

Skepticism, Agnosticism, Scientism, Atheism



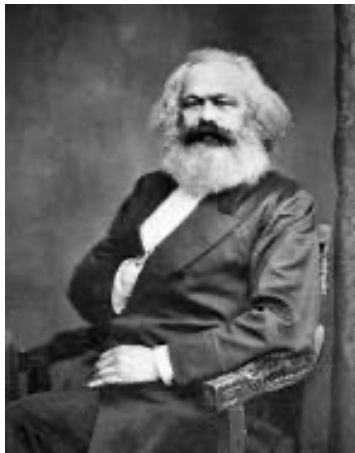
David Hume



Immanuel Kant



Julius Wellhausen



Karl Marx



Vladimir Lenin



Mao Zedong

David Hume Redux

- I had mentioned in an earlier session that I would discuss Hume later. Here is that discussion. Hume was a true skeptic. Born in 1711, he graduated from Edinburgh University at the age of 15. This was indeed an accomplishment, but it was not unusual for boys of his age. He intended to follow the family tradition and study Law. He found the study of Law boring and extended his interests to many other things. He read voraciously.
- At the age of 18, Hume had a nervous breakdown, a few years later after he recovered, he moved to France. While in France, he wrote his great work, *A Treatise On Human Nature*. His work comprised three books; *Of the Understanding*, *Of the Passions* and *On Morals*.
- In the first part of the *Treatise*, he expressed his skepticism about the ability of reason to arrive at truth. He was especially skeptical about the ability of cause and effect to act as an effective tool of reason. We've heard this before (al-Ghazali, Ockham) . In his second part of his *Treatise*, he discusses the psychology of human emotions in dealing with human decision making, including decisions concerning morality. He believed that reason did not play the primary role in this decision-making process. In his third part of the *Treatise*, he stressed the role of the approval or disapproval of others in deciding the morality of human actions. This may be seen as a kind of situational ethics.
- Hume did not believe that the *Treatise On Human Nature* expressed his most mature level of work. That may well be true. He produced many other serious works. But the *Treatise* was the most complete expression of his thought. I chose to mention it because, though others thought Hume to be a philosopher. Hume thought himself to be a moralist and we touched on morality in the last section. I shall mention Hume yet again, later.

Julius Wellhausen. Christian Rationalism and Skepticism

- In parts of Europe, Christianity, both Protestant in Prussia as well as Catholic in Bavaria and the Austro-Hungarian Empire seemed safe and prosperous. In the New World, most Christians in the former British colonies remained Protestant while the majority of Christians in the former French and Spanish colonies remained Catholic. Anti-Catholic sentiment remained strong in France especially among the intellectual classes. For this reason, one might have suspected that attacks on Christianity by men of reason would most likely come from France. One so thinking would again have been wrong.
- Jews and Christians of all branches of the faith continued to believe that the Torah was produced by Moses, even given to Moses, perhaps, by God Himself. Julius Wellhausen, a son of a Protestant minister and himself a Protestant, was born in the Kingdom of Hanover, later to become a province of Prussia. In 1872, Wellhausen was appointed a professor of theology at the University of Greifswald in Prussia.
- Wellhausen carefully studied the Hebrew Scriptures and came to doubt that any single person, be it Moses or anyone else, could be the sole source of the five books of the Torah. He knew his conclusions would be controversial, so he resigned his position at the University. In his letter of resignation, Wellhausen wrote the following;
- I became a theologian because the scientific treatment of the Bible interested me; only gradually did I come to understand that a professor of theology also has the practical task of preparing the students for service in the Protestant Church, and that I am not adequate to this practical task, but that instead despite all caution on my own part I make my hearers unfit for their office. Since then, my theological professorship has been weighing heavily on my conscience.
- Wellhausen had brought the disciplines of reason to the study of faith. Wellhausen was later given a position as a Professor of Philology at Halle, Marburg and finally Gottingen.

Wellhausen and the Documentary Hypothesis

- Wellhausen wasn't the first to question the reliability of Scripture or its origin, but he was the first to do it in a thoroughly organized way and in an academic setting. Wellhausen's work was also like a dam that burst leading to many other questions regarding, first, the Hebrew Scriptures and then the Christian Scriptures.
- Wellhausen first noticed in Genesis that two Hebrew words seemed to be used interchangeably to refer to God; El and YHWH. He wondered why that was. Wellhausen analyzed Genesis and concluded that there were at least two sources to the stories found in Genesis. He called one the Elohist (E) source and the other the Yahwist (J) source. Wellhausen used the letter J because that is the letter that German uses to make the sound that the letter Y makes in English. Wellhausen also noticed in Leviticus details concerning priestly duties, so he added a third source, the Priestly (P) source.
- Finally, Wellhausen thought the story of Hilkiah seemed suspicious. Hilkiah was the High Priest during the reign of King Josiah. He found "a copy of the Law" while renovating the first Temple (2 Kings 22:8). Wellhausen began to question whether Deuteronomy meant "second law" or "a copy of the Law". He believed that Josiah used the occasion of Hilkiah's discovery to move worship away from various shrines throughout Judah to centralized worship at the Temple in Jerusalem. Perhaps this 'copy of the Law' was legitimately found, placed there by Jewish believers who had fled South a century earlier by refugees from the conquered land of Israel to the North. Or, perhaps, Josiah had someone write Deuteronomy and make it part of the Torah to advance his own policies. We'll never know since, with one exception, the oldest copy of the Torah in Hebrew is the Dead Sea Scrolls. They date back no earlier than one hundred or so years before Jesus. The *Ketef Hinnom* silver amulets from the 6th century BCE are the oldest remnants of the Torah but they contain only a few words from the Book of Numbers.

