

## Heresies in Church History

**IDOLATERS** – Christians continued to worship or create idols in violation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> commandment. There were two problems here. The first was the practical use of the idols, and the second was their continued presence, merely adding Christianity to their other beliefs.

**Response:** *abstain from the pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from what is strangled, and from blood.* Acts 15:20; 1Jn. 5:21

**NICOLAITANS** – Rev. 2:6,14-15 a sect holding to the “teaching of Balaam” which upheld the freedom to eat food offered to idols. The fear was that if Christians unwittingly ate such food, purchased from the marketplace and offered to an idol by its seller, that they had desecrated the temple of their body, losing their holiness and their salvation.

**Response** – Paul rejected that idea, asking “is that anything?” He provided a weaker-stronger brother standard in 1Cor. 8-10. This ruling upheld the freedom we have in Christ concerning food sacrificed to idols, but weighed that freedom against the temptation to new believers; its bottom line was to avoid it where possible, but not to fret if it happened. As far as the use or presence of idols, or committing fornication, Acts 15:20 is an absolute prohibition. Rev. 2:20 outright condemns intentionally eating food sacrificed to idols (participating in idolatry).

**No Resurrection of the Dead** – 1Cor. 15:12

**Response:** *if Christ is not raised, your faith is vain; you are still in your sins. If we have existence in Christ only in this life, we are the most miserable of all men.* (v. 17,19)

**Easy-Believism** – this is a belief that because we are under grace, obedience is optional. Our freedom in Christ, our forgiven state, becomes a license to sin.

**Response:** *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, who are dead to sin, live in it any longer?* Rom. 6:1,2.

*Don't you know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be misled: neither the immoral, idolaters, adulterers, the corrupt, the effeminate [man-boy sex], homosexuals, extortionists, thieves, drunkards, the pugnacious, nor defrauders will inherit the kingdom of God.* 1Cor. 6:9,10.

**JUDAISM** - The issue confronted is whether Christianity should remain within Judaism or become an independent and distinct religion. If it remains within Judaism then,

1. Circumcision is a prerequisite to salvation for men.
2. Obedience to Jewish Law is necessary including Sabbath and Kosher requirements.

**Response:**

1. It denies salvation by faith through Christ's Atoning sacrifice.
2. It undermines obedience inspired by love and thankfulness rather than reward.

**A. Nazarenes** - Taught that Jesus was Messiah whose teachings supersede Moses and the Prophets, but those of Jewish descent must still obey the law.

**B. Ebionites** - Taught that Jesus was only a man, even if a prophet and spokesman of God. Some accepted Jesus' virgin birth. Others said he was born of the union of Joseph and

Mary but then Christ descended on that offspring at his baptism in the form of a dove. The Christ departed the man prior to his crucifixion and resurrection.

**HELLENISM** - The absorption of Greek philosophy into Christian theology, especially the distinction between spirit and matter, most commonly referred to as DUALISM.<sup>1</sup>

**A. Platonism** (following the teachings of Plato) and NeoPlatonism. Used the philosophy of Plato to analyze and restate Christian Truth: flesh and matter are evil while pure spirit is good. The impetus for its development is that it affords an explanation for continuing sin in the lives of Christian converts.

*Aberrations of Platonism-*

1. Christ was spirit, not flesh, and therefore didn't suffer on the cross.
2. The resurrection is spiritual, not physical and therefore it takes place daily.
3. Sex is evil, food is evil, drink is evil, etc.
4. Asceticism and mysticism are paths to true righteousness.

**B. Gnosticism** - Prominent founders within the Christian community include Simon Magus (the Samaritan magician found in the Book of Acts), Basilides of Alexandria, and Valentinus of Alexandria. It has its source in "gnosis" or special knowledge that has been revealed and transmitted secretly to the initiates of the sect.

*Offshoot: Manicheanism.* Augustine was a Manichean for 9 years (374-383).

