

Dr. Roger Green, Reformation to the Present, Session 11, Enlightenment – America Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Green, Reformation to the Present, Session 11, Enlightenment – America, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Green's lecture outlines the intellectual landscape of the Enlightenment, tracing its origins and impact on religious thought. He positions the Enlightenment as a period emphasizing **reason and rationality**, contrasting it with the preceding Reformation and Renaissance. The lecture introduces key philosophical figures like **Locke and Kant** to illustrate the era's focus on human reason and its implications for understanding God and ethics. Examining the Enlightenment's expression in different regions, **England's deism** is characterized, followed by the more radical **naturalism in France** exemplified by Spinoza, Voltaire, and Rousseau, with the latter foreshadowing a shift towards feeling in religion.

2. 16 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Green, Reformation to the Present, Session 11 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Church History → Reformation to the Present).



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3. Briefing Document: Green, Reformation to the Present, Session 11, Enlightenment – America

Briefing Document: The Enlightenment - A Critical Review

Overview:

This lecture by Dr. Roger Green provides an overview of the Enlightenment period (primarily the 17th and 18th centuries), positioning it within the broader context of church history following the Reformation and Renaissance. The lecture focuses on the intellectual shifts and criticisms leveled against the Church and Christianity during this era, primarily in Western Europe and America. Dr. Green introduces key terms (Reformation, Renaissance, Enlightenment), highlights the rise of modern philosophy with figures like John Locke and Immanuel Kant, and then examines the specific expressions of Enlightenment thought in England (Deism) and France (Naturalism).

Main Themes and Important Ideas:

1. **Shifting Central Arguments:** Dr. Green argues that while the Reformation was centrally concerned with justification and assurance, and the period following focused on ecclesiology, the Enlightenment saw a fundamental shift towards a **criticism of the Church and Christianity**. He states, "now we're going to see the central argument, in a sense, or the central story of this time, is kind of a criticism of the Church and a criticism of Christianity." This criticism led to a sidelining of Christianity and the Church in various aspects of life.
2. **Defining Key Terms:**
 - **Reformation:** While a reaction against medieval Roman Catholicism, the Reformation ultimately **freed up the individual conscience** but largely within the context of the reformulated church. "But within that church, people could have freedom of conscience. They had the freedom to kind of think for themselves... But it was all done within the church."
 - **Renaissance:** Parallel to the Reformation, the Renaissance involved a "going back to the original sources" and a "recovery of humankind and human abilities." It also fostered a sense of **freedom of conscience**, but unlike the Reformation, this often led thinkers **outside of the church**, contributing to concepts like secularization and humanism. "So unlike the kind of Reformation thinking that was all done within the church, sometimes Renaissance thinking was kind of a

liberation from the church and a creation of kind of terms we'd be familiar with, like secularization or humanism..."

- **Enlightenment:** Defined as "the period of reason, and the period of rationalization," marked by a "conscious effort to apply reason to every aspect of life." While often called the "age of reason" (17th century), the 18th century saw questions raised about the **sufficiency of reason**, particularly in matters of faith and religion.
1. **The Influence of Modern Philosophy:** Dr. Green emphasizes the impact of modern philosophy on the cultural, scientific, and religious worlds, prompting the question of the relationship between philosophy and theology. He introduces two key figures:
 - **John Locke (Empiricism & Natural Theology):** Locke's philosophy, where "the mind is kind of a blank piece of paper," emphasized **experience as the beginning of knowledge**. In terms of theology, Locke and others favored **natural theology** – understanding God through his created world – over revealed theology (God revealing himself in Christ through scripture). This shifted the starting point for understanding God from divine revelation to human experience. "For John Locke... experience is really where knowledge begins... the starting point for what you want to know is really lodged in us and not in God or in what you can learn about God from the church."
 - **Immanuel Kant (Limits of Reason & Categorical Imperative):** Kant is presented as representing humanity "coming of age" with reason as the norm. However, he also recognized the **limitations of reason**, arguing that knowledge of God comes through **faith**, not rationality. His **categorical imperative** – "Think of the consequences of your actions if they were universalized" – represented his ethical mandate. Dr. Green suggests that Kant's emphasis on ethics potentially led to a **reduction of religion to morality**, potentially marginalizing other theological truths. "we're starting to reduce religion to ethics... is it possible for some people following Kant to forget about other truths like God and the incarnation and the Holy Spirit and the church...?"
 1. **The Enlightenment in England: Deism:**
 - Deism is described as a philosophical and religious viewpoint, not a denomination, that flourished in England and then spread to America.
 1. **Key Aspects of Deism:** Belief in a **creator God** (monotheism).

