

A Critique of the Enlightenment Doctrine on Progressivism  
Through the Writings of Francis A. Schaeffer

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## Abstract

The Enlightenment doctrine of progressivism, and Francis Schaeffer's Christian worldviews could hardly be more different. This thesis critiques the Enlightenment doctrine from the perspective of Francis Schaeffer through some of his most notable works. Specifically, this thesis explores the doctrine of progressivism, the idea that man and or society are constantly improving and getting better. The primary Enlightenment authors will include Voltaire, Hume, Locke, Rousseau, Turgot, and Kant. Francis Schaeffer's counterarguments and perspective will be shown through *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer*, a five-volume collection of his various works.

## A Critique of the Enlightenment Doctrine on Progressivism

## Through the Writings of Francis A. Schaeffer

The Enlightenment was largely an intellectual and philosophical movement based on humanism, intellectual autonomy, and reason. The Enlightenment developed over at least three hundred years, but climaxed in the late eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> The Enlightenment shook the commonly held religious beliefs regarding God, authority, and divine revelation. The effects of the Enlightenment can be felt even now in the twenty-first century. The changes it brought about shaped the modern world in many ways, often in ways that were antithetical to the Christian worldview. Francis Schaeffer (1912-1984), a Christian apologist and theologian from the late twentieth century, confronted many of the philosophies that resulted from the Enlightenment. The worldviews and subsequently writings of the Enlightenment thinkers and this Christian apologist could hardly be more antithetical. The Enlightenment was based on a diametrically opposed view of the world that placed man's reason at the core of importance. Schaeffer's Christian beliefs relied more on the revelation of scriptures, which he believes is the basis for the Western way of life.<sup>2</sup> The Enlightenment involved progress, renewed discovery in the realms of science, and pursuit of knowledge. Francis Schaeffer did not stand against scientific exploration or the discovery of knowledge; quite the opposite, he believed that the Christian worldview provided a solid foundation for the pursuit of knowledge and scientific discovery. Schaeffer's primary disagreement with the Enlightenment thinkers was not their wish to further discovery and learning, but the

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<sup>1</sup>Stephen, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 5-6.

<sup>2</sup>Francis Schaeffer, "A Christian Manifesto," in *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: A Christian View of the West*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Illinois: Crossway Books, 1985), 149.

humanistic precepts upon which they based their methods of doing so. The Enlightenment's assertions that human reason could be more important than God Himself, and that mankind is constantly progressing and becoming more perfect through his own effort are the primary precepts with which Schaeffer disagrees. Schaeffer offers a reasoned argument against the Enlightenment doctrine of progressivism as based on human reason and ability.

Out of the multitude of Enlightenment authors, there are a few exceptional ones readily contrasted with Francis Schaeffer and his own works. One of the preeminent authors, Voltaire (1694-1778), is often considered the "Father of the Enlightenment."<sup>3</sup> His belief in progress and many works perpetuating Enlightenment ideals including, *The Philosophical Dictionary*, *Candid*, and *In Defense of Modernity* embodied many of the Enlightenment ideals. While not necessarily opposed to the existence of God, Voltaire was openly critical of organized religious institutions. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) was also an important figure; much of his work dealt with the idea of releasing our bonds of "self-incurred tutelage," or the bonds of authority above us (including religious authority). His primary work regarding this topic is the short essay, *What is Enlightenment*.<sup>4</sup> Jacques Turgot (1727-1781), who grew up in a religious background, enhances many of the Enlightenment ideals while still maintaining a religious framework. His work, *A Philosophical Review of the Successive Advance of the Human Mind*, epitomizes his view that man is capable of progress through the rationality, and he is very

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<sup>3</sup> Schaeffer, "A Christian Manifesto," 147.

<sup>4</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason: and other Writings in Moral Philosophy* (Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1949), 1.

careful to point out that this rationality given to him by providence.<sup>5</sup> While many Enlightenment authors would probably agree that Providence was the ultimate provider of reason, Turgot went to a great deal of trouble to explicate the fact. Adam Ferguson, sometimes called the father of modern sociology, clearly states his belief that providence is the provider of reason in his work, *History, Progress and Human Nature*. In *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, Adam Smith argues that mankind naturally uses this reason to move society forward in a positive direction, to progress.<sup>6</sup> These are central points of the Enlightenment, man's ability to reason, as well as his ability to better himself through that reason.