*Aberrations of Gnosticism-*

1. Salvation is the freeing of spirit from flesh.
2. Salvation is attained by teaching revealed truth through "mysteries" which return the individual to pure spirit in stages (mysteries were ceremonies with mystical effects on participants).
3. Christian and Jewish writings are purely allegorical and must be properly interpreted by one with special knowledge to reveal the underlying truth.
4. Other teachings of Jesus exist outside of written Scripture, entrusted to those with the hidden knowledge for transmission orally to deserving initiates.
5. God is not a being with personality but is the all-permeating 1st Principle, 1st Cause and True Love without form.
6. Satan is the God of the Old Testament (called Demiurge) and the creator of the world of matter.
7. Gnosticism minimized the historical elements of Scripture, Christ's actual existence and crucifixion and physical resurrection as a man, the tangible and historical participation of God in the lives of his people individually and in the life of Israel as a nation.

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<sup>1</sup> Dualism also refers to existence being ruled by two principles: good and evil. It results in the belief that Satan is equal and opposite to Yahweh. Therefore, God is not sovereign in all matters, because Satan has an exclusive domain of his own.

**C. Pantheism** - "God" is an all-inclusive phrase describing Nature without personality and that life-force which resides innately in all things.

**MARCIONITES** - Marcion was the son of a wealthy bishop and he was raised as a Christian. He went to Rome in 138 or 139 and taught the following:

1. Nature is Dualistic.
2. The God of the Old Testament was evil.
3. There is no secret body of knowledge or allegorical interpretation of Scripture.
4. The Demiurge created men and their souls.
5. A second God, hidden until Christ's coming, is the God of Love.
6. The God of Love undertook to rescue men he didn't create and owed nothing to the Demiurge.
7. The God of Love revealed himself in Jesus who was not born of men through the Demiurge, but was only a phantom who seemed to be a man. This was called *docetism* from the Greek meaning "to appear."
8. Sexual union was forbidden.
9. Marriage was rejected.
10. Martyrdom was prized.

Marcion was an organizer and gathered his followers into churches. He assembled probably the first authoritative collection of early Christian writings which later came into Eusebius' possession. These are the only source we have for our knowledge of the first three centuries of the church.

**MONTANISM** - c.156-172 Montanus was raised in Phrygia in Asia Minor and his movement is sometimes called the "**Phrygian**" movement. Its teachings include,

1. Revival of prophets and new revelation.
2. Asceticism, fasting, celibacy, and martyrdom as path to righteousness.
3. An early end of the world.
4. Imminent second coming of Christ.
5. The New Jerusalem would be an ideal society located ... at Phrygia, of course.
6. Speaking in tongues is the sign of salvation.
7. There will be a millennial reign of Christ (a belief called "Chiliasm").

**Modalism** - God emerges from the abstract whole of his being to take on the attributes of a man, father/creator, or Holy Spirit as his present "mode" of being. In other words, God appears or acts in three different modes, revealed one at a time as Father, Son or Holy Spirit; then he returns to his abstract whole. *Sabellius* was a proponent of modalism c. 220. Using the chemical states of liquid, solid, and vapor to describe the Trinity would be modalistic (e.g. water, ice, and steam). Don't use it.

## SCHISMS (or splits) -

**A. Novation Schism.** Novatian was a presbyter of the Roman church. His followers voiced dissatisfaction with lax moral practices and with the lenient treatment of those who denied the faith during the persecutions of the church. Novatian began a parallel church structure by appointing his own bishops. His opponents included Calistus, Bishop of Rome, who taught that no sin is unforgivable if the sinner is genuinely contrite. Calistus also pointed to the parable of the wheat and the tares to describe the composition of the church as a whole which was not to be pre-judged by its participants. Other famous opponents included Stephen, Bishop of Rome, Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, Clement of Alexandria (-215), and Origen of Alexandria (182-251).

### *Aberrations -*

1. There is no forgiveness of sins after salvation -OR-
2. There is no forgiveness of "deadly sins" after salvation.

The deadly sins as Tertullian defined them: idolatry, blasphemy, murder, adultery, fornication, false-witness, and fraud. The definition of deadly sins became an instant hit and everyone began his own list of the "big 7." Scripture teaches there are no better or worse sins, and the unforgivable sin is the blaspheming of the Holy Spirit by identifying Him with Satan (Matt.12:24-31) or by worshipping Satan despite complete knowledge of the freedom offered through Christ (Heb.6).