2. High opinion of **human free will**, reacting against Calvinist predestination.
 3. Emphasis on a **virtuous, moral life** attainable through reason.
 4. Belief in an **afterlife** with rewards and punishments (though vague).
 5. Underscoring the importance of **reason** in religious and cultural life.
 6. Reliance on **natural theology** – understanding God through his creation as a God of order and design. Dr. Green critiques the deists for not adequately addressing the problems of natural theology (e.g., natural disasters). "What they didn't wrestle with enough is, what do you do with tsunamis, earthquakes, floods, and the Black Death? What do you do when the natural world doesn't demonstrate a God of order, beauty, and design?"
- **Key Deist Writers: John Toland:** Author of "Christianity Not Mysterious," arguing that "there is nothing mysterious in Christianity" and that everything about God and the church can be known by reason.
 - **Matthew Tyndall:** Author of "Christianity As Old As Creation," asserting that "reason is the touchstone of religion." He criticized biblical miracles and the concept of divine revelation beyond the natural world, advocating for a Christianity aligned with natural theology. "he wants to drop anything that speaks against natural theology."
1. **The Enlightenment in France: Naturalism:**
 - The Enlightenment in France is characterized by **naturalism**, being "much more radical" and "less restrained" than in England.
 - There was an "outright kind of warfare against the institutional church in France," fueled in part by the Church's significant land ownership and perceived alignment with royalty.
 - **Key Thinkers: Baruch Spinoza:** Developed a form of **religious pantheism**, denying the God of the Bible and the Church, suggesting a sacredness inherent in the natural world. "What Spinoza really developed was a kind of religious pantheism. He didn't believe in the God of the Bible. He didn't believe in the God of the church. But maybe there's something sacred in the world in which we live."
 - **Voltaire:** Advocated for a religion focused solely on **morality and ethics**, expressing strong **despise for Christianity and the Church**. His famous call to "crush the infamy" referred to the destruction of the Church and its beliefs. He

also exhibited strong anti-Semitism. "for Voltaire, religion is simply and really only... in morality and ethics. His religious vision was about morality and living an ethical life. And he really did despise... anything that came out of Christianity or the church."

- **Jean-Jacques Rousseau:** While Swiss-born, his work is associated with France and had a significant influence in America. A key aspect of his thought was that the **hallmark of religion is feeling and the inner life**, marking a shift away from the strict rationalism of some Enlightenment thinkers and foreshadowing Romanticism. "for him the hallmark of religion is feeling. The hallmark of religion is the inner life." He also emphasized a **return to the natural world** and a natural morality, critiquing the perceived evils of industrial society.

Key Quotes:

- "now we're going to see the central argument, in a sense, or the central story of this time, is kind of a criticism of the Church and a criticism of Christianity."
- "But within that church, people could have freedom of conscience. They had the freedom to kind of think for themselves... But it was all done within the church."
- "So unlike the kind of Reformation thinking that was all done within the church, sometimes Renaissance thinking was kind of a liberation from the church and a creation of kind of terms we'd be familiar with, like secularization or humanism..."
- "Enlightenment is the period of the Enlightenment, starting in the 17th century, the period of reason, and the period of rationalization. It's really a conscious effort to apply reason to every aspect of life."
- "the starting point for what you want to know is really lodged in us and not in God or in what you can learn about God from the church." (regarding Locke)
- "Think of the consequences of your actions if they were universalized." (Kant's Categorical Imperative)
- "we're starting to reduce religion to ethics... is it possible for some people following Kant to forget about other truths like God and the incarnation and the Holy Spirit and the church...?"
- "What they didn't wrestle with enough is, what do you do with tsunamis, earthquakes, floods, and the Black Death? What do you do when the natural world doesn't demonstrate a God of order, beauty, and design?"