Francis Schaeffer responds to Enlightenment ideology in several of his books, foremost among which are, *How should We then Live*, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race*, and *A Christian Manifesto*. All of these demonstrate both cynicism regarding the humanistic framework of the Enlightenment and hope based on biblical principles, primarily the salvation of mankind through Christ. Steven Toulmin, Alister McGrath, and J. Bury will supplement some of Schaeffer's arguments. Toulmin's postmodernist viewpoint allows him to point out several areas in which he believes modernism failed.<sup>7</sup> J. Bury, an author from the mid-1950s, wrote *The Idea of Progress* to point out flaws in the humanist rationalistic framework.<sup>8</sup> Alister McGrath, a Christian apologist from the 21<sup>st</sup> century, will demonstrate some of the ways in which science and religion can work together through apparent conflicts.

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<sup>5</sup> Ronald Meek, *Turgot on Progress, Sociology and Economics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010) 49-50.

<sup>6</sup> Adam Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1982), 146.

<sup>7</sup> Meek, 80-83.

<sup>8</sup> Other prominent writers included D'Alembert, Priestly, Condorcet, and Rousseau.

The Enlightenment is, in part, the foundation of modernity and its approach to science, knowledge, and belief. As such, there is an enormous quantity of written works regarding the Enlightenment. Francis Schaeffer also has a plethora of sources, books, and other informational repositories to his name. However, one aspect that has not been studied nearly as in depth as it could, is the relationship between the Enlightenment thinking and Francis' Schaeffer's views on the progressive nature of man. The Enlightenment is founded on the idea that mankind will progress towards a sort of utopian society completely on his own.<sup>9</sup> This view of mankind is incredibly optimistic, self-centered, and antithetical to the very heart of Schaeffer's ideals. Therefore, the primary significance of this research is that it examines many of the founding precepts of the Enlightenment and modernity in light of Schaeffer's own work.

The Enlightenment was largely an intellectual response, a rebellion against the system of hierarchical authority. Enlightenment thinkers angered by the wrongdoings and injustices that had occurred as result of the system, and believed that man's reason was all that was needed to free him from said events. Voltaire demonstrated his cynicism regarding the ability of organized religious institutions and hierarchical authority in general, to fairly lead the world to betterment in many statements such as, "It must once again be acknowledged that history in general is a collection of crimes, follies, and misfortunes, among which we have now and then met with a few virtues, and some happy times; as we sometimes see a few scattered huts in a barren desert."<sup>10</sup> He is especially critical of the Middle Ages, a time in which the church, when organized

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<sup>9</sup> Condorcet Marquis, *Outlines of an Historical View of the Progress of the Human Mind* (Philadelphia, 1796), 10, Liberty Fund, <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/1669> (accessed July 10, 2011).

<sup>10</sup> Voltaire, *The Portable Enlightenment reader: In Defense of Modernity* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 371.

religion, was the preeminent authority. Mankind lived in a very hierarchical system at the time, and Voltaire is incredibly critical of this system based on authority of one man above another.<sup>11</sup> It is largely this old framework that the Enlightenment thinkers blamed for the wrongdoing in the world. The Enlightenment was critical of religion, government, and any hierarchical authority in general.<sup>12</sup>

This hatred of hierarchical authority led to a movement towards individuality and autonomy that are so key to humanism. “When the human mind emerged from barbarism, it found itself in a kind of childhood, eager to accumulate ideas yet incapable at first of acquiring those . . . because the intellectual faculties had been for so long in a sluggish state . . .”<sup>13</sup> says D’Alembert, an essential Enlightenment figure who devoted much of his work to the *Encyclopedie*.<sup>14</sup> In other words, mankind was emerging from a lower mental state and inferior way of thinking and was slowly gaining the ability to think for itself, slowly progressing. Diderot also stated that his work on the *Encyclopedie* was to disseminate knowledge, and in so doing, promote Enlightenment.<sup>15</sup> The philosophers and thinkers of the Enlightenment largely blamed mankind’s deprived and sad state on their lack of mental development, their lack of Enlightenment due to the suppression of the authoritarian system under which they lived.<sup>16</sup> The rebellion against this system had many results, but two are of primary concern. Firstly, it placed mankind

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 371.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 371.