**B. Donatists -** The Carthaginian **rigorists**, who hadn't backed down during Diocletian's persecution (c. 303-305), refused to accept the appointment of a new bishop of Carthage by a Roman Pope who had indeed backed down. They called him "traditore" or "hand-over of the Scriptures." Rather than submit to his rule, the Donatists appointed their own bishop who was succeeded by Donatus in 316, from whom the schism took its name. This resulted in the development of a dual church system with Popes and counter-Popes (or anti-Popes), bishops and counter-bishops.

The Donatist adherents were primarily North African and non-Latin and the split may well have been exacerbated by racial tension. When the Christian Emperor Constantine called a synod under pressure from the Donatists (who by then had appointed some 270 bishops), those of the "Catholic Church" refused to attend. Constantine tried to compel attendance by force but later gave up that method. A newcomer named Augustine tried to act as mediator between the feuding groups but failed. The Donatists remained independent until the Vandals sacked Rome.

**Purgatory** – because the Donatists remained true to Christ despite torture and death, while others broke under duress and denied Christ, the Donatists demanded that those who were broken should be excluded from the Church. Pope Gregory (c. 450) decided to put an end to this dispute between the strong and the weak. He invented purgatory. It would be a place between earth and heaven where those who had denied Christ could do penance and regain their salvation. Over time, this came to be a place to do penance for all unrepented sins during this life. It fit nicely into what became a doctrine of works by the Catholics.

**ARIANISM** - The Arian controversy lasted from the time of Constantine in 318 until 451 when the Council of Chalcedon finally put it to rest. Arius, a priest in Alexandria, denied the true divinity of Jesus Christ. He taught that the Son was not eternal but was *created* by the Father, and therefore the Son was not God by nature. He had a changeable nature. His honor and dignity were earned from the Father by Jesus' righteous life on earth rather than being inherent in Jesus' identity as God. Jesus was not "consubstantial" with the Father (i.e. of the same substance). The Holy Spirit was begotten by the Logos (Christ) and therefore was less than either the Son or the Father.

Arius' bishop, Alexander, condemned Arius' teachings and defrocked him and his followers. However, Arius had many sympathizers throughout the empire and a major conflict arose. Eusebius writes the dispute was so intense that "the Christian religion afforded a subject of profane merriment to the pagans, even in their theaters." Constantine was upset with both Alexander and Arius. He wrote each of them and said, "There was no need to make these questions public ... since they are problems that idleness alone raises, and whose only use is to sharpen men's wits ... these are silly actions worthy of inexperienced children, and not of priests or reasonable men." Constantine called for the first ecumenical council of the church to resolve the dispute. It met at **Nicea** in 325. The bishops who met there debated the nature of the person of Jesus Christ for over two months. Arius was opposed in the debate by the archdeacon **Athanasius** from Alexandria. Arius lost. The Nicene creed reference to the nature of the person of Jesus Christ reads "being one essence (homo-ousios) with the Father." Arius and his followers were banished from the empire.

Although settled in theory, Constantine wavered on the issue (his sister was an Arian) and he permitted some of the bishops to return from exile in 328. They immediately began a series of political maneuverings that led to the exile of Athanasius in 335, who was then bishop of Alexandria. Arius was declared orthodox and was scheduled for reinstatement in the church when he died in 336. The conflict continued for 150 years.

The final orthodox Nicene formula is this: "The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *and from the Son*." This final phrase "and from the Son" is called the *filioque*.

**Nestorians** – c. 428. Also known as *Adoptionism*. Nestor was from the Antiochene school. He taught that Christ, as man, is the adoptive Son of God, not God incarnate. He had two separate natures. The two natures were united in love but separated in essence. The orthodox position is that Christ is one *person* with two *natures*, one human and one divine. The Nestorian heresy is that Christ comprises two *persons*; one with a human nature, and the other with a divine nature. If there are two distinct persons in Jesus Christ, Mary would be the mother of the human person only. Thus the reference to Mary as Mother of God (Theotokos) was anathema to the Nestorians who preferred to refer to Her as "Christotokos" (Mother of Christ). Nestor was opposed by Eusebius.

