

STUDY PACK 2

THE RENAISSANCE AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT

“Although this past age did include the early Christian church, it became increasingly clear that the sort of human autonomy that many of the Renaissance humanists had in mind referred exclusively to the non-Christian Greco-Roman world. This Renaissance humanism steadily evolved towards modern humanism—a value system rooted in the belief that man _____ that man is autonomous.”

~~ Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live*, p.60. ~~

I. THE RENAISSANCE

The Renaissance was not simply a religious or a political movement. Instead, it was a state of mind. The people of that period began to have a different attitude toward life. It was a time of expression when the people wanted to be actively involved in all areas of life. The Renaissance began in the 1400's and lasted during the 1500's contemporaneous with the Reformation.

This new interest in life seems to have begun with the contacts with the East during the Crusades. This awakening first was evident in the cultural and economic activities of the Italian cities. Trade with China and India expanded and seemed to awaken in people interest in art and science, and a new interest in history and the present.

Many important Italian men were making history during this period. In Florence the ruling Medici family stirred intense interest in art and other cultural and intellectual areas. Other important people included the artist Da Vinci who was also a great scientist, engineer, and inventor; the sculptor and painter Michelangelo who was also an architect and poet; and the poet Petrarch.

Dante became one of the first important writers to write in a local language instead of Latin. He mixed Christianity with classical paganism and his works are still read today.

Machiavelli wrote *The Prince*, which gives instructions on how to seize and maintain power as a despot.

The Renaissance began in Italy but quickly spread to the other European nations. In Germany, Gutenberg invented a printing press with movable type. The Flemish school of art is characterized by Jan Van Eyck during this era. Erasmus, the Dutch theologian, emerged as one of the great intellectuals of this time along with Sir Thomas More of England. In France, Francois Villon became the first great lyric poet.

As a result of the printing press, the whole world became excited about learning. The day when learning was an exclusive privilege of a select few had finally come to an end.

The people of the Renaissance were interested in their kings and their countries. The historical drama became quite popular as there were few written histories at this time. Shakespeare was a popular Renaissance writer who seemed to understand the minds and hearts of the people.

Humanism as a movement seemed to have its birth during this period. In Italy, Petrarch, who is sometimes acknowledged as the “father of humanism,” evidenced interest in the classical Greek and Roman civilizations. This interest and study focused on man himself and parallels the emphasis

on man in all other art media. The result of humanistic thinking is to make a god out of mankind and to deny the existence of _____

The move from the medieval period to the Renaissance confronted man with new and often confusing issues. The discovery of America caused man to see the need to adjust his ideas of the world. The study of the solar system awakened a new area of interest. Copernicus confused many with his theory that the sun was the center of the universe, and that the earth revolves around the sun. The Roman Catholic Church condemned his book in favor of Ptolemy's previous idea that the earth stood still and was the center of the universe.

Brahe, the Danish astronomer, used scientific information gathered over an extended period of time to test Copernicus' theory. Kepler, the German mathematician, observed that Brahe's idea of circular orbits did not fit known information, so he suggested that the orbits could be in the form of an ellipse. Sir Isaac Newton and Leibnig were able to explain why the orbits were elliptical and also developed calculus. All of these discoveries were used to honor man and further develop the philosophy of humanism that was to dominate man's thinking for many years.

One of the bright lights of this period was Savonarola, a Dominican friar of Florence, Italy, who was a preacher of righteousness and a patriot. He did not hesitate to reveal unrighteousness even among the hierarchy of the Church regardless of any personal punishment. The life and writings of Savonarola had a tremendous effect on Luther. He said of Savonarola's *Exposition of the Psalms* that it is a beautiful example of what is to be believed, trusted and hoped from God's mercy, and how we come to despair of works. Savonarola was tried for heresy and burnt at the stake in 1498.

The Renaissance emphasis on national languages helped to strengthen the emphasis on nationalism.

II. NATIONALISM

The word "nation" originally referred to a group of people of the same ancestry and a common language. More recently, the word has come to mean a group of people with _____ or _____ or ruler without necessarily having common ancestry. This is particularly true in the United States due to the many immigrants who have come to this country from around the world.

"Patriotism" originally meant love for the place where one was born, but it has come to mean love for one's country. This may be the country of one's birth or an adopted country. Often a naturalized citizen may be more patriotic than a natural born citizen.

Nationalism may be defined as a feeling held by a number of people that they are one people. This attitude may develop from any one or a combination of sources such as geographical location, race, culture, religion, or economic ties. This combination of factors often brings about a spirit of nationalism which leads people to combine under one government.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries strong kings built powerful nation states in Europe. This is sometimes called the "age of royal absolutism" (1650-1775).

In France, Louis XIV declared "I am the state." He canceled religious freedom in France because he thought that it was "arrogant" for anyone to belong to a different church than the king did. He exercised complete control over France's economy — which crippled it. He assembled a group of

businessmen and asked them for advice on how to improve the economy. They replied “laissez-faire” (leave us alone). Ever since, the idea that the government should stay out of the economy is called “laissez-faire.”

Throughout Europe, strong nation states united various groups of people.

III. THE ENLIGHTENMENT

The Enlightenment, also known as the Age of Reason, took place between 1600 and 1800. The decline in the power of the Roman Catholic Church opened up all kinds of possibilities for independent learning. Unfortunately, much of the “new learning” was not only independent of the Roman Catholic Church, it was independent of all semblance of _____.

The French philosopher, Voltaire (1694-1778), is often called the “Father of the Enlightenment.” The humanistic elements of the Renaissance came to full development in the Enlightenment. Man dreamed of utopia _____. In fact, God and Christianity were often seen as the barriers to utopia. The five-word rallying cry of the Enlightenment was: Reason, nature, happiness, progress and liberty. All without God or revelation.

The men of the Enlightenment announced that Christianity was a thing of the past. They would lead a return to the past paganism of Greece and Rome. Man would find fulfillment without God.

IV. DEISM

Some men wanted the freedom of the Enlightenment without the foolishness of denying the Creator God. Deism was popularized by Lord Herbert of Cherbury (England). He taught four basic principles:

1. God did create the world.
2. Salvation is _____.
3. God punishes people who fail to live sincerely.
4. The Bible is only a good book.

Man sat in judgment on the Scriptures, obeying only those parts which appealed to him.

Deism would eventually lead to Transcendentalism and Unitarianism. William Ellery Channing would sum up Transcendentalism, “The only god whom our thoughts can rest upon, and our hearts cling to, and our consciences recognize, is the god whose image dwells in our own souls.” Channing, *Works*, p. 302. Another Transcendentalist, Ralph Waldo Emerson, wrote: “_____ and _____”.

Utopia was longed for; God and the Bible were rejected. The French Terror would be the fruit of such rebellion against God. Classical humanism, the study of man, became secular humanism, _____ Governmental systems were designed to replace God.