<sup>13</sup> Jean D’Alembert, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader: The Human Mind Emerged from Barbarism* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 7.

<sup>14</sup> D’Alembert, 7.

<sup>15</sup> Denis Diderot, "Encyclopedia." *The Encyclopedia of Diderot & d’Alembert Collaborative Translation Project*. Translated by Philip Stewart. Ann Arbor: MPublishing, University of Michigan Library, 2002. <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.did2222.0000.004> (accessed [fill in today's date in the form April 18, 2009 and remove square brackets]). Originally published as "Encyclopédie," *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, 5:635–648A (Paris, 1755).

<sup>16</sup> Baron D’Holback *Good Sense* (Public Domain Books, 2010), chap. Intro, Kindle Edition.

at the center of importance and makes him solely responsible for his own actions, mental state, and wellbeing. Secondly, it led to the belief that mankind was capable of progressing to a better state of being through his own efforts. It was largely man's reluctance to take responsibility for his own thoughts, and the stifling hand of authority that kept man in this pathetic state, if the Enlightenment thinkers are to be believed.

To Immanuel Kant, this means that mankind is to blame for his state. According to him, all that man needs is freedom, freedom to utilize his own reason.<sup>17</sup> It is because man is lazy and afraid to step out into the great unknown, and afraid to make decisions for himself that progress is limited. Man is willing to let others make his decisions for him because he is afraid to take responsibility for his own thoughts and actions. The hierarchical system of authority both enslaved man, and freed him from the responsibility of making his own decisions.<sup>18</sup> Man is capable of much more, capable of enlightening himself if only he would throw off the comfortable burden of hierarchical authority, or "self-incurred tutelage."<sup>19</sup> Because of this, Kant looked upon his own age with partial optimism: "If we asked, 'Do we now live in an enlightened age?' the answer is, 'No,' but we do live in an age of enlightenment."<sup>20</sup> He is quite clear that he viewed his own time as an era of the breaking of bonds. His was a time when the old system of authority was being torn down, and replaced by individual authority.<sup>21</sup>

But what exactly is Enlightenment, and what is self-incurred tutelage? "Tutelage is man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another," as

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<sup>17</sup> Kant, 286.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 286.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 286.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 290-291.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 290-291.

Kant would say.<sup>22</sup> Enlightenment is essentially freedom from this tutelage. The Enlightenment was largely an intellectual movement against hierarchical and religious authority and superstition. Where once individuals might have been expected to simply accept the authority of the church or standing political institutions, the Enlightenment called this authority into question. The individual was to question everything. Nothing, no standard, precept, or idea was off limits. Everything faced critical inspection, was subjected to question, and bowed to the inquisition of reason. The single most important element of the Enlightenment, matched only in importance by autonomy of mankind, was mankind's ability to reason. It is this from this ability to think and reason that an earlier founder of Enlightenment thinking found his proof for individual existence and significance. Descartes's famous statement, "I think therefore I am," embodies this sentiment perfectly.<sup>23</sup> Autonomous individuality follows reason in importance. According to Enlightenment ideals, the individual is the most important aspect; all purpose, truth, and meaning come from the individual.<sup>24</sup> Providence, while providing mankind with the ability to reason, apparently expects mankind to use this ability on his own.

Modernity as related to the Enlightenment is difficult to define exactly, especially since it can mean so many different things depending on context and the exact timeline. In this context, modernity will primarily refer to the worldview that considers human reason to be the single most important aspect as this is the most substantial ground shared

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 286.

<sup>23</sup> Rene Descartes, *The Portable Enlightenment reader*: "I think, therefore I am . . ." (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 184.