**Monophysites** – Christ has one predominant nature. Monophysitism developed as a reaction to the dual nature teaching of Nestorianism. It led to the formal secession of the Coptic and Armenian churches from the rest of the Christian church. Although they accepted the formulation of the Nicene Creed, they fought over the way in which divinity and humanity are joined in Christ Jesus. The problem arose when they began to think about the fact that God (and therefore the divine nature of Christ) was unchangeable, immutable and eternal, while human nature is changeable and temporal.

- Antiochian Monophysites stressed Christ's human nature, because they believed that Christ needed to be fully and truly human if he were to be the savior of human beings.

- Alexandrian Monophysites stressed Christ's divinity because he needed to be fully God if he were to teach divine truth.

**PELAGIANISM** – This is a doctrine of works and a rejection of grace. It rejects the idea that man is incapable of doing what God expects in the way of obedience to the Law. c. 400 AD. Pelagius was appalled by the sinfulness in the Church at Rome, which he believed was the natural result of Augustine's teaching on grace. And so he taught,

1. Man is basically good but morally weak, and thus capable of perfect obedience (this rejects total depravity). God only requires what man is capable of doing.
2. Even if Adam had not sinned, he would have died (the Tree of Life is a metaphor).
3. Adam's sin harmed only himself, not the human race (no original sin). Therefore, infant baptism is unnecessary to wipe away original sin. Newborns are in the same state as Adam before his fall (innocent).
4. The whole human race neither dies through Adam's sin and death, nor rises again through the resurrection of Christ (Christ's death did not atone – it was a sacrificial example).
5. The (Mosaic Law) is as good a guide to heaven as the Gospel (the Law remains). Christ lived in such a way as to provide an example for us.
6. Even before the advent of Christ there were men who were without sin. Christ was not unique; his righteousness is not imputed to us; we earn our own salvation.

Pelagius' teachings were condemned at the Councils of Carthage (c. 415), Orange (529), Ephesus (431), Trent (1546), and by the Protestants in their Confessions such as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Helvetic, Augsburg, Gallican, and Belgic Confessions, the Anglican Articles, and the Canons of Dort. A milder version will arise in the 1600's called **Arminianism**.

**MONASTICISM** - As Christianity became more and more the haven of the general population, its standards became more and more subdued. God's people became displaced by the teeming masses. Two competing philosophies arose that drove believers into monasteries to preserve the original documents and teachings of the church:

- a. antinomianism** (at the far left) taught that the Christian was above the law and beyond mere morality, and could therefore do as he pleased. "Once saved, always saved" was corrupted into "Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we live."

**b. rigorists** (at the far right) taught with Puritanical fervor, that the perfection of the person and the soul is an attainable goal in this lifetime, and in some versions of their teaching, a goal that could be surpassed. Mere salvation wasn't enough.

Somewhere between these two extremes came a group of Christian purists who, frustrated by the lack of commitment in the church body, decided to seclude themselves in trial communities called monasteries to work out a formula for Christian living. It quickly degenerated into an escapist retreat on the one hand, and an elitist club on the other. If martyrdom was no longer the mark of someone who had made it, then perhaps a monk's habit and hairdo might be an appropriate alternative, a mark of distinction and apartness --- the sign of someone to be envied but not imitated.

Jeremy Jackson in *No Other Foundation*, points out the underlying dangers of the "monastic solution" to Christian nominalism in these cautions:

1. People, being gregarious by nature, tend to gather together in flocks. Flocks, by identifying themselves distinctly from all other flocks, also tend to exclude all others. They are inherently alienating.
2. A flock tends to feather its own nest, cater to the internal needs of its members, and thereby it tends to "become a service organization, gratifying human egos, human mores, human traditions. The Gospel is adapted to society, instead of society being adapted to the Gospel." (p. 64)
3. "Anyone who takes Jesus' words seriously is thought to be either a fanatic, whose conduct is vaguely threatening, or a super-saint, whose example is not for the likes of us."