The Documentary Hypothesis Opens the Gates

- Wellhausen's four-part **Documentary Hypothesis** posited that the Torah was the result of four different documentary sources; the Jahwist (J) which calls God by the name YHWH, the Elohist (E), which refers to God as Elohim, the Priestly (P) which may have written the Book of Leviticus, and the Deuteronomist (D) which may have produced the Book of Deuteronomy. Because Wellhausen's Documentary Hypothesis suggested different sources, his method of looking at Scripture was called **Source Criticism**. Wellhausen went on to suggest that whoever wrote P edited the entire Torah, which had been a collection of different stories, into a somewhat coherent single story. Wellhausen also speculated that several of the Books of the Prophets (Nevi'im) were also written by D. These include Joshua, Judges, First and Second Samuel and First and Second Kings.
- Wellhausen's theories held sway for over one hundred years. Yes, there were variations on his theories such as the Supplementary Hypothesis which held that, over time, various layers of additional stories were woven into a base story by redactors (editors). The analysis of Scripture to determine how these redactors did their work gave the label **Redaction Criticism** to this form of analysis. A third major form is the Fragmentary Hypothesis which held that redactors wove together a number of shorter traditions into a longer story. Supporters of this hypothesis note different styles of writing in Scripture. This type of analysis was called **Form Criticism**.
- Wellhausen intended his theory to show that the Torah was not a single document written all at once by a single author regarding a faith that was the same from the time of Abraham through the time of Moses. Wellhausen believed that the faith developed and changed over time and that its basic unity was provided by redactors. Like many intentions, the impact that Wellhausen's theories went far beyond his original goals.

Biblical Criticism Let Loose

- We live in the twenty-first century, but the nineteenth century is still, in many of our lifetimes, recallable through stories told to us by our grandparents. It was in the Nineteenth century that Reason, in the name of the Enlightenment, took on Faith, especially the faith explained in the Old and New Testaments of the Christian Bible.
- A school of German Protestant scholars from Tübingen university gave the term “**higher criticism**” to the study of the Bible which did not focus on the study of the written word (that was “lower criticism”). It focused instead on understanding the political, geographical and generally historical context in which the events in Scripture took place. A later term used to describe that form of biblical analysis was “**historical-critical**” analysis.
- The leader of the Tübingen school of Biblical scholars was Ferdinand Christian Baur. He applied his own “critical analysis” to the New Testament as Wellhausen and others had applied to the Old Testament. He was also influenced by the work of another German Protestant scholar Friedrich Schleiermacher. Baur knew about the Ebionites whom we mentioned in an earlier section. They were a Jewish sect of Christians who believed that Jesus was the Messiah. Period. They didn’t believe Jesus was divine. They didn’t believe in the Trinitarian nature of God. The Ebionites only accepted the Gospel of Matthew and believed Paul to be a heretic. As I showed, the Ebionites themselves morphed into Gnosticism. Baur believed that a true reading of the Christian Scriptures showed a battle between the Jewish Church of Peter and the Gentile Church of Paul
- What Wellhausen let loose on the Hebrew Scriptures, Baur, Schleiermacher and the Tübingen school let loose on the Christian Scriptures.

The Historical-Critical Bible

- While Nineteenth Century Christians may have disagreed with each other about the canon of what Christians called the Old Testament, they were united in their belief that the Bible was the inspired word of God. A large segment of Christians of the time thought that every word of the Bible was literally true, and that God's most likely method of inspiration was akin to whispering His words into the ears of the men who wrote the books. The Historical-Critical method began the process of bringing all of that into serious question.
- It is not so much what the critics said and wrote that caused the upset. In fact, the Historical-Critical analysis of Scripture has allowed readers to distinguish poetry from narration, creedal statements from commentary and provided other insightful means to understand more closely the ideas that the authors of Scripture were trying to convey. Those who study the Bible today owe a great deal to the work of these Nineteenth Century scholars. What really bothered many Christians of the time was their clinical treatment of Scripture. The Book whose words and stories touched both hearts and minds and strengthened believers in their faith, was analyzed without any understanding that the Bible was a Book of faith, written by believers and for believers. It was not written as a book of history though it contained history. It was not written as a Book of science yet the miracles that it described were immediately dismissed by some critics as completely contradictory to science. One can imagine the reaction of many believers of the time. It might sound something like, "Well, duh! Isn't that the definition of miracle"?
- As the Nineteenth Century drew to a close, it was non-believers that took the skepticism of the Biblical Scholars, perverted it and politicized it. They didn't merely call the Bible into question. They called faith into question.