- "there is nothing mysterious in Christianity." (Toland's thesis)
- "reason is the touchstone of religion." (Tyndall's assertion)
- "he wants to drop anything that speaks against natural theology." (regarding Tyndall)
- "What Spinoza really developed was a kind of religious pantheism. He didn't believe in the God of the Bible. He didn't believe in the God of the church. But maybe there's something sacred in the world in which we live."
- "for Voltaire, religion is simply and really only... in morality and ethics. His religious vision was about morality and living an ethical life. And he really did despise... anything that came out of Christianity or the church."
- "for him the hallmark of religion is feeling. The hallmark of religion is the inner life." (regarding Rousseau)

Concluding Remarks:

Dr. Green's lecture provides a foundational understanding of the Enlightenment as a period marked by a significant intellectual and cultural shift that challenged traditional religious authority. The emphasis on reason, natural theology, and individual autonomy led to various critiques of Christianity and the Church, as seen in the contrasting approaches of Deism in England and the more radical Naturalism in France. The introduction of key philosophical figures like Locke and Kant highlights the intellectual underpinnings of this era, while the discussion of Rousseau hints at a transition towards new intellectual and cultural movements. The lecture sets the stage for understanding the Church's response to these challenges in subsequent sessions.

4. Study Guide: Green, Reformation to the Present, Session 11, Enlightenment – America

The Enlightenment: A Study Guide

Key Concepts and Themes

- **The Relationship Between Philosophy and Theology:** The Enlightenment saw a significant shift in how reason and faith were perceived and their respective roles in understanding the world and God.
- **Criticism of the Church and Christianity:** A central theme of the Enlightenment was the critical examination of religious institutions, doctrines, and practices using the lens of reason.
- **Reason and Rationality:** The Enlightenment emphasized the power of human reason as the primary tool for acquiring knowledge and understanding all aspects of life.
- **Individual Conscience:** The Reformation fostered a sense of individual freedom of conscience, which evolved during the Enlightenment, sometimes leading individuals outside the bounds of the church.
- **Natural Theology:** The belief that knowledge of God can be obtained through the observation and study of the natural world was prominent during this period.
- **Limits of Reason:** Some Enlightenment thinkers, like Kant, recognized that reason had limitations, particularly in the realm of faith and religious experience.
- **Influence on Different Regions:** The Enlightenment manifested differently in England (Deism), France (Naturalism), Germany, and America, reflecting varying social, political, and religious contexts.

Quiz: Short Answer Questions

1. Describe the key difference in the understanding of "freedom of conscience" between the Reformation and the Renaissance, according to the lecture.
2. What is Dr. Green's definition of the Enlightenment, and what cautionary note does he mention regarding the 18th century's view of reason?
3. Explain John Locke's concept of the mind and how he believed knowledge of God could be obtained.

4. According to the lecture, what was Immanuel Kant's view on knowing God, and what ethical principle is he known for?
5. What are the six key aspects of English Deism discussed in the lecture?
6. How did Deists view miracles and divine revelation beyond the natural world?
7. Explain the core idea of Spinoza's religious pantheism and how it differed from traditional monotheism.
8. What was Voltaire's attitude towards the church and Christianity, and what phrase is associated with his view?
9. According to the lecture, what did Rousseau consider the "hallmark of religion," and how did this differ from the emphasis on rationality during the Enlightenment?
10. How does the lecture suggest Rousseau can be seen as a transition figure in intellectual history?