<sup>24</sup> Kramnick, *VI-XV*.

by both the Enlightenment and modernity.<sup>25</sup> The beginning of modernity is also difficult to place, and while Toulmin proposes the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century might be a safe and well supported starting point, other authors place it as much as one hundred years later or two hundred years earlier.<sup>26</sup> For the purpose of this essay, the exact starting date is not critical as the origins of modernity are not strictly limited to a specific century, but much of the framework was established during the Enlightenment period.<sup>27</sup> Several elements characterize the modernist viewpoint. First, nature is considered to be governed by fixed laws. Second, the most critical component of humanity is “its capacity for rational thought or action.”<sup>28</sup> The third aspect is belief in the ability of human beings to establish their own societies through their own reason. The final aspect is the belief in a dichotomy between the rational and emotional aspects of humanity.<sup>29</sup> Modernity admits that human beings have both emotions, and reason within them. However, emotions distort reason, and are therefore considered harmful to rational enquiry. As such, the most direct connection between the Enlightenment and modernity is the importance regarding, necessity of, and optimism about man’s ability to reason.<sup>30</sup>

Schaeffer clearly understood the goals of the Enlightenment as well as the ensuing consequences. “The Utopian dream of the Enlightenment can be summed up by five words: reason, nature, happiness, progress, and liberty,”<sup>31</sup> Schaeffer argues that these concepts were not merely an attempt at progressing the human race, but also capable of dismantling the Christian faith if handled incorrectly. The Enlightenment stood to tear

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<sup>25</sup> Toulmin, 111.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-9.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 110-111.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 110-100.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 113-115.

<sup>31</sup> Schaeffer, “A Christian Manifesto,” 148.

down everything the earlier Protestant Reformation had accomplished.<sup>32</sup> Francis Schaeffer points out certain errors in the logic of the Enlightenment thinkers. The first is their all-or-nothing approach of throwing everything out in one large pile. Schaeffer would argue that, while their rejection of religious authority may have had some validity, the complete disassociation with God's authority was unnecessary. Man was not just rebelling against the inability to think for himself, but the ultimate authority. Subsequently, mankind became the ultimate authority.<sup>33</sup> Schaeffer argues that belief in God creates a rational basis for seeking out answers and knowledge, and does so more thoroughly than would a humanistic foundation; therefore accomplishing some of the goals of the Enlightenment without destroying the religious foundation.<sup>34</sup> While the argument for the existence of God is an entirely different issue, this is Schaeffer's belief, and the fact remains that the Enlightenment thinkers discarded the notion of an ultimate authority all too easily, and while they did not necessarily reject the existence of God, He became a far less important figure to them.

One example of a religious aspect that could have been abandoned without entirely rejecting God as the ultimate authority would have been superstition. Though Voltaire describes superstition as a "matter for the doctor's discretion," he does list some examples of what he believed superstition to be.<sup>35</sup> Among others he lists the belief in magic, communication with the devil, and sorcerers.<sup>36</sup> In general, Voltaire seems to place anything of mystical nature in the category of superstition, and to some extent this

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 362.

<sup>34</sup> Francis Schaeffer, "How should we then Live," *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: A Christian View of the West*. 2nd ed. (Illinois: Crossway Books, 1985), 386.

<sup>35</sup> Voltaire, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader: Reflections on Religion*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 115-133.

<sup>36</sup> Voltaire, *Reflections on Religion*, 127-128.

includes religion. In truth, probably a good deal of what Voltaire called superstition should have been removed from the church. The most harmful element of superstition; however, was not the specific beliefs but the general mindset. Superstitious thinking was antithetical to reason, and therefore should be held in check in the general populace, and eliminated if possible.<sup>37</sup> Schaeffer would not disagree that the removal of unreasonable and superstitious thinking would be a good thing, as Schaeffer himself advocated the importance of reasonable faith.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, he would not agree that religion, the belief in miracles, or the existence of spiritual beings should be considered superstition.

Schaeffer's commitment to the Christian faith is evident and explicit throughout his writing. It could be said that Schaeffer held to five primary principles regarding the Christian faith: truth is absolute, the Christian faith is rational but rational faith is not the same as rationalistic humanism, the world should be seen in terms of worldviews, and the ultimate authority of Jesus Christ.<sup>39</sup> In regards to the realism of truth, Schaeffer means that the Christian faith must be in line with what is real and true. Christian faith must align to the objective reality that is, and not some abstract notion of truth.<sup>40</sup> Secondly, Schaeffer believed that the Christian faith was reasonable in that it could be believed on the basis of reason and not just blind faith. While faith is not just an activity of the mind and reason, it is not necessary to abandon these to affirm Christianity.<sup>41</sup> While Schaeffer argues that Christianity is rational in that it does not contradict sound reason, it is not rationalistic in the humanistic sense which would make mankind the most important

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 128-129.

