

Year at a Glance	
Nov 9-Dec 14	Early Church Age
Jan 4-Feb 8	Post-Nicene Age
Feb 15-Mar 22	Medieval Age
Mar 29-May 10	Reformation Age
May 17-May 31	Great Awakening to Today

Great Awakening to Today	
May 17	“The Cult of Reason” (chapters 31, 32, 33)
May 24	“The Great Awakening” (chapters 34, 35, 36)
May 31	“A Christian America” (chapters 37, 38, 39)

One of the great **ironies of church history** is that the **Puritans**, who longed for a pure and unified church governed entirely by Scripture, ultimately helped open the door to the denominational world we live in today. In last week’s lesson, we explored how the Puritans arose within the Church of England seeking further reform, emphasizing the authority of Scripture, genuine conversion, holiness, and the Lordship of Christ over every area of life.

We traced the Puritans’ growing **conflict with the English monarchy** under James I and Charles I, their objections to ceremonial worship and episcopal control, and the eventual outbreak of the **English Civil War**. We discussed **Oliver Cromwell**, the Westminster Assembly, and the Puritans’ desire to build a thoroughly Christian society shaped by biblical truth. At the same time, we also considered some of the **dangers** that emerged when spiritual goals became too closely tied to political power. The class highlighted both the strengths and weaknesses of Puritanism: their seriousness about holiness, preaching, theology, family worship, and pastoral care, alongside tendencies toward division, excessive introspection, and legalism.

We also examined how the Puritan movement unintentionally contributed to the rise of **denominational** Christianity. As believers increasingly emphasized **Scripture** above tradition, the importance of **conscience**, and the reality of genuine **inward faith**, Christians began arriving at differing conclusions about church structure and practice. Combined with the exhaustion caused by religious wars such as the **Thirty Years’ War** and later developments like the **Toleration Act of 1689**, the modern denominational world gradually emerged. **Yet despite their imperfections, the Puritans still challenge us today with their seriousness about God, holiness, worship, eternity, and the authority of Scripture.**

But the exhaustion produced by centuries of religious conflict did not merely lead to denominational diversity and greater calls for tolerance. For many thinkers, it also led to growing skepticism toward Christianity itself. Increasingly, people looked beyond the church to human reason, science, nature, and personal feeling as the source of truth and meaning. Out of that environment arose two enormously influential movements that still shape the modern world today: the **Enlightenment** and **Romanticism**.

Great Awakening to Today

“The Cult of Reason”¹

For it is written, "I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE." Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe (1 Corinthians 1:19-21).

Benjamin Franklin was asked about his religious faith a few weeks before he died. His response: “As to Jesus of Nazareth, ...I have...some doubts as to his Divinity, tho’ it is a question I do not dogmatize upon, having never studied it, and think it needless to busy myself with it now, when I expect soon an opportunity of knowing the truth with less trouble. I see no harm, however, in its being believed, if that belief has the good consequence...of making his doctrines more respected and better observed” (cited in Shelley, p. 311).

“We are all born in the Enlightenment and bred in Romanticism” (author cited in Calhoun).

This lesson we come to what C. S. Lewis called “the great divide.”² Certainly it is a great divide in Western history, and it is a great divide in church history as well, because the forces unleashed by the Enlightenment and Romanticism are still with us.

THESIS: The Enlightenment mind and the Romantic heart reshaped the modern world by replacing confidence in divine revelation with confidence in human reason and human feeling, yet even in the midst of that shift God continued to preserve and awaken His church.

I. The Enlightenment

The Enlightenment was a movement where “national interests and mental relaxations combined to exclude metaphysics from culture” (Charles Williams cited in Shelley, p. 312). It was a major turning point toward modern secularism.

Man has the ability to find the truth by the use of his senses and reason. **Man is not a sinner. He is a reasonable creature.**

A. What _____ the rise of this so-called “Age of Reason”?

1. Thinking spawned during the Reformation period mixed with the **humanism** of men like Erasmus, and the Renaissance emphasis on **free will**.
2. A thirst for **tolerance** after a century of religious war (English Civil War; persecution of French Huguenots; Thirty Years’ War in Germany).