Quiz: Answer Key

1. The Reformation emphasized freedom of conscience *within* the church, allowing individuals to interpret scripture and hear preaching in their own language, but within the body of Christ. The Renaissance, however, saw freedom of conscience sometimes leading thinkers *outside* the church, fostering secularization and humanism.
2. Dr. Green defines the Enlightenment as the period starting in the 17th century characterized by reason and rationalization, a conscious effort to apply reason to every aspect of life. The cautionary note is that in the 18th century, the sufficiency of reason for everything, especially faith and religious life, was called into question.
3. John Locke viewed the mind as a "blank piece of paper" upon which life experiences and sensations make impressions, forming knowledge. He believed knowledge of God began with natural theology, understanding God by observing his created world through experience, rather than through revealed theology.
4. Kant believed that God could not be known through rationality but only by faith, as a religious experience. He is known for the categorical imperative, a moral principle urging individuals to consider the consequences if their actions were universalized.

5. The six aspects of Deism are: belief in a creator God, a high opinion of human free will, belief in a virtuous life, belief in an afterlife with rewards and punishments, emphasis on the importance of reason, and underscoring the critical role of natural theology.
6. Deists generally rejected miracles in the Bible as unreasonable and irrational, incompatible with strict natural theology. They also dismissed the idea of divine revelation in the form of scripture or a person (like Christ), believing knowledge of God came primarily through the natural world.
7. Spinoza's religious pantheism was an extreme view critical of traditional religion and the Bible, suggesting that the sacred was not a separate creator God but inherent within the natural world itself. This differed from monotheism, which posits a distinct, singular God who created the world.
8. Voltaire held a strongly negative view of the church and Christianity, despising its teachings and advocating for its destruction, famously saying, "crush the infamy." He believed religion should be solely about morality and ethics.
9. Rousseau considered feeling and the inner life to be the hallmark of religion, emphasizing emotion over rationality. This contrasted with the Enlightenment's strong focus on reason as the primary means of understanding.
10. The lecture suggests Rousseau is a transition figure because his emphasis on feeling and emotion in religion signaled a move away from the Enlightenment's strict rationality and foreshadowed the rise of Romanticism in the 19th century.

Essay Format Questions

1. Analyze the relationship between the Reformation and the Enlightenment, as presented in the lecture, focusing on how the former contributed to the intellectual environment of the latter.
2. Compare and contrast the philosophical approaches of John Locke and Immanuel Kant, as discussed in the lecture, regarding their views on the sources of knowledge and the role of reason in understanding God.
3. Discuss the key characteristics of English Deism and analyze why it can be considered a product of the Enlightenment's emphasis on reason and natural theology.

4. Evaluate the contrasting expressions of the Enlightenment in England (Deism) and France (Naturalism), explaining the factors that contributed to their different levels of radicalism towards traditional religion.
5. Explore the significance of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's ideas, as introduced in the lecture, in understanding the shift from the Age of Reason to the subsequent emphasis on feeling and emotion in the 19th century.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Reformation:** A 16th-century movement that aimed to reform the doctrines and practices of the Roman Catholic Church, leading to the establishment of Protestant churches.
- **Renaissance:** A period in European history marking the transition from the Middle Ages to modernity, characterized by a renewed interest in classical art, literature, and philosophy.
- **Enlightenment:** An influential intellectual and cultural movement of the 17th and 18th centuries that emphasized reason, individualism, and skepticism towards traditional authority.
- **Reason:** The power of the mind to think, understand, and form judgments logically. A central concept of the Enlightenment.
- **Rationalization:** The process of replacing tradition, emotion, and superstition as the basis for organizing society and thought with logic and efficiency.
- **Ecclesiology:** The branch of theology concerned with the nature and constitution of the church.
- **Justification:** In Christian theology, the act by which God declares a sinner righteous through faith in Christ.
- **Assurance:** In Christian theology, the believer's confidence in their salvation.
- **Individual Conscience:** The internal sense of what is right and wrong, often seen as a key aspect of individual autonomy.
- **Secularization:** The process by which religious thinking, practice, and institutions lose social significance.