<sup>38</sup> Eduardo J. Echeverria, "The Christian faith as a way of life: in appreciation of Francis Schaeffer (on the fiftieth anniversary of L'Abri Fellowship)," *Evangelical Quarterly* 79, no. 3 (July 2007): 2, Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed August 29, 2011).

<sup>39</sup> Echeverria, 2-5.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

aspect. On the contrary, though the Christian faith is rational, God is the centerpiece.<sup>42</sup>

Schaeffer also considered it important to grasp people and their belief systems as a whole. That is, everyone holds any number of presuppositions about life that they might not even be aware of. These presuppositions form their worldview, and this worldview shapes the way they think.<sup>43</sup> Schaeffer does not allow Christianity to become a mere instructor of morality; according to him Christ and His teachings must inundate a person on every level. The reasonable belief in Christ should shape a person's worldview and interaction with the rest of the world. This is not an uninvolved creator, but a personal Savior and Lord to which we should dedicate our lives.<sup>44</sup>

In addition to these five tenants, Schaeffer espouses two additional tenants of the Christian worldview that are nonnegotiable and logically follow. These are the fallenness of man, and the redemption of man through Christ.<sup>45</sup> Together, these challenge the very basis of the Enlightenment. Schaeffer believed that man as a whole being (thus including his ability to reason) was fallen and corrupted by his sinful nature. Because of this, Christ is the only one who can redeem man, and consequently is the ultimate authority, even above man's ability to reason.<sup>46</sup>

Schaeffer therefore argues that the establishment of man as the center of the universe and existence carries another complication. This is a problem that leads to impassible consequences; if mankind is the paragon of existence, then progress is limited by his level of perfection. Even if mankind attained the utmost perfection possible for a

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-9.

material being, even then humanity would eventually find itself restricted to some extent. The pitfall here is that this limitation necessarily means that mankind and his perfection are finite, they are limited. In the humanist worldview, there is no conceivable way to circumvent this problem.<sup>47</sup> The sad fact of the matter is that even if mankind were to reach a perfect state, it is hard to tell what limits would exist for man in that state. If mankind is the measure, he is also the limit. If an Ultimate Creator is the measure, then the measure of perfection is both infinite and unachievable by man alone.

### **Body**

One of the areas most dramatically affected by Enlightenment philosophy was religion. Enlightenment thinkers largely held to two concepts regarding religion: religion exists solely for the sake of containing mankind (making him moral and peaceful), and all religion is the same in that it teaches man to be moral. According to Voltaire, "Religion teaches the same principles of morality to all nations, without exception . . ."<sup>48</sup> Voltaire argues that though some religions are bizarre and even nonsensical in his estimation, they all teach the same underlying principles.

Consequently, he does not condone the spread any particular religion through missionary work; if all religions are the same, then no people group has the right to tell another that their religion is incorrect.<sup>49</sup> Voltaire goes so far as to say that any part of religion that does not work toward the goal of causing man to seek after virtue (to

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<sup>47</sup> Schaeffer, "How should we then Live," 361.

<sup>48</sup> Francois Voltaire, *The Portable Voltaire* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), 375.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 375.

progress), should be considered dangerous, which would include the idea that man (especially in regards to his ability to reason) is a fallen creature.<sup>50</sup>

Probably many of the things Voltaire wanted to see destroyed about organized religion were terrible, especially the mixture of politics and religion. Voltaire criticized this state-established and authoritative religion; religion should only exist to further man's enlightenment, and any institution that does otherwise can only be a disservice to mankind.<sup>51</sup> Voltaire and many of the Enlightenment thinkers held to a modified form of Christianity known as Deism. Deists generally claimed to believe in God, but as a "watchmaker," someone who created the world but is no longer involved with it.<sup>52</sup> The level of religious belief did vary from individual to individual. During this time religious belief in God was still widely accepted, and Deism was not extremely popular, let alone atheism. As indicated by some of Voltaire's own writings, many "deists" may have actually been atheists who pretended to have some religious convictions in order to avoid scrutiny. Others, such as Turgot, held to a more profound belief in a creator: ". . . the only true God, the only God worthy of adoration, was known only in one corner of the earth . . ." <sup>53</sup> Turgot's convictions, clear and evident, clearly demonstrate that at least a few Enlightenment thinkers strongly believed in God.