¹ This lecture outline is largely based upon Dr. David Calhoun’s lecture on the same topic.

² Peter Kreft calls it “The Great Darkness.”

3. A **new faith in law and _____** spawned by the pioneers of modern science (Copernicus; Kepler; Galileo; Newton).
- B. The _____ of Reason (Voltaire, Diderot, Jefferson – Why are all these Enlightenment leaders depicted in their portraits as smiling? They believed they were onto something. Every problem of human life will be solved as mankind now uses reason to solve the problems of the world.)

1. The Promise of _____

“Nature and nature’s laws lay hid in night; God said, ‘Let Newton be!’ and all was light” (Alexander Pope).

“Everywhere society became more and more enlightened. By which was largely meant that whereas in the Middle Ages [Dark Ages] the questions that could not be answered theologically were held as negligible, in this century the answers that could not be given scientifically were more and more held to be worthless” (Charles Williams, *The Descent of the Dove*, 201).

2. The progress of _____

Philosophy began to emerge at this time as a **separate discipline** from theology.

- a. **Rationalism**—Descartes (1596-1650) (more on the continent)

Descartes began with just what he could think, doubting everything he could doubt to get down to the bare rock of reality and then think his way to God and to the external world.

While it was an amazing accomplishment, the British were not altogether impressed. **Lord Francis Bacon** said that Descartes was like a spider, producing cobwebs out of his own existence. [Bacon – scientific method]

- b. **Empiricism**—**John Locke** (1632-1704) (on the British Isles)

Rather than beginning with the human mind, the empiricist began with the external world, and the human mind was simply that which would observe, understand, and organize data that would come to it from the external world.

But in one sense it comes down to the same thing: the growing autonomy of human reason is emerging.

One man, with his **eyes closed**, is thinking through truth (rationalism). The other man, the empiricist, with his **eyes wide open**, is looking through a microscope or telescope,

trying to discover reality through observation and investigation. Though their approaches are different, both ultimately arrive at the same place: **the growing autonomy of human reason**. Whether through pure thought or the organization of observable data, the focus shifted increasingly to human rationality as the supreme authority for determining truth rather than the Bible (Calhoun).

3. Early scientists and religion

- a. **Isaac Newton** was a devout Christian
- b. Newton said that in his scientific work he was thinking God's thoughts after Him. He began his work with the prayer that God would enable him to think God's thoughts after Him.
- c. The **doxological science** of Newton soon gave way to humanistic secular science (what Frances Schaeffer calls "**modern science**"). This is the beginning of what is sometimes called the battle between science and the Bible.

This did not lead immediately to agnosticism or atheism (in most people), but it led to a new way of conceiving the Christian faith.

4. The rise of _____ religion

- a. *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695) by John Locke

The mysteries began to evaporate, and the Christian faith began to look more like an Enlightenment philosophy.

- b. The centrality of **morality**

The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ (**Jefferson** New Testament without miracles)

Christianity as Old as Creation (1730) by **Matthew Tindal**—"Our reason, which gives us a demonstration of the divine perfections, affords us the same concerning the nature of those duties God requires; not only with relation to himself, but to ourselves, and to one another."

This led to a new form of religion called **Deism**.

Rationalists tried to explain even the doctrine of the Trinity in ways that seemed fully reasonable, though some critics joked that they never doubted the Trinity until rationalists tried to explain it.

c. Deism

God is the great creator God who started it all and in some distant sense rules over it by allowing the laws He put into operation to function without interference. He is the great geometrician.