Nineteenth Century Atheism

- Ludwig Feuerbach may not himself have been an atheist, but he did influence the advance of atheism more than any other figure of his time. He began his studies at the University of Heidelberg with the intention of pursuing a career in the Church. One of his professors there had an interest in Georg Hegel who taught at the University of Berlin. Feuerbach enrolled there and studied under Hegel. Hegel is best known for his **Dialectic** which saw the progress of history as a process of thesis-antithesis-synthesis. The synthesis then became the new thesis as the process of history continued.
- Ludwig Feuerbach joined a group of Young Hegelians who formed their own version of the Dialectic. Feuerbach believed that Christianity, along with other aspects and institutions of Western civilization, would ultimately be superseded by something new in the inevitable process of history.
- Feuerbach transferred to the University of Erlangen. He finished his academic work there and received his degree in 1828. He produced his most important work, ***Das Wesen des Christentums*** (The Essence of Christianity) several years later. The essence of *The Essence* was Feuerbach's notion that God was merely a projection of the better aspects of human nature. In the book **Feuerbach denounced the idea of religion that sees God as a being who exists apart from human beings and is not dependent on them.**
- I suspect that Ludwig Feuerbach is not a commonly known name to most Twenty-First century Christians. They may recognize the names of two men who were greatly influenced by Feuerbach, Charles Darwin and Karl Marx. Marx himself once wrote that he owed his philosophy to his passing through the 'brook of fire' (a play on Feuerbach's name) to lay hold of truth and freedom.

Flavors of Atheism – Socio-Political Atheism and Karl Marx

- It is true that atheism is the child of skepticism (al-Ghazali, Ockham, David Hume) and rationalism (Marx). In fact, however, as was noted in the presentation of the first lesson of this class, atheism is as much a faith as Christianity is. Science can neither prove nor disprove the existence of God. In fact, a discussion of a transcendent God is a matter beyond the physical sciences. It belongs more to a metaphysical field of scholarship.
- Having said that and recognizing my own ignorance, I do hold open the door for those few people of science who believe that a biological source may cause humans to believe in God. I will let them make their case. Some psychologists make similar claims, but they can point only to statistical data as a source of information. Their methods of inquiry aren't as suitable to the scientific method as a biologist's might be.
- Atheism tends to fall into one of two generic categories; **scientific atheism** and **socio-political atheism**. The former simply doesn't see the need for God to explain anything that exists in the physical world. Charles Darwin is a good example of a scientific atheist.
- The latter holds that a belief in a deity has enslaved humanity to a non-existent entity. The belief in that entity so harms the process of human development and growth that it must be eliminated from the public square and public life. Karl Marx is an example of a social-political atheist. This is another example of Rousseau's notion that morality (or its opposite) is a societal issue and not an individual issue. The social group that concerned Marx the most were those who believed in the existence of a personal God. Marx held that the impact of that belief was immoral. He also showed a dislike for the middle class (bourgeoisie) that Rousseau had. He believed the middle-class exploited the working class and religion was simply a tool used by the middle class to keep the working class in line.

Flavors of Atheism – Scientific Atheism and Charles Darwin

- Darwin's accomplishments and his voyage on the H.M.S. Beagle is well known. His most famous work was a book with three titles or, better, one title and two sub-titles. It is best known as *On the Origin of the Species*. Its full title is *On the Origin of the Species by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life*. The use of the full title has been properly abandoned for any number of good reasons.
- Darwin's biggest contribution to science was not as much his ideas on evolution as it was in defining natural selection as the method by which the process developed over time. It seems clear to me that Darwin was doing nothing more than what was, to his mind, honest scientific work. I think a fair reading of the book would lead most people to that same conclusion.
- I think it is also fair to say that Social Darwinism, which holds that some races or ethnic groups prevailed over others by natural selection, existed long before Darwin published anything. An example of that is the American idea of Manifest Destiny. That phrase was coined in 1845. British author Herbert Spencer, influenced, like Darwin, by Thomas Malthus, promoted his social progressive views in his work *Progress: Its Law and Cause*, three years before Darwin published his magnum opus.
- Darwin did remove God from the process of human creation or, at least, set him back a bit but it's not completely clear that Darwin was ever officially an atheist. In fact, he began his studies to be an Anglican clergyman. As his work evolved (pun intended), Darwin did look on Christianity as improbable. In 1879, three years before his death, he wrote, *I have never been an atheist in the sense of denying the existence of a God. – I think that generally ... an agnostic would be the most correct description of my state of mind.*