Why has the church tended to follow these two tracks of legalism and nominalism? Why does the church compromise so readily and follow secular fads so easily? Jackson tells us, "Just as the secular mind prefers to push Christ aside and talk about Paul or Augustine or Luther, so the ecclesiastical mind, the mind absorbed in the church as a mere institution, is more taken with the thoughts and deeds of churchmen than with the Word of the Founder of the Church.

**The Church as State** – In 380, Christianity became the official religion of Rome. When the force of Visigoths led by Alaric took and sacked Rome in 410, and when in 430 (as Augustine lay dying in Hippo) the Vandals besieged the city, it was just the beginning of 600 years of barbarian invasions. Rome was no longer the center of world power. It changed to Constantinople. A political power vacuum emerged. The church became the only organized institution capable of exercising civil dominion over a large territory. And so for the next 1000 years the church retained political as well as spiritual control over the world until King Henry VIII challenged the Romish Pope and won. This stimulated corrective action within and against the Roman Church by the Protestants Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli. The **Reformation** had begun.

While the church held its power and control, church offices were highly prized. Those who attained those positions wielded enormous influence, and gained enormous wealth. But the power and wealth of the church intoxicated, and corrupted. It led to abuses, doctrinal error, persecutions, and abominations. The church became an engine of war and domination, because its leadership was un-Christian. It had become a civic institution. In the late 1700's, America chose to separate church and state because of those historic abuses, and it was the churchmen of America who pushed for that separation. It wasn't that they opposed the church influencing and participating in the state; they opposed the state influencing and participating in the church. That was what they saw as the cause of the church's corruption for a thousand years.

**Mysticism** had become a major force in about 500 when the works of the Greek theologians were published under the pseudonym of "Dionysius the Areopagite." They were probably developed in the Monophysite circles of Syria. They gained wide acceptance as sub-apostolic expositions of how the celestial hierarchy of God and the angels was related to the ecclesiastical hierarchy of bishops and priests with their sacraments. The writings of Dionysius formed the basis for the thought of Bernard of Clairvaux and Thomas Aquinas. This period therefore not only knit East and West together, but also past and present.

**Iconoclasts** – the church adopts the use of icons, statues, stained glass, and story-laden pictures to further the teachings of the church in a world that cannot read or write. They soon fall into misuse and are treated as holy objects, worthy of worship in themselves – the representation becomes the object.

**Scholasticism** - Universities arose in the 12th and 13th centuries as associations or guilds of teachers with theology as their major subject. Paris became a leading university as did Bologna. They were chartered from the Pope and pursued the relation of faith and reason. The questions they sought answers to were like these:

1. Is God's revelation that culminated in Christ consistent with reason or are the two contradictory?
2. If the two are compatible, which should have priority, the faith which is the basis of Christian commitment, or man's reason?
3. Can reason demonstrate as true what the Christian believes about God?
4. If it cannot, does what is received by faith complement what is reached by reason, or do the two contradict each other?
5. If reason seems to deny what the Christian accepts on faith as given by God, should he follow reason and discard faith, or can he find some way to hold to both?

The method used by Scholasticism to reach answers to these questions was Aristotelian logic (if, then, else, therefore) and the dialectic of Plato's Socrates (leading the listener to a conclusion by a series of probing questions). To acquaint themselves with the Greek philosophers the Scholastics used the only texts they had, the Latin materials available in the monastic libraries. They began to search out original Greek works or alternative translations from Persia where the **Nestorian** heretics had left them

in 400. They began to attend Moslem schools which carried Syriac translations and Arab schools in Spain where Jews, Christians and Moslems studied together. The Eastern theology of Constantinople was encountered and brought to the West this "new wave" theology.

**A. Realism** - Plato declared that words or phrases which describe "universals" have an independent existence from the individual units which comprise them. We have coined the phrase, "the whole is more than the sum of its parts" to describe this approach. As applied to theology this would mean that mankind as a whole has been corrupted by the sin of Adam. The saving work of Christ is for mankind as a whole and not for isolated individual men. The church is more than the sum of individual Christians or local congregations.

**B. Nominalism** - This school of thought maintains that only particular things are real and universals are merely words coined by the intellect. Terms such as mankind, city, nation, animal and church are concepts of the mind. Only individual objects and events exist. Men, seeing what they believe to be resemblances between objects, invent abstract terms to group individual objects together. Likewise, the Trinity must refer to three individual gods no matter what concept we try to link them with.