C. The _____ of Reason

1. **David Hume**—no certain knowledge possible
 - a. He was very skeptical of the rationalists.
 - b. Hume was not an orthodox Christian, but was in fact quite an enemy of Christianity, in particular of the miracles.
 - c. But this eighteenth-century Scotsman argued that you really cannot trust your senses. **What goes on inside the mind may not correspond with what you think is out there. There is a big gap between what is out there and what you think is out there.**
 - d. **That was a problem to Christianity, but especially to Deism because of the confidence the Deists had in their own rational religion.** If you cannot be sure your mind is overcoming the barrier between what is inside and what is outside, then rational religion does not have a strong basis.
 - e. Hume's fellow Scots noted that he **still ducked** when low tree branches hung over the sidewalk, even though his philosophy taught that we cannot truly know whether reality exists as we perceive it. **Thomas Reid** developed Scottish *Common Sense Realism*, arguing that some truths about the world are naturally obvious and trustworthy.
 - f. Even so, Hume's skepticism weakened the Enlightenment's confidence in human reason.
2. **Gotthold Lessing** - taught that you cannot trust history
 - a. **"the big ugly ditch"** between what we know now and what we read about the past
 - b. An account of a miracle is not a miracle. The Bible telling about prophecy is not prophecy. And so there is the added problem of understanding what has happened in the past and the great ugly ditch that stands between us today and everything that has taken place in the past.
3. **Voltaire**—"the best of all possible worlds"?

- a. Voltaire was optimistic early on that rationality would bring an answer to human life that Christianity had failed to provide.
- b. He began to have second thoughts about whether this world is indeed the best of all possible worlds. His novel *Candide or Optimism* sets that out.
- c. Voltaire was stunned by the devastation of an **earthquake** in Lisbon, and after that, the world and God did not appear to him so rational. “Candide, stunned, stupefied, despairing, bleeding, trembling, said to himself: If this is the best of all possible worlds, what are the others like?” (*Candide or Optimism* by Voltaire)
- d. Christianity was a pernicious plot designed to turn the earth over to the oppressive powers of the priestly class. Voltaire would refer to Christianity as the “infamous thing” (Shelley, p. 317).

Despite these checks and questions that some people were asking about reason, the Enlightenment was here to stay.

II. Romanticism

The Enlightenment and Romanticism are **parallel movements**, different expressions of similar frustrations with the past.

- A. Jean-Jacques **Rousseau** (1712-1778)—“I _____; therefore, I am”

Rousseau was sitting on an island in a lake and felt himself to be **one with nature**. A **mystical experience had apparently brought him in line with nature**.

Rousseau’s ideas “came into the brilliant artificial world of the Enlightenment like a warm west wind from the fields into a lighted salon, extinguishing the tapers and filling the air with the scent of damp earth and rain-soaked vegetation” (Christopher Dawson).

- B. The Romantic **creed**

1. The importance of _____

“Call it Bliss! Heart! Love! God! I have no name to give it! Feeling is all in all: The Name is sound and smoke, Obscuring Heaven’s clear glow...” (from Goethe's [*GUR-tuh*] *Faust*).

The center is in human emotion or feeling, not the human mind as in the Enlightenment.

2. The **sanctity** of _____

“Accuse me not of arrogance,
 If having walked with nature
 And offered, as far as frailty would allow,
 My heart a daily sacrifice to truth
 I now affirm of nature and of truth that their divinity
 Revolts offended at the ways of men”
 (William Wordsworth).

If the Enlightenment leads in a Deistic direction, Romanticism leads toward Pantheism.

3. The role of the _____ (rather than the scientist or the philosopher)

“The artist stands on mankind like a statue on its pedestal....Only an artist can divine the meaning of life” (Novalis).

C. Romantic _____

1. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)—*Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*

Focuses on Enlightenment reason and Romantic attitudes.

Kant questioned how much we could really know and tended then to turn inside, like the Romantics, to find within the place for true religion—not in facts and dogma and information and Bible and creed, but in the inner life, which we have direct access to.

2. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834)—*On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*
 - a. Romantic religion found an important expression in the inner-religion of Friedrich Schleiermacher, his feeling of **absolute dependence**.
 - b. Schleiermacher taught that our understanding of God in the Gospel does not come from our minds thinking it out, nor does it come from reading it in the Bible, **but it comes from inner feeling of absolute dependence as we find ourselves dependent upon God.**
 - c. People have puzzled ever since as to what that feeling means.
 - d. But Schleiermacher had a great impact on future discussions of theology. There was much more subjective understanding of Christian theology: how it impacts me; how I feel; how I think. Not so much “thus saith the Lord” or “the Bible says,” which we heard from the Reformers and the Protestant orthodox believers,

but “I think, I feel, I believe” becomes the focus of modern theology after the time of Schleiermacher.