Darwin's Legacy

- **Darwin's work, today, remains a theory. He admitted in his book that there should have more evidence of intermediate fossils whether existing across geological strata or within a particular stratum. Darwin was highly confident that additional geological and archaeological study along with the natural process of erosion would expose such intermediate fossils. That hasn't happened.**
- **Also, Darwin's idea that a slow process of gradual natural selection was the engine driving evolution has been challenged. A theory known as catastrophism posits that evolution was not driven by slow, gradual processes but rather by random catastrophic events such as earthquakes or strikes upon the earth by comets or asteroids. There are many creation scientists who bring up the issue that the complexity required to form even the basic part of a living being by random chance argues against Darwin's theory. They ask how the evolution of a more complex biological component could be required for the development of a lesser complex component? Creationist literature abounds but peer reviewed articles in well-known scientific journals supporting their theories do not.**
- **So, Darwin's version of evolution remains only a theory and not a proven fact. Yet that grossly understates Darwin's work. It may remain a theory, but it is the standard and accepted theory that, to date, provides the fullest scientific explanation of how life on earth came to exist.**
- **It is also true that Darwin's theory of natural selection, the survival of the fittest, has been hijacked by eugenicists, as well as dictators of both the right and the left, to explain and justify why they and their ideas of how things should be accepted. I think Darwin would be appalled by what such people have done in his name.**

Karl Marx

- **Most commentators on Karl Marx list him as a scientific atheist but Marxism clearly has had far more of a social and economic impact on the world than a scientific one. Marxists, of course, believe their atheism is based on a totally rational view of the world. Yet this “rational conclusion” remains both unproven and unprovable as mentioned at the beginning of this course. Neither the existence nor the non-existence of God is something that can be proven in a scientific way.**
- **When you examine how other Marxist ideas, also based, allegedly, on scientific reasoning, have fared, those ideas never seem to bring about the predictions that they make. Yet, Marxist communism seems to continue to be pursued by people all around the world including many academics.**
- **This undying interest in Marxist ideas managed to affect the most one of the most unlikely groups to ever consider Marxism. Beginning in the 1950s to early 1960s, younger Jesuits seem determined to find a way to make Marxist atheism compatible with Christian theism. In the mid-1960s, I attended a symposium on that very issue at St. Joseph’s University (then College). Soon Jesuit-led Liberation Theology movements could be found throughout Latin America. The magazine, *Commonweal*, has published a number of articles on this theme in recent years and the Jesuit magazine *America*, continued to push this idea in their July 23, 2019 issue. This kind of Hegelian synthesis seems to me to be the equivalent to trying to make a square triangle.**
- **Marx himself and one of his most important adherents, Vladimir Lenin, had their own thoughts about the possibility of a synthesis between Marxism and any religion, especially Christianity. They did not line up with Jesuit thinking.**

A Communist/Christian Synthesis?

- Marx did allow some role for religion in his theories. Here is what he wrote in his work, *A Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*;
Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.
- For Marx, religion, then, was the canary in the coal mine. Marx continued;
The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness. To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions. The criticism of religion is, therefore, in embryo, the criticism of that vale of tears of which religion is the halo.
- The Russian Marxist, Vladimir Lenin, did not beat around the bush. In his book, *Religion*, Lenin what might be the beginning of a new union of scientism and the state;
Atheism is a natural and inseparable part of Marxism, of the theory and practice of scientific socialism.
- In his work *The Attitude of the Workers Party Toward Religion*, Lenin added;
Religion is the opium of the people: this saying of Marx is the cornerstone of the entire ideology of Marxism about religion. All modern religions and churches, all religions and every kind of religious organization are considered by Marxism as the organs of bourgeois (i.e. Middle Class) reaction, used for the protection of the exploitation and the stupefaction of the working class
- Marxism itself denies that there could ever be a serious example of a Hegelian synthesis between the thesis of atheism and its antithesis, theism. The Jesuits must either convert Marxists or become Marxists, otherwise they are trying to create a square triangle.

Modernism

- The Historical-Critical method of looking at scripture did not begin as an assault on Scripture. It began as a way to understand Scripture more deeply. If it had maintained that original goal, it would have been far less controversial. After all, it did provide a number of significant insights into both Hebrew and Christian writings.
- The problem was that this method of examining Scripture went well beyond its original intent. It began to question both the authenticity and the reliability of Scripture (e.g. Was there ever really a King named David? Did Jesus really rise from the dead?). Such questions are, of course, legitimate. However, they seemed to be claiming that their method of biblical criticism was scientific. They claimed that their version of the scientific method could be used to validate or invalidate the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures. To make matters worse, some branches of Christianity seemed to be buying into these claims. The word used to describe this kind of thinking was *Modernist* and the movement was called *Modernism*.
- Catholics in the West had the Church to lean on to respond to these assaults on faith. Pope Pius X wrote the Encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* in 1907 against Modernism and three years later required all clerics to sign an oath against Modernism. Since Protestantism, by their belief structure, relied entirely on the validity of Scripture, the need for a definitive response was even greater. Lacking a centralized authority, however, there was no common Protestant response. Making matters worse, the assault on Scripture by Modernists grew out of German Protestantism. Yet there was one forceful response from American Protestantism. We'll examine the Catholic and Protestant response in the next few slides.