**Charges of the Reformation** – Martin Luther, in 1517, nailed his famous 95 theses to the door of the Wittenberg Chapel in hopes of having a debate on some questionable church teaching and practices. By the time the dust settled, the Roman Catholic Church would never be the same. The essence of the charges fall into 5 battle cries known as the **Solas**:

- **Sola Scriptura** – the standard of truth is the Bible alone, not the church, not the Pope
- **Solus Christus** – salvation is by Christ alone, not by sacraments, not by priests
- **Sola Gratia** – salvation is by grace alone, not by works, not by penance
- **Sola Fide** – salvation is by faith alone, not by faith plus anything else
- **Soli Deo Gloria** – everything we do is for the Glory of God alone; everything that has been done for us by God is for God's glory alone; nothing we do merits God's grace.

**Arminianism** – c. 1610 There are a number of similarities between Arminianism and Pelagianism. Arminius was a Calvinist who challenged the extent of the atonement, believing that Christ died for the whole world, and that man had free will capable of accepting or rejecting God's grace. This was in opposition to Augustine's teaching that Calvin had accepted. After Arminius died, his followers developed the five points of Arminianism in a remonstrance or list of objections to Calvinism. And so they were called the Remonstrants. The followers of Calvin and Augustine responded with their own Five points of Calvinism (100 years after Calvin). The Arminian points are these:

**1. Free-Will or Human Ability** - Although human nature was seriously affected by the Fall, man has not been left in a state of total spiritual helplessness. God graciously enables every sinner to repent and believe, but He does not interfere with man's freedom. Each sinner possesses a free will, and his eternal destiny depends on how he uses it. Man's freedom consists of his ability to choose good over evil in spiritual matters; his will is not enslaved to his sinful nature. The sinner has the power to either cooperate with

God's Spirit and be regenerated or resist God's grace and perish. The lost sinner needs the Spirit's assistance, but he does not have to be regenerated by the Spirit before he can believe, for faith is man's act and precedes the new birth. Faith is the sinner's gift to God; it is man's contribution to salvation.

**2. Conditional Election** - God's choice of certain individuals to be saved, made before the foundation of the world, was based upon His foreseeing that they would respond to His call. He selected only those whom He knew would of themselves freely believe the gospel. Election therefore was determined by or conditioned upon what man would do. The faith which God foresaw and upon which He based His choice was not given to the sinner by God (it was not created by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit) but resulted solely from man's will. It was left entirely up to man as to who would believe and therefore as to who would be elected unto salvation. God chose those whom He knew would, of their own free will, choose Christ. Thus the sinner's choice of Christ, not God's choice of the sinner, is the ultimate cause of salvation.

**3. Universal Redemption or General Atonement** - Christ's redeeming work made it possible for everyone to be saved, but did not actually secure the salvation of anyone. Although Christ died for all men and for every man, only those who believe on Him are saved. His death enabled God to pardon sinners on the condition that they believe, but it did not actually put away anyone's sins. Christ's redemption becomes effective only if man chooses to accept it.

**4. The Holy Spirit Can Be Effectually Resisted** - The Spirit calls inwardly all those who are called outwardly by the gospel invitation; He does all that He can to bring every sinner to salvation. But inasmuch as man is free, he can successfully resist the Spirit's call. The Spirit cannot regenerate the sinner until he believes; faith (which is man's contribution) proceeds and makes possible the new birth. Thus, man's free will limits the Spirit in the application of Christ's saving work. The Holy Spirit can only draw to Christ those who allow Him to have His way with them. Until the sinner responds, the Spirit cannot give life. God's grace, therefore, is not invincible; it can be, and often is, resisted and thwarted by man.

**5. Falling from Grace** - Those who believe and are truly saved can lose their salvation by failing to keep up their faith, etc. All Arminians have not been agreed on this point; some have held that believers are eternally secure in Christ - that once a sinner is regenerated, he can never be lost.

Arminianism is often called semi-Pelagianism. It was rejected by every major voice of the Reformation, and every major confession. It found its modern voice in John Wesley, and then became popularized during the Revivals of the 1880's (Charles Finney), especially among the populist Baptists and Methodists.