With man as the central starting point, religion necessarily became of lesser importance and legitimacy. The Enlightenment thinkers again not only brought into question the concept of religious authority, but also the belief in God. While some Enlightenment thinkers did believe in a God, He was very different God from previous

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<sup>50</sup> Voltaire, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader*, 67.

<sup>51</sup> Kant, 290.

<sup>52</sup> Schaeffer, "A Christian Manifesto," 148.

<sup>53</sup> Meek, 46.

conceptions. Generally, the humanistic framework considered itself superior to religious doctrines, especially Christianity. The Enlightenment thinkers claimed that Christianity was a religion of blind faith and was completely unscientific. They considered much of religion to be harmful to reason and scientific progress.<sup>54</sup>

Without a God to turn to, mankind had to look inwards to find purpose; and look inward he did. Mankind attempted to find purpose and meaning in progress, in believing that mankind was improving, was getting better. One of the venues mankind explored to this end was evolution. Evolution can logically support this form of progress. When man eventually began to realize that his situation was hopeless, that he could not derive his purpose solely from himself, something was needed to fill this gap. Regardless of scientific debate, philosophically the theory of evolution alleviates much of the hopelessness created by humanism by creating an illusion of progress. The logical outcome of this is that mankind is the pinnacle of evolution, the ultimate biological entity; therefore validating the humanist worldview and the concept of progress.<sup>55</sup> This is, of course, a complete redefinition of the original idea of progress, but nonetheless an outcome of those same presuppositions.

Long before the popularization of Evolution, the Enlightenment perpetuated two primary views on the progressive nature of humanity. One is that humanity is advancing as a whole, while the individuals themselves do not change much. The other view, which is a little bit more optimistic and far less popular, maintains that mankind is progressing in its very nature (as individuals). Both are based on the humanistic view brought on by

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<sup>54</sup> Schaeffer, "How then should we Live," 354.

<sup>55</sup> Schaeffer, "How then should we Live," 371.

the Enlightenment, but the societal development model was probably more widely accepted.

Adam Ferguson was one such proponent of individual progression, but in a limited capacity.<sup>56</sup> Condorcet, a French philosopher and political scientist, was far more outspoken on the topic, and very clear about his beliefs:

. . . no bounds have been fixed on the improvement of human faculties; that the perfectibility of man is absolutely indefinite . . . has no other limit than the duration of the globe upon which nature has placed us . . . may doubtless be more or less rapid, but it can never retrograde . . .<sup>57</sup>

Which is so much to say that man as an individual has no limits to his perfectibility.

Condorcet seems to believe in a purely naturalistic universe, in which man is left fashion himself into whatever he so wishes. The only limit he places on human development is “the duration of the globe . . .” or basically until the planet ends.<sup>58</sup> Of course, not all philosophers or thinkers of this time would agree that human progression was infinite. Some believed that, individual progression occurred within certain limitations.<sup>59</sup>

Immanuel Kant, shows a slightly more skeptical view regarding individuals: “For any single individual to work himself out of the life under tutelage which has become almost his nature is very difficult. . .”<sup>60</sup> Essentially, Kant did not completely reject the idea of individual progression, but did reject the unlimited potential which Condorcet pushed. Hume is even more critical:

It is universally acknowledged that there is a great uniformity among the actions of men, in all nations and ages, and the human nature remains still the same, in its

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<sup>56</sup> Adam Ferguson, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader: Historical Picture of the Human Mind* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 381.

<sup>57</sup> Marquis, 10.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>59</sup> Eugene Heath and Vincezo Merolle *Adam Ferguson: History, Progress and Human Nature* (London: Pickering & Chatto Publishers, 2007), 178, Liberty Fund, <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/1790> (accessed July 10, 2011).