- **Humanism:** A philosophical and ethical stance that emphasizes the value and agency of human beings, individually and collectively, often prioritizing reason and ethics over supernatural or religious beliefs.
- **Empiricism:** The theory that all knowledge is derived from sense-experience. Associated with John Locke.
- **Natural Revelation:** The belief that knowledge about God and divine things can be discovered through natural means, such as observation of the natural world, human reason, and philosophical inquiry.
- **Revealed Theology:** Knowledge of God and divine things believed to be obtained from supernatural sources, such as scripture or divine revelation.
- **Pietism:** A 17th and 18th-century Protestant movement that emphasized personal piety, religious experience, and practical Christian living.
- **Categorical Imperative:** A central concept in Immanuel Kant's ethics, a universal moral obligation that should be followed regardless of one's desires or consequences.
- **Deism:** A religious and philosophical belief that posits a creator God who does not intervene in the universe and whose existence can be known through reason and observation of nature.
- **Unitarianism:** A theological movement that emphasizes the oneness of God and rejects the doctrine of the Trinity, often evolving from Deistic thought.
- **Naturalism:** In the context of the Enlightenment, a philosophical viewpoint emphasizing natural causes and laws and often rejecting supernatural or spiritual explanations.
- **Pantheism:** The belief that God is identical with the universe or nature; the divine is immanent in all things.
- **Anti-Semitism:** Hostility to, prejudice toward, or discrimination against Jews.
- **Romanticism:** An artistic, literary, musical, and intellectual movement that originated in Europe toward the end of the 18th century and in most areas was at its peak in the approximate period from 1800 to 1850, emphasizing emotion, intuition, and the individual.

5. FAQs Green, Reformation to the Present, Session 11, Enlightenment – America, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions: The Enlightenment

1. How did the Enlightenment period differ from the Reformation and the Renaissance in terms of individual freedom and its relation to the Church? The Reformation, while reacting against medieval Roman Catholicism, fostered freedom of conscience *within* the church. Individuals had the liberty to read scripture and hear preaching in their own language, but this was still within the framework of the Christian community. The Renaissance, while also promoting freedom of conscience and a return to original sources, saw some thinkers whose exploration led them *outside* the church, contributing to secularization and humanism. The Enlightenment, starting in the 17th century, took this further by emphasizing reason and rationality applied to all aspects of life, leading to a more direct criticism of the Church and Christianity, often sidelining religious authority in favor of human reason.

2. What were the central tenets of deism as it emerged in England during the Enlightenment? Deism, a philosophical-religious viewpoint rather than a denomination, had several key aspects. Deists believed in a creator God (monotheism) who created the world and then became a passive observer. They strongly emphasized human free will, reacting against Calvinistic predestination. They advocated for a virtuous, moral, and ethical life, believing reason could guide this without explicit biblical instruction. Deists generally believed in an afterlife with rewards and punishments. Crucially, they underscored the importance of reason in both religious and cultural (especially political) life and heavily relied on natural theology – understanding God through his created order – though they often didn't adequately address the problem of evil and suffering in this framework.

3. How did key figures like John Locke and Immanuel Kant contribute to the philosophical landscape of the Enlightenment and the understanding of the relationship between theology and philosophy? John Locke emphasized empiricism, suggesting the mind is a blank slate filled by sensory experience. He championed natural theology, arguing that knowledge of God begins through observing the created world, rather than through revealed theology (scripture). This shifted the starting point of understanding away from divine revelation and towards human experience and reason. Immanuel Kant, while acknowledging the power of reason as representative of humanity's coming of age, also recognized its limitations, particularly in knowing God.

Influenced by Pietism, Kant argued that God is known through faith, not purely through reason. His categorical imperative focused on universalizable ethical principles, potentially leading to a reduction of religion to morality for some, possibly marginalizing other core theological tenets. Both philosophers highlighted the increasing importance of human reason in understanding the world and our place in it, impacting the way theology and philosophy interacted.