3. Ralph Waldo **Emerson** (1803-82) and **Transcendentalism**

Rejected orthodox and eventually Unitarian theology for “the fire within,” his inner inspiration, belief and doctrine.

The Romantic Self “**can only warm itself by the fires within. When the fuel is spent, and the flames flicker out, there is nothing to do but bank the embers and die, as Emerson did when the final, fatal virus overtook him:** ‘Then, as was his custom, he went to the fireplace and took his fire apart, setting the sticks, one by one, on end on each side, and separating all the glowing coals. That done, he took his study lamp in his hand, left the room for the last time, and went upstairs’” (“When the Fire Goes Out,” a review of *Mind on Fire*, a biography of Ralph Waldo Emerson by Robert D. Richardson, Jr., in *Books & Culture*, March/April 1996, 26).

III. Conclusions

- A. Romanticism and Enlightenment in the **Modern World**: We are all born in the Enlightenment and bred in Romanticism.

That means that since the eighteenth century, Western men and women have a **split personality**, an Enlightenment mind and a Romantic heart, till we are brought under the control of Jesus Christ so that our minds and our hearts are given to Him.

1. The **Enlightenment mind means that people believe we can solve problems**. We can find an answer eventually to everything.
 - a. **Frances Schaeffer**: “The enlightenment mentality expresses it something like this: it can be done. Give me until tomorrow.”
 - b. **But in our own time, confidence in Enlightenment rationalism has largely collapsed, leading first to postmodern skepticism about truth itself, and then to today’s fragmented culture of expressive individualism, identity, emotion, and personal experience.**
 - c. Nevertheless, there is still a great deal of Enlightenment thought that affects us in our world today.
2. The Enlightenment emphasized reason and rational thought, but **Romanticism reacted by emphasizing feelings, desires, and personal authenticity**. There is a story about a **young girl** who, when corrected by her mother, replied, “**But I want to obey ME!**” Though she had never read Emerson’s phrase “Obey thyself,” her

response captured the Romantic idea that the authentic person should follow inner feelings and live according to self-expression rather than external authority.

What has been the fruit of this split personality of the modern world? Jewish writer **Chaim Potok** says, “**This 300 years of modern paganism, or secular humanism, is probably the most creative, the most liberated, the wealthiest, the most dehumanizing, and the most murderous civilization in the history of our species**” (cited by Calhoun).

B. How did the church react to the Enlightenment and Romanticism?

1. **Roman Catholicism** often relied on older methods of **censure** and **suppression**. In places like France, church leaders appealed to the state to censor “**dangerous**” books, but they were often unfamiliar with the deeper philosophical issues being raised by the Enlightenment.
2. In many places there was a **rationalizing** of orthodox **Christian doctrine** so that it **began to look more like Deism**. In trying to answer the rationalists and deists, some Christians adopted many of the same presuppositions, placing too much confidence in autonomous human reason (cp. to later evolution debates, etc.).
3. **Romanticism also influenced theology and Christianity**, especially through **Friedrich Schleiermacher**, who emphasized **religious feeling** and experience over doctrinal truth. What emerged on the other side was often a deeply tainted form of Christianity shaped more by human emotion than divine revelation.
4. In **England, Bishop Joseph Butler** wrote effectively against deism. His work, *The Analogy of Religion*, became a standard apologetics text. **Butler accepted reason as valuable, but he challenged its sovereignty**. He argued that life itself is filled with mysteries and perplexities, so we should not reject Christianity simply because some doctrines are difficult. In doing this, Butler exposed the false optimism and overconfidence of deism, which eventually collapsed under its inability to explain the realities of evil, suffering, and human sinfulness.
5. **William Law**, who influenced John Wesley, offered an even **deeper critique**. He argued that **fallen human reason was not ultimately the solution but part of the problem itself**. The attempt to create a purely rational religion easily becomes idolatry. Instead, Law called for a humble acceptance of God’s truth, truth that is not irrational, but often above human understanding.
6. Even **after deism declined**, the **Enlightenment left a lasting mark on Western culture**. Society increasingly attempted to organize education, politics, and public life apart from formal Christian influence, pushing faith into the private sphere of the home and the heart. This tension continues to shape modern secular society today. [The deists said we can be moral without Christian dogma. Their children said, “Why be moral?”]