Fundamentalism

- There were a number of movements within Protestantism that affected what would come to be called many things including Fundamentalist Christianity, Evangelicalism, Dispensationalism and Princeton Theology.
- Evangelical Christians basically believe that the essential story of the Christian Scriptures is the story of salvation by grace through faith in the atoning work of Jesus Christ. Evangelicals see the born-again moment as the moment of conversion of the new believer to Christ. Evangelicals may also undergo Baptism but, for them, Baptism is not that born-again moment. They do it only because Jesus commanded it. Evangelicals believed that the Bible, and the Bible only, is the inerrant revelation by Jesus Christ as to how salvation is achieved.
- Dispensational Christianity began in England around 1830. John Nelson Darby began to teach that all of time could be divided into seven stages called Dispensations. Each stage revealed more about God's revelation. At the end of each age, God would punish those who did not perform their tasks properly. As modernism began to call into question some of the key beliefs of Christianity, Dispensationalist came to believe that the current age in which they lived was the seventh and final dispensation. This last age would end with the Great Tribulation at the Battle of Armageddon. Christ would then return and reign for a thousand years. The Scofield Reference Bible is preferred by Dispensationalists.
- Princeton Theology also stressed the inerrancy of the Bible. Princeton Seminary professor Charles Hodge believed that God "breathed" his exact thoughts into the minds of the writers of the Bible.

The Five Fundamentals

- In 1909 California businessman Lyman Stewart (founder of Union Oil) and his brother Milton, both devout dispensationalist Presbyterians, anonymously provided funds for the publication of a series of documents called *The Fundamentals*. Its full name was *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*.
- *The Fundamentals* was a set of ninety essays published between 1910 and 1915. It was initially published quarterly in twelve volumes, then republished in 1917 by the *Bible Institute of Los Angeles* as a four-volume set. (*Baker Books* reprinted all four volumes under two covers in 2003). *The Fundamentals* was a “statement of the fundamentals of Christianity”. However, its contents reflect a concern with certain theological innovations related to modernist Christianity, especially biblical higher criticism.
- The book was mailed free of charge to ministers, missionaries, professors of theology, *YMCA* and *YWCA* secretaries, *Sunday school* superintendents, and other Protestant religious workers in the United States and other English-speaking countries. Over three million volumes (250,000 sets) were sent out. There were five basic fundamentals defined by this publication:
 - The inerrancy of the Bible
 - The literal nature of the biblical accounts, especially regarding Christ's miracles and the Creation account in Genesis
 - The virgin birth of Christ
 - The bodily resurrection and physical return of Christ
 - The substitutionary atonement of Christ on the cross

Pascendi Dominici Gregis (On Feeding the Lord's Flock)

- The Catholic Church also saw the dangers to the faith. It responded in its own way. Catholic Pope Pius X wrote an encyclical describing what he saw as the errors of Modernism as well as the cause of those errors. Pius X believed that higher criticism was eliminating anyone who claimed to be a Christian from being considered as a legitimate scholar of Biblical studies and evaluator of Biblical truths. Pius X went further. He said that this “agnosticism” required scriptural scholars to believe that anything described in the Bible as something that was in any way miraculous or beyond the understanding of natural science could not possibly be true and ought not be taken seriously.

“In the person of Christ, they say, science and history encounter nothing that is not human. Therefore, in virtue of the first canon deduced from agnosticism, whatever there is in His history suggestive of the divine, must be rejected. Then, according to the second canon, the historical Person of Christ was transfigured by faith; therefore everything that raises it above historical conditions must be removed. Lastly, the third canon, which lays down that the person of Christ has been disfigured by faith, requires that everything should be excluded, deeds and words and all else that is not in keeping with His character, circumstances and education, and with the place and time in which He (Jesus) lived.” (PDG paragraph 9)

- Pius X rightly realized where this was leading. Agnosticism required that anything in Scriptural revelation that described events that took place which revealed the transcendent nature of God or spoke of anything which would be considered miraculous **ought not be** considered by scholars since reason alone could not prove them to be true. Pius X understood that the next step was that atheism would soon change that **ought not** to **must not**.
- Agnosticism and, later, atheism would allow, in a most condescending way, the study of the human desire for a transcendent Divinity. They would also allow the study of the “historical” Jesus. They would claim that Paul or John or someone else turned this failed Jewish Messiah into God. Belief in the atoning death of Jesus or his physical resurrection from the dead were simply adult fairy tales. Again, however, this kind of agnosticism, turned later into atheism, did allow the sociological study of why and how people could come to believe in such fairy tales.