4. In what ways was the Enlightenment in France, characterized by "naturalism," more radical in its critique of religion and the Church compared to England's deism? The Enlightenment in France was significantly more radical and less restrained than in England. While English deism sought a rationalized form of belief in a distant creator God, French naturalism, exemplified by figures like Spinoza and Voltaire, involved a much more extreme and outright attack on the institutional Church and traditional Christianity. Spinoza promoted a form of pantheism, identifying the sacred with the natural world rather than a transcendent personal God. Voltaire openly despised Christian teachings and the Church, advocating for its destruction ("crush the infamy") and often exhibiting strong anti-Semitism by blaming Jewish origins for Christian beliefs. This represented a direct and hostile rejection of religious authority and dogma, contrasting with the more reasoned and philosophical questioning seen in English deism.

5. How did Jean-Jacques Rousseau's perspective on religion during the Enlightenment differ from the emphasis on rationality seen in many other Enlightenment thinkers, particularly through his focus on "feeling"? Jean-Jacques Rousseau offered a distinct perspective by emphasizing feeling and the inner life as the hallmark of religion, rather than strict rationality. This marked a departure from the deists' focus on reason and natural theology. Rousseau's emphasis on emotion and the individual's inner experience positioned him as a transitional figure towards Romanticism, a 19th-century cultural movement centered on feeling and emotion. By prioritizing subjective experience over objective reason in matters of faith, Rousseau challenged the dominant Enlightenment emphasis on rational inquiry in all aspects of life, including religion.

6. What were the key arguments presented by deist writers John Toland ("Christianity Not Mysterious") and Matthew Tindal ("Christianity As Old As Creation") against traditional Christianity? John Toland, in "Christianity Not Mysterious," argued that there is nothing within Christianity that cannot be understood by human reason. He claimed that all necessary knowledge about God and the Church is accessible through rationality, rejecting the concept of religious mystery. Matthew Tindal, in "Christianity As Old As Creation," asserted that reason is the ultimate standard for religion. He criticized biblical miracles as being irrational and rejected the idea of divine revelation beyond the natural world. For Tindal, true Christianity was as old as creation itself, accessible through natural law and reason, and stripped of supernatural elements and specific divine interventions.

7. What does the lecture suggest about the long-term impact of Enlightenment philosophies on religious thought and the role of the Church in society? The lecture suggests that Enlightenment philosophies significantly challenged the authority and centrality of the Church and traditional Christian beliefs. The emphasis on reason and individual autonomy led to criticisms of church doctrines, a preference for natural theology over revealed theology, and, in more radical forms, outright hostility towards religious institutions. The rise of deism and its later evolution into Unitarianism, along with the more radical naturalism in France, demonstrated a move away from orthodox Christianity. Even the focus on ethics by figures like Kant could lead to a marginalization of other theological truths. Ultimately, the Enlightenment fostered a climate where reason became a primary lens through which to view religion, leading to a questioning and reinterpretation of traditional beliefs and a shift in the Church's cultural influence.

8. How did the Enlightenment influence the understanding and interpretation of Jesus Christ, as exemplified by the deists' view and C.S. Lewis's counter-argument? The deists generally viewed Jesus as a good moral and ethical person whose example should be followed. They accepted his historical existence but rejected his divinity and miraculous claims, fitting him into their framework of a rational and naturalistic understanding of religion. C.S. Lewis critiqued this middle-ground view in "Mere Christianity," arguing that Jesus's claims about himself leave only two logical possibilities: either he was a liar or a lunatic for claiming to be God, or he was indeed Lord. Lewis rejected the notion of Jesus as simply a nice moral teacher, highlighting the stark implications of his divine claims as presented in the Gospels. This illustrates how Enlightenment rationalism led to a humanistic interpretation of Jesus, which was subsequently challenged by those defending traditional Christian theology.