- C. Deism's decline did not restore Christianity to a central place in Western culture.
1. Westerners have sought to organize a **religiously neutral civilization**.
 2. **Faith is confined to church, home and heart.**
 3. This leaves Christians with a basic problem in the modern era:
 - a. How far can believers go in trying, as citizens, to get the state to enforce Christian standards of conduct?
 - b. If Christians give up the idea of enforcing Christian behavior, what norm of conduct should they, as citizens, try to make an obligation for everyone?
















D. **So what should our perspective of the so-called "Age of Reason" be as Christians?**

As Christendom began to weaken under the pressures of the Enlightenment and Romanticism, the church was forced increasingly to confront the difference between **cultural Christianity** and **genuine conversion**. For centuries, Christianity in the West had often been tied to political power, national identity, and outward conformity. But the collapse of that world also exposed the reality that **true Christianity is not produced by coercion or inheritance, but by the new birth**. In that sense, the Great Awakening was not merely a reaction against unbelief, but also a renewed emphasis on authentic, converted Christianity.

The story of this period is not simply one of decline, skepticism, and movement away from Christianity. Alongside the Enlightenment and Romanticism, and in some ways partly as a reaction to them, God was also bringing remarkable **spiritual awakening**. At the very time many intellectuals were placing their confidence in reason, morality, science, or subjective feeling, the Great Awakening was calling people back to the realities of sin, conversion, the new birth, and the authority of Scripture. So while this period marks a major turning point toward modern secularism, it is also the backdrop for one of the most surprising revivals in church history, which we will begin looking at **next week**.

Next Week: "A Brand from the Burning: Wesley and Methodism" (chapter 34) & "A New Order of the Ages: The Great Awakening" (chapter 35) (2nd Edition)

The Enlightenment Mind, the Romantic Heart, and the Christian Response

1. THE ENLIGHTENMENT		Main Idea / Contribution	Simple Memory Phrase
 René Descartes (1596–1650)		Rationalism; truth discovered through reason and doubt. Sought certainty by starting with the thinking self.	<i>“I think, therefore I am.”</i>
 John Locke (1632–1704)		Empiricism; knowledge comes through observation and experience. The mind is born blank (<i>tabula rasa</i>).	<i>“The mind observes the world.”</i>
 Voltaire (1694–1778)		Fierce critic of Christianity and organized religion. Believed reason and tolerance would free humanity from superstition and priestcraft.	<i>“Crush the infamous thing.”</i>
 David Hume (1711–1776)		Skeptical of human reason; questioned miracles, causation, and our ability to know anything with certainty.	<i>“Can we really know anything?”</i>
 Gotthold Lessing (1729–1781)		Distrust of history and the supernatural. Said history cannot give certainty about religious truth—“the ugly ditch.”	<i>“History cannot give certainty.”</i>
2. ROMANTICISM		Main Idea / Contribution	Simple Memory Phrase
 Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778)		Emphasized feeling, nature, and the goodness of the “natural” human heart. Suspicious of civilization and organized religion.	<i>“I feel, therefore I am.”</i>
 Immanuel Kant (1724–1804)		Religion is found within the human mind and moral law, not in external authority or revelation. The “moral law within.”	<i>“Truth turns inward.”</i>
 Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834)		Religion is not doctrine but a feeling of absolute dependence on the Infinite. Focus on religious experience and inner consciousness.	<i>“Religion is inner feeling.”</i>
 Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882)		Transcendentalism; trust the inner self and intuition above tradition and authority. “Obey thyself.”	<i>“Obey thyself.”</i>
3. CHRISTIAN / JUDEO-CHRISTIAN RESPONSE		Main Idea / Contribution	Simple Memory Phrase
 Joseph Butler (1692–1752)		Argued that life is filled with mysteries and that human reason is limited. Warned against Enlightenment overconfidence.	<i>“Life itself is filled with mystery.”</i>
 William Law (1686–1761)		Said fallen human reason is unreliable and leads to pride. True knowledge comes from humility and grace.	<i>“Reason is part of the problem.”</i>
 C. S. Lewis (1898–1963)		Defended objective truth, morality, and Christianity. Showed that reason points toward God.	<i>“Christianity explains reality.”</i>
 Peter Kreeft (b. 1937)		Modern Christian philosopher; affirms that reason and faith are harmonious and truth is rational.	<i>“Truth is rational and moral.”</i>
 Francis Schaeffer (1912–1984)		Criticized secular humanism and the autonomy of man apart from God.	<i>“Man without God collapses.”</i>
 Chaim Potok (1929–2002)		Criticized modern secular civilization for gaining material wealth but losing the soul and human dignity.	<i>“Modernity gained wealth but lost the soul.”</i>