Loisy et al.

- Alfred Loisy (1857-1940) was a French Catholic priest who was a firm believer in the “higher” historical-critical method of studying Scripture. Loisy, as many of his fellow critics, believed that the Bible, a book of faith, could only be studied agnostically. He may well have been the example which Pius X was arguing against in his encyclical.
- Regarding the Hebrew Scriptures, Loisy wrote in his book *La Religion d'Israël*, that the Jewish (and, later, Christian) belief in a single, transcendent God stemmed from an historically traceable development. Elohim was a Council of Canaanite deities ruled by El, a kind of Father God. Lesser deities called Lords made up the rest of the Elohim. The Semitic word for Lord was *Baal*. These were the *Baals* of the Old Testament. YHWH was one of those deities and El assigned YHWH to be the God of the Hebrews. It was only after Moses that YHWH became the monotheistic God of all.
- Like many of the members of the Liberal Protestant school of “higher” critics, the Catholic Loisy believed that Jesus was nothing more than a Jewish Messiah. He wrote this in his journal about Jesus,

Christ has even less importance in my religion than he does in that of the liberal Protestants: for I attach little importance to the revelation of God the Father for which they honor Jesus. If I am anything in religion, it is more pantheist-positivist-humanitarian than Christian. (Mémoires II, p.397)

- It's interesting to note that some of the “higher critics” at the time were not against religion. They thought that even though religion may be only a sentimentality, it was beneficial to individuals and to the state. They were against any of religion's specific beliefs being taken too seriously. Besides, if there was no religion, there would be no need for religious critics.

Scientism and the Suppositions of Modern Biblical Criticism

- **Scientism and science are not the same thing.**
- **Science is the investigation of the physical universe using a process of hypothesis, testing to validate or invalidate the hypothesis and the publication of the results of validated hypotheses for other scientists to test and validate. Should other scientists get the same results from the published tests, the hypothesis becomes accepted.**
- **Scientism is the idea that science is the only possible way to study and investigate truth. As I have said, that made some sense for the study of the physical world where the scientific method could be used. There is some (stress some) evidence of the use of the scientific method in Darwinism, but I have seen little, if any, evidence of the use of the scientific method in any of the alleged “higher forms” of biblical criticism.**
- **There are hypotheses, for sure, but where is the testing of the hypotheses? Where are the published methods of testing with similar results being found? I already gave you my exaggerated example of the scientific method used to prove atheism. There are more serious clues that even the most inexperienced reader can find in scientism. Look for these words and phrases; “most likely”, “probably”, “we are forced to conclude”, “may well be”. Science uses words of a more definite nature such as “is” and “are”.**
- **Perhaps the most damning aspect of scientism is that it is self-refuting. Ask someone who holds to scientism how they proved they hypothesis that science is the only means of finding truth. What tests did they run? What experiments did they make? Scientism assumes things about science. Real science proves things.**

Two World Wars

- **Anti-clericalism could be found throughout the Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries mostly in the Catholic countries of Europe. The linkage of Church and the Monarchies in countries like France, Spain, Portugal and Italy made the Church a prime target during the rise of republican movements within those lands.**
- **It is hard to say how that would have played out in the later Twentieth Century, but two World Wars broke out that forced countries around the world to put such questions aside to support their respective war efforts.**

World War I: A Silly War and the End of an Era

- It may not be completely fair to label World War I a silly war since some level of conflict seemed inevitable given certain political events in the middle of Europe.
- In 1814-15, following the devastation of the Napoleonic Wars, the Council of Vienna tried to draw new boundaries in Europe that would create a balance of power that would prevent future wars. But nationalist movements were breaking out all across Europe and three of these movements proved to be very upsetting
- It is not surprising that Germany, Italy and Poland would play such important roles in the two world wars of the Twentieth Century. We should remember that, before 1860, there was no Italy or Germany. Giuseppe Garibaldi united the various regions of Italy and declared the country an independent kingdom in 1861. The German Empire officially came into being ten years later thanks to the work of Otto von Bismarck. Poland had received a taste of independence in the mid-to-late Nineteenth Century but never managed to achieve full independence. The balance of power forged at Vienna was shattered with the rise of the two new nations of Italy and Germany and Russia had a large Polish population longing for the same kind of nationhood.
- The Franco-Prussian war may have been a harbinger of things to come but, with Germany's victory in that war, there was great hope that a new, post-war balance of power would last. The assassination of an Austrian Archduke in 1914 by a Serbian assassin brought the whole house of cards tumbling down. Amazingly, all the countries that went to war did so with almost a happy air about them. They all felt that their alliances were strong, and that war would end in a quick victory for their side. They were wrong. The war was long and brutal. It brought an end to three functioning monarchic Empires; the Czarist (Orthodox) Russia, the (Catholic) Austrian Emperor and the (Islamic) Ottoman Sultan.