**The Enlightenment** – Scholasticism and the Reformation had opened the door to philosophy and institutional change for the West. Once that door was opened, the *Age of Reason* had dawned. It held to the supremacy of the human mind over myth, superstition, and revelation. The world divided into 3 groups in the 1600's:

- **Traditionalists** who clung to their Catholic religious heritage;
- **Reformists** who opposed more than they upheld, and so they were labelled “protestants”
- **Separatists** who rejected God altogether in favor of humanism and human reason.

It is this third group that the Enlightenment or **Modernity** sprung from. Its assumptions are:

1. Human Autonomy - meaning and morality can be discovered within the bounds of natural reason without any reference to God.
2. Inevitable Progress - every day, in every way, we're getting better and better.
3. Knowledge is *always* good, and therefore must be obtained at any cost
4. Knowledge results in control over our environment, which is our salvation
5. Righteousness is found in developing and enforcing social and political solutions

**Secularism** – There are two spheres of human activity, one public, the other private. Religion must remain in the private sphere. Therefore, the Church should have no role in the public sphere, no voice in the marketplace of ideas. The public sphere should not attempt to control the content of the private sphere. This is separation of church and state taken to an extreme.

**Scientism** – Science is no longer just a technique or a means of acquiring accurate knowledge about our physical world. It has become the altar on which mankind must place its sacrifices of time, money, study, and devotion. It is the means of our ultimate salvation and survival, the only standard of truth and light in a dark world. And its priests are our scientists, who will dispense the truth they serve to a witless, ignorant, and superstitious generation. We devote our children to its service.

And Science is no longer limited to the physical sciences, or technical fields, but has now branched out to include history, philosophy, psychology, education, and sociology. Its teachings are promoted through our school curricula, books, and mass media. Heresy is defined as whatever contradicts current scientific orthodoxy – in other words, Science has replaced the church, making it redundant and disposable, along with its priesthood. There is no sin, only misperception. There is no absolute truth apart from what scientists declare it to be; in the social sciences, the opinions of the “scientists” trump all other opinions. Their “testimony” is therefore unassailable in any court in the land. But the testimony of a Christian about right relationships, founded on the biblical text instead of an authorized textbook, is a fiction, an unlicensed intrusion on the protected and sanctioned territory of Science. Science is the final arbiter of truth; it is the civil religion of our time.

**Darwinism** – going beyond the teachings of Charles Darwin and Science, this defines a mechanistic universe in which there can be no God. The mechanism *is* God: impersonal, indifferent. Like Pelagianism, mankind is evolving ever better with each generation,

without a corrupt nature, capable of being educated out of its “sickness” and selfishness. Man is not at all dead in his sin. Nor is he unique in his divinity (he is not made in the image of God). He is just another creature on the planet with no more rights, privileges, or superiority than a cockroach might have.

**PostModernism** – after World Wars I and II, and the atrocities of the last century, it became clear that the ideals of the Enlightenment were false. There is no such thing as truth or progress, we are told. Truth is relative, subjective, limited, and transitory. Life is to be lived in the private sphere. We have restricted connectivity to others through public spheres such as job, school, and politics. In the public sphere we must not impose our views on others (see *Secularism* above). All views are equally valid. The only shared truth we have is vicarious. Its images are conveyed to us through television and other media. These provide us with our image of reality, ala George Orwell’s *1984*, or Kurt Vonnegut’s *Fahrenheit 451*. And yet we strive to don that publicly projected, acceptable image by adorning ourselves with its icons: the right clothing, makeup, consumables, homes, cars, etc. We are driven to conform this way in order to gain acceptance, to participate in that larger community. The images have been designed by folks who are unknown, unelected, and unaccountable to us, who themselves are at the mercy of corporate employers and Stockholders. They pander to whatever draws our attention: sex, violence, greed. The source of culture, the values of our community, have been so splintered that there is no longer a standard of right and wrong, biblical or otherwise. We are lost among the trees in a forest filled with alleged truth, searching for our own personal path to bliss. After all, there are many roads to heaven...

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