

How We Came To Be Where We Are

(A Fifteen-Minute History of the Last Six Centuries, Beginning with the Reformation)

Most historians are agreed that what we call the "modern age" began in the 18th Century which has been called the "Age of Reason."

At that time a number of French intellectuals, including men like Rousseau, Hume, Voltaire, Montesquieu, Immanuel Kant and John Locke became convinced that man's greatest strength lay in his power of reason.

Reason led to knowledge, knowledge led to progress and progress made it a better world.

Prior to that time, in the largely Christian Western World, faith in Jesus Christ had been considered superior to reason because it led not only to knowledge of man and nature, but of spiritual realities which were not accessible to man's power of reason.

The luminaries of the Age of Reason, however, were convinced that reason superseded faith as the best way to understand and create a better world.

They further argued that science was the best means of applying reason and that science was the key to the future.

The scientific and technological progress of the following two centuries seemed to prove them right.

Now the Age of Reason was given birth by a revolution in scientific thought that took place during the two centuries that preceded it.

During the 16th and 17th Centuries men like Copernicus, Galileo, Sir Isaac Newton, Robert Boyle and Johannes Kepler made breakthroughs in scientific thought that radically changed man's understanding of how the universe functioned.

Copernicus proposed that the sun did not revolve around the earth as everyone had always believed, but that the earth revolved around the sun.

That was a hard idea to sell, but he was right.

Galileo discovered laws of motion and gravity.

Newton and Leibnitz gave us the laws of thermodynamics and a new branch of mathematics called "calculus."

Boyle gave us the science of chemistry and Kepler gave us modern astronomy.

These patriarchs of science introduced what came to be called the "scientific method"—a process of observation, hypothesis and experimentation which had the power to discover the laws of nature.

But what made both the Scientific Revolution and the subsequent Age of Reason possible was something that preceded them both—something occurred during the 15th Century called the Protestant Reformation.()

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Joseph Henrich, who is the chairman of the Department of Human Evolutionary Development at Harvard University argues that the birth of the Modern Age took place on a November day in 1517 in the small German town of Wittenberg when an Augustinian monk by the name of Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of the Castle Church.

Luther's theses called for a debate on the Church's practice of selling something called "indulgences."

The Church taught that there was a place called "purgatory" where Christians had to go after they died before they could go to heaven.

In purgatory they would be cleansed, purged of sins they had failed to confess during their lives.

The time they had to spend in purgatory could be hundreds or even thousands of years.

Indulgences were Papal promises printed on paper that time spent in purgatory could be reduced for deceased friends or relatives.

Luther argued in his 95 theses that there was no Biblical basis for the existence of purgatory or indulgences.

What he didn't expect was that a man by the name of Gutenberg, who had recently invented something called a printing press would use it to publish Luther's theses throughout Germany.

That was the spark that ignited the Protestant Reformation which spread like wildfire throughout western Europe and ultimately the world.

Embedded deeply in the Protestant Reformation was the Lutheran doctrine of what was called the “priesthood of all believers: the Biblical teaching that every Christian has a personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ, God's great high priest.

There was therefore no need for a human priesthood.

But since this was not the teaching of the Church, the only place one could learn of such a relationship with God was in the Bible.

And in order to do that **he had to be able to read.**

But at that time over 95% of all Germans couldn't read, so Luther did two things which had far-reaching effects.

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First of all, he persuaded the princes of Germany to build schools where children could be taught to read and write.

Secondly, he translated the Bible into German so that Germans could read it in their native language.

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These schools were the first instances of what we now call public education and they engendered an explosion of literacy throughout western Europe.

Soon a large percentage of not only Germans, but French, Italians, British, Swedish and residents of the Netherlands could read.

To serve this new market, publishers sprang up like weeds and began cranking out printed materials—pamphlets, magazines and books.

A formerly illiterate and for the most part disinterested public almost overnight became an informed and interested public.

People no longer had to accept as fact what an ecclesiastical and intellectual elite told them: they could read and think and draw their own conclusions.

And as neurologists and psychologists have known for a long time: learning to read improves the way the brain functions.

It causes the brain to form specialized networks which increase the speed and efficiency of cognitive and communicative skills.

Human faculties of memory, visual processing, analytical thinking and problem-solving are sharpened.

Literate people become more aware of their talents and potentials and a spirit of intellectual curiosity is born.

This is exactly what happened in western Europe in the two centuries that followed the Protestant Reformation.

A revolution in scientific thought occurred which gave credence to the power of reason and reason and science became man's twin idols.

There was, however a downside to the deification of reason.

Its leaders' passion for establishing its supremacy led them to disparage religion and regard it as an enemy of reason.

Voltaire savagely attacked Christianity, once proclaiming that mankind would not be free until the last king was strangled with the entrails of the last priest.

Christianity was dismissed as superstition while science was exalted as pure, objective reason.