Scientism and Social Atheism

- The First World War saw an end to yet three more governments that appealed to religious traditions. If society was the source of evil in the world and if religious faith was an important part of a society, that faith had to be done away with.
- The Russian Revolution of 1917, did bring to an end centuries of monarchical rule by the Orthodox Russian Czars. What came out of that revolution did not immediately bring the Bolsheviks into power. The consolidation of that power took about five years to be fully established.
- When Bolshevism did establish itself in Russia the world was introduced to the first state whose government represented the rational ideas of the Enlightenment and also of Scientism. The same thing happened in Turkey. Kamal Ataturk declared that Turkey would be a Republic, unaffiliated with any religion. The rest of the Ottoman Empire were placed under the protection of England and France. The Austro-Hungarian Empire was broken up into a number of smaller countries and Poland became independent of Russia.
- The Communists in the Soviet Union were, at the same time, fond of scientific Darwinism and the Hegelian Dialectic yet did not believe in the processes that each system defined as its engine of progress. For Darwin, competition among the species is the engine that drove evolution, yet the Communists opposed any serious competition in their system.
- Hegel believed that it was the Dialectic process of thesis-antithesis-synthesis that brought about Communism, yet Communists believed that they were the end point of that process. Once the Workers Paradise had been established in the Soviet Union, the realization of that paradise would bring the Dialectic process to its natural conclusion. All that would be needed was to make this national Russian movement international.

Communism: Science or Scientism?

- Many Western intellectuals were (still are?) intellectually invested in Communism as the culmination of the scientific way of progress. Their investment required them to overlook the deaths by starvation of millions of Ukrainian farmers who were forced to send the products of their labor to the cities like Moscow and Petrograd rather than to feed their own families. In Communist Russia, all animals may have been equal but as former Communist sympathizer, George Orwell wrote, some animals were always more equal than others (Animal Farm).
- Advocates of scientism in the Soviet Union were happy to sign a non-aggression treaty with the advocates of scientism in Socio-fascist Germany. The Soviets did not recognize that the National German Workers Party was different than the Communist socialist workers party in Russia. The Dialectic did not end with Communism. Communism was the new thesis and Nazi Germany was the next antithesis. The new synthesis would have to wait for its introduction for another fifty years when Chinese Communist Leader Deng Xiaoping began his Black Cat-White Cat policy. Since that time, China has merged principles of Western Capitalism with the principles of Communism. For its part, the West has more and more added principles of Communism to its Capitalist principles.
- As all this was happening in Europe, the United States, founded on the rationalist Theism of John Locke allied themselves with the Marxist Atheist advocates of scientism in the Soviet Union. They did this to defeat Hitler and Japan. Millions of Russian lives were lost on the Russian Western Front because inexperienced political appointees of the Supreme Soviet (workers' council) had positions of command. Stalin had purged the general class of military officers some years before. The Soviet Union was fortunate to have a man like General Zhukov who managed to turn the tide at Stalingrad.

After the War Was Over

Two countries came out of the ashes of World War II; the Communist Soviet Union which could now brag about the benefits of its atheistic scientism and the United States which remained a land of rational theism.

Naturally, the two countries became instant rivals. What came as a surprise was that atheistic Communism experienced a surge of successes around the world. China declared itself to be Communist in 1949. Multiple countries in Eastern Europe did the same in the late 1940s and early 1950s. North Korea, North Vietnam and, later, Cambodia, also turned to atheistic Communism. Cuba did the same in the early 1960s.

If you could subject these countries to an examination using the scientific method, here's what you might expect as a result. The hypothesis is that by taking control of wealth away from the hands of individuals who would use it for their own purposes and by putting that wealth into the hands of the central government which comprised a council of workers, wealth would be more evenly distributed throughout the country and the beginnings of a worker's paradise would be experienced. Freed from the fantasies of religion, people would stop worrying about what God wanted and would dedicate themselves to the needs of their neighbors and their native lands.

The wealth of individuals was indeed confiscated by the government. The people, however, did not benefit from the confiscation, the political elite did. The central government may have been a worker's council, but the real power was more often in the hands of a dictatorial leader. Each communist country created its own "more equal" set of animals. From an examination using the Scientific Method, the scientism of Atheistic Communism was an economic and political failure wherever it was tried.

A Brave New World

As the twentieth century progressed, a Cold War developed between the United States and the Soviet Union. Their forces never directly encountered each other in combat. They did battle each other via proxy wars in Korea, Viet Nam and other spots around the world.

