developed during the 18th Century, was a form of English and German Deism.

[**Deism** – No fellowship – No worship – No sacraments – Bible not the Word]

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

Theistic rationalists believe that God plays an active role in human life, rendering prayer effective; accepting parts of the Bible as divinely inspired, yet using reason as the criterion for what to accept or reject.

When it comes to a Christian view of rationalism vs. empiricism, a believer in God starts with the same questions that any philosopher starts with: how do I know that I know what I know?

When we look at the world around us, how can we be sure that our understanding of the world is right?

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When we examine our thoughts, how do we ensure that our thoughts—and the results of the our of our thinking are correct?

The answer to these questions is not found in confidence in oneself or one's mind, but trust in God.

The writer of Proverbs tells us to trust in the Lord with all our heart and lean not on our own understanding (Prov. 3:5).

But, someone may ask, “how can I know that **my perception** of this knowledge from God is not subject to the same human errors that the rest of knowledge is subject to?”

The answer is found in the very next verse, Prov. 3:6: “In all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.”

- What this means is a theme echoed throughout all Scripture—**the only Being who truly knows what He knows is God.**

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- Since we are finite, our minds are unable to be completely sure of our thoughts or knowledge, whether we are empiricists looking at the evidence, or rationalists depending on innate knowledge.
- Even those embroiled in the rationalism vs. empiricism debate will admit that the human experience includes both a search for empirical data and a reliance on innate knowledge.
- But every human being is subject to error, and neither method of knowing will give us perfect understanding.
- That is why we must trust God to provide the answers and the knowledge we need (James 1:5) -- God's Word is truth (John 17:17)

Many people, in all stages of faith, struggle to trust God; and Job, after challenging God and hearing God's response, concluded that "surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know" (Job 42:3).

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It is tempting, in such a humanistic era, to believe that we by our own power can rise to any height of knowledge if we simply find the correct method.

But the Bible tells us that we have limited power and that we must trust God if we are ever to have peace.

- Isaiah 26:3 You will keep *him* in perfect peace, *Whose mind is stayed on You*, Because he trusts in You.
 - ❑ The text declares that characteristic Christian faith will be expressed as complete trust in the sufficiency of God and the perfection of His will.
 - ❑ **Perfect peace** -- More literally, *peace peace (shālôm shālôm)*, means “a peace that really is peace,” rather than the temporary peace, which is all that man can bestow.
 - ❑ **V 4 Trust ye** implies the redeemed will readily testify of God’s everlasting faithfulness

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