They popularized the idea that there was—and had always been—a war between science and religion, conveniently ignoring the fact that the Scientific Revolution was led by scientists who were all devout Christians.

And that it had been a revolution in religious thought—the Reformation—that had paved the way for the Scientific Revolution AND the Age of Reason.

[This myth of a war between science and religion that was concocted in the late 18th Century persists and is widely accepted today—along with the belief that faith in God is somehow opposed to science.]

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But God will not be mocked and some major discoveries of contemporary science are now pointing to religious rather than scientific answers.

Astronomical measurements that can now be taken through both earth-bound and satellite telescopes have confirmed that the universe is expanding.

Combined with the discovery of electronic and material debris scattered throughout the universe, astrophysicists have concluded that the expansion of the universe was caused by a hyper-explosion of mass and energy in the distant past.

They call it the “big bang” but it raises a problem.

Where did the matter and energy come from?

Some scientists try to dodge the question by saying that it always existed.

They maintain that the universe must simply be accepted as what they like to call “a brute fact”—whatever that means.

But that's not science—it's just wishful thinking.

The scientific method is based upon the principle of what is called **determinism**.

We call it cause and effect.

It simply says that every physical event has a cause.

If an object moves, something caused it to move; if it stops moving, something caused it to stop moving.

If something exists, something caused it to come into existence.

Therefore, since matter and energy exist, they had to be created.

And if they were created, there had to have been a Creator.

Hence, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

Checkmate.

The other question scientists have been unable to answer is: how did life originate?

For a long time—ever since Darwin published his theory of evolution—scientists believed that the fundamental building block of all life—the cell—could have evolved out of the random interaction of chemical elements.

But as knowledge of the cell has increased and its incredible structural and functional complexity has been revealed, it has become increasingly difficult to argue that it could be the product of random forces.

One molecular biologist has compared the structural and functional complexity of a single cell to a factory the size of Detroit.

Statisticians have calculated that the odds against a single DNA molecule—a gene—having resulted from random organic chemical activity are 1 followed by 140 zeroes to one.

As one statistician put it: if the entire universe were full of organic molecules bumping into each other, it would never produce a single DNA molecule.

The bottom line is that it couldn't have happened randomly so there had to have been an independent intelligence guiding the process.

A logical conclusion, but one so offensive to scientific materialists that in order to avoid it they have come up with a new theory to explain where and how life originated.

They call it "panspermia."

The theory of panspermia alleges that at some point in the distant past, an alien intelligence from somewhere in the universe planted or "seeded" DNA molecules on the earth.

Sounds like the beginning of a movie about Superman.

And it only kicks the can down the road as far as answering the question of where life originated because the question would remain: who created the aliens that seeded the earth?

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The fact of the matter is that what drives people to reject the idea of a Creator God is not scientific reasoning but intellectual pride: man's refusal to believe that there is a God who rules over us and to whom they are accountable.

It's the desire to be our own god and accountable to ourselves alone.

It was what the serpent promised Eve: "You can know what God knows."

Translation: you can be your own god.

It was what drove some men on the plain of Shinar to attempt to build a tower to heaven so that they could glorify themselves rather than God.

It was what drove the most famous and revered scientist of the 20th Century—Albert Einstein—to commit the gravest error a scientist can commit: falsifying numbers in his research.

When Einstein first heard of the theory of an expanding universe he rejected it and maintained that the universe was in a condition of "steady state" and had always existed in its present form.

He knew that if the universe were expanding there would have to have been a cause because science says that every *physical event has a cause*.

Therefore there would have had to have been something or someone who brought matter and energy into existence and then caused them to explode, producing the expansion.

And who or what would that be?

Einstein was finally convinced by astrophysicists who showed him irrefutable evidence that the universe was expanding.

After he had been convinced he confessed that he had falsified numbers in his equations in order to prove that the universe was in steady state.

He said that it was the greatest mistake he had ever made in his life as a scientist.

Just think of it: the greatest genius of the 20th Century, a man universally regarded as having unimpeachable intellectual integrity and unassailable morals, committed the ultimate scientific sin in order to avoid having to consider that there might be evidence of a Creator God.

It exemplifies how far people will go to avoid recognizing that there is a God in heaven.

The Bible calls people who disbelieve in God "fools."

"Only the fool says in his heart, "There is no God."

A fool is someone who is presented with clear evidence of something, but still chooses to not believe it.

Disbelief has become his religion; he has faith in his disbelief.

Disbelief is a force unto itself—a pride-born form of thinking that can come to dominate a person's thinking.

Like atheism, it is an idol, a jealous god who demands total subservience.

But thanks be to God Who created the universe and who rules over us for sending His Son to set us free from the curse of disbelief.

Now in our time He has led scientists to discover aspects of His creation which cannot be explained through the power of reason.

Aspects which can only be grasped by faith.

And just think: it all started on a day in November in the little town of Wittenberg 725 years ago.

Amen.