THE BIG PICTURE:

Enlightenment: “Truth through Reason”



Romanticism: “Truth through Feeling”



Christianity: “Truth through Revelation”



APPENDIX

“The Demise of State Religion and the Rise of Denominationalism” (see Shelley, chapter 31)
“One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind”—Romans 15:5

Is the Lord pleased with denominations? Has something gone wrong with the church of Christ?

- I. Definitions:
 - A. “A sect claims the authority of Christ for itself alone. It believes that it is the true body of Christ; all truth belongs to it and to no other religion” (Shelley, p. 306).
 - B. “The denominational theory of the church, then, insists that the true church cannot be identified with any single ecclesiastical structure. No denomination claims to represent the whole church of Christ. Each simply constitutes a different form—in worship and organization—of the larger life of the church” (Shelley, p. 306).
- II. Consider the Early Church (Antiochene & Alexandrian schools) and the hundreds monastic orders.
- III. The Peace of Augsburg (1555). Catholics and Lutherans in Germany agreed to stop fighting only after adopting the territorial principle: The ruler in each region could decide the faith for his subjects, Lutheran or Catholic.
- IV. Edict of Nantes (1598). The Huguenots gained religious freedom and political control of certain parts of the country while Roman Catholicism remained the official religion of the realm.
- V. The Thirty Years’ War (1618-1648) and the Peace of Westphalia (1648). Princes, if they chose, could for the first time allow Protestants and Catholics to exist within their territories. The pope was excluded from any interference in the religious affairs of Germany. After more than thousand years the state was free to transact its business as though the pope did not exist.
- VI. America. Other than Virginia, the English authorities made no attempt to impose a pattern of religious uniformity in the New World.
- VII. The Westminster Assembly (1642-1649). The Dissenting Brethren of Westminster Assembly (the Independents) articulated the denominational theory of the church in several fundamental truths:
 - A. Considering man’s inability to always see the truth clearly, differences of opinion about the outward form of the church are inevitable.
 - B. Even though these differences do not involve fundamentals of the faith, they are not matters of indifference. Every Christian is obligated to practice what he believes the Bible teaches.
 - C. Since, no church has a final and full grasp of divine truth, the true Church of Christ can never be fully represented by any single ecclesiastical structure.
 - D. The mere fact of separation does not of itself constitute schism. It is possible to be divided at many points and still be united in Christ.

Thus, the denominational theory of the church looked for Christian unity in some inward religious experience—and allowed diversity in the outward expressions of that personal faith.
- VIII. In the opinion of many, the only way to eliminate denominations (before Christ’s return) is to return to a state church. Denominations are a by-product of religious freedom.
- IX. There will be no denominations in heaven.

44. A Family Tree of Protestant Denominational Groups