The philosophies of Locke and Rousseau had been tried and tested at the end of the eighteenth century but not against each other. The philosophy of Locke won the day in that first encounter by any fair standard of comparison. In the Cold War, the two philosophies would once again be tested but this time, in direct competition. Once again, the philosophy of Locke won out. The Soviet Union collapsed. Russia, once ruled by Czars and Commissars was free to try a new way. Russia's response turned out to be a new form of Czarism. In China, the "Black Cat/White Cat" philosophy proved that Hegel's dialectic didn't stop with Communism.

The United States specifically and Western Civilization generally seemed to have won the day. A world that allowed an individual to believe in God and practice religion now dominated the world. Everything seemed perfect, yet a movement known as secularism which had been around since the nineteenth century in some form or another had been growing for years in the background. Rousseau may have lost in real life, but his ideas still rule in many of the Universities of the world. In an article written by Christopher Ingraham published in the Washington Post on January 11, 2016, 60% of university professors identified themselves as being leftist or far-leftist. 13% identified as being to the right or far right. In another poll taken by the American Enterprise Institute in 2016, 18% of social science professors self-identify as Marxist while 5% self-identify as conservative.

Communism In Academia and China

Rousseau and Marxism may have lost the real-life contests, but they continue to win big in Academia. This trend at the university level is now working its way down to lower levels of education as you will see in the next section. It can also be found dominant in the major means of public entertainment and news broadcasts.

In the late 1970s, Deng Xiaoping began to reform the Communist control of China's economy. He allowed levels of private enterprise. The economy began to grow. By the late 1980s, the economy had slowed down and was beginning to falter. The famous crackdown in Tiananmen Square followed. But things picked up again in 1992 when Deng toured the southern part of China. He initiated his "Black Cat/White Cat" theory which said basically that Deng didn't care if a cat was white or black as long as it could catch mice. The Western secular world thought that meant that China was moving away from Communism. The West was wrong. It meant that he would use capitalism, if necessary, to save the Communist dictatorship.

However, there may be another way to look at what is happening in China. Perhaps Hegel's Dialectic did not stop, as Communists believed, with Communism. Perhaps some synthesis between Capitalism and Communism is taking place in China.

Deng Xiaoping's decisions may have saved the Chinese economy and kept the dictatorship in control of more than a billion people. Recently, China, now ruled by Chairman for Life Xi Jinping, recently signed a treaty with the Vatican allowing the Chinese government a level of approval regarding who the Bishops of the Church would be. The treaty was arranged with the help of disgraced former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick. Shortly after the treaty was signed, the Chinese government ripped down two Catholic shrines and forbade Chinese children under the age of 18 to attend any Christian worship service. Later, China evicted a community of nuns from their convent.

Communism Is Rousseau On Steroids

If we look back on philosophy and the French Revolution and its impact on morality and politics, Rousseau believed that natural state of all men at birth was good. Evil developed when these naturally good men were tainted by competition as they tried to situate themselves into society. Society itself played a role in the development of that evil as it tried to tame the “noble savage” that Rousseau admired so much so that he (and Rousseau had men in mind, not women) would lose his nobility and the result was the evil and corruption that resulted as men jostled for better and better position.

The French Revolution ultimately got rid of the Monarchy and the Church (Remember, social class is a societal source of evil. The easiest way to get rid of a societal evil is to get rid of the class). The last vestige to be “cured” was the Bourgeoisie, the merchant Middle Class. Soviet Russia achieved that when it starved its Ukrainian Farmers to death in the 1930s. Communist China got rid of their non-conforming intellectual class with the Great Awakening of the 1960s. It is estimated that Atheistic Communism put somewhere between 70 to 100 million people to death (not killed in wars but executed either quickly by the point of a gun or slowly in Gulags) in the years between 1922 and 1992. In other words, the scientism of atheistic Communism killed more people in less time than all the religious wars of the previous two millennia.

Is Atheism a Religion? Let's Ask Bertrand Russell

Bertrand Russell, believes that Marxist atheism, at least, has all the hallmarks of a religion.

“To understand Marx psychologically, one should use the following dictionary:

- 1) Yahweh = Dialectical Materialism
- 2) The Messiah = Marx
- 3) The Elect = The Proletariat
- 4) The Church = The Communist Party
- 5) The Second Coming = The Revolution
- 6) The Millennium = The Communist Commonwealth
- 7) Hell = Punishment of the Capitalists

The terms on the left give the emotional content of the terms on the right, and it is this emotional content, familiar to those who have had a Christian or a Jewish upbringing, that attempts to make Marx's eschatology credible. A similar dictionary could be made for the Nazis, but their conceptions are more purely Old Testament and less Christian than those of Marx, and their Messiah is more analogous to the Maccabees than to Christ”.

Bertrand Russell, A History of Western Philosophy, Book Two. Catholic Philosophy, Chapter IV, Saint Augustine's Philosophy and Theology (p. 363)

Remember, as mentioned in the first presentation of this series, Bertrand Russell is himself an atheist.