<sup>60</sup> Kant, 2.

principles and operations. The same motives always produce the same actions: The same events follow from the same causes. Ambition, avarice, self-love, vanity, friendship, generosity, public spirit: these passions, mixed in various degrees, and distributed through society, have been, from the beginning of the world, and still are, the source of all the actions and enterprises, which have ever been observed among mankind.<sup>61</sup>

After hearing Condorcet's incredibly optimistic view of mankind and the individual, Hume's outlook seems almost dreary. To say that man never really changes, that the same vices always persist from age to age, really does seem a more accurate description of mankind than to say that he is constantly improving.<sup>62</sup> Turgot would agree: "But what a spectacle the succession of men's opinions presents! I seek there for progress of the human mind, and I find virtually nothing but the history of its errors."<sup>63</sup>

Many of the Enlightenment thinkers believed that society progressed while the individual remained somewhat static. Adam Ferguson, though he believed in limited individual progression, believed that society had far more potential for progress.<sup>64</sup> Enlightenment thinkers did not only believe that society could progress technologically, or politically, but in every way. Kant believed that this slow process required only that individuals be free to reason for themselves, and that such a society would be perfectible in nature.<sup>65</sup> Voltaire and the French Revolution especially perpetuated this belief.<sup>66</sup> Condorcet, ever the optimist, recalls that society must pass through certain stages, as history has shown. Societies constantly change, but with every step some changes are made, and these changes inevitably lead "towards knowledge and happiness . . . to the

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<sup>61</sup> David Hume, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader: History as Guide* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 359.

<sup>62</sup> Hume, *History as Guide*, 359.

<sup>63</sup> Meek, 44.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>65</sup> Kant, 2.

<sup>66</sup> Schaeffer, "A Christian Manifesto," 148.

means of securing and of accelerating the still further progress, of which, from his nature, we may indulge the hope.<sup>67</sup> Condorcet, claiming to view society from a historical viewpoint, nonetheless takes a very optimistic viewpoint on human existence.

The claim that society's potential for progress was endless was a bold one. Adam Ferguson stated:

Individuals or nations might suffer from corruption and decay, but history, composed of individuals and nations, progresses incessantly . . . The human mind endowed with an instinct for perfection, as well as reason and other cognitive faculties, so that nations can progress. . .<sup>68</sup>

The truly amazing thing about this statement is that it takes into account the corruption and imperfection of individuals and societies, but claims that in spite of all of this, societies are always moving forwards, always moving towards perfection. The statement seems almost a contradiction in and of itself, but it embodies the belief of many Enlightenment thinkers.

Turgot is not reticent to admit that progress occurs at varying rates. Some nations might be “. . . brought to a standstill in the mist of their mediocrity . . .” while others might progress quickly; all of this depends on the circumstances of each nation.<sup>69</sup> Admittedly, nations suffer from both internal and external sources of imbalance, including war and conquest. Turgot though, calls it a way in which “Cultures and governments are enriched. . .”<sup>70</sup> He does not go so far as to say the conquest itself is a good thing, but his primary meaning is that even in conquest cultures and nations tend

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<sup>67</sup> Marquis, 9-10.

<sup>68</sup> Heath and Merolle, 178.

<sup>69</sup> Meek, 42-43.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

towards perfection and progress even through these tragedies.<sup>71</sup> Despite any such interpretations, Turgot believed that all nations will eventually work through stages from what he would call infancy, to what we might call, maturity.<sup>72</sup> No matter what happens, society moves closer and closer to perfection:

. . . Empires rise and fall . . . the arts and sciences are in turn discovered and perfected, in turn retarded and accelerated in their progress . . . yes in the midst of their ravages manners are softened, the human mind becomes more enlightened, and separate nations are brought closer to one another . . . and the whole human race, through alternate periods of rest and unrest . . . towards greater perfection.<sup>73</sup>

In regards to the system of law and government, Adam Smith is one of the clearest writers on the topic. He assumed that the betterment of a government and society from its more barbaric to its more advanced state is a natural progression and not necessarily something that can be forced.<sup>74</sup> He further promoted the idea that mankind passes through four stages from the “Age of Hunters,” to the “Age of Commerce.”<sup>75</sup> Adam Smith demonstrated a level of overconfidence in presuming he was living during the most advanced stage of society.

Beccaria, an Enlightenment author famous for his reformatory essay, *On Crime and Punishment*, demonstrated much the same sentiment as Adam Smith, with the exception that he also believed such progress could be augmented. Beccaria believed this typically slow process could be sped up through the use of “prudent laws,” to facilitate changes.<sup>76</sup> Adam Smith draws a connection between the justice of laws regarding crime and punishment and the level of societal development. “In the first stages of society,

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>74</sup> Smith, 196.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>76</sup> Cesare Beccaria, *An Essay on Crimes and Punishments* (Boston: Nabu Press, 2010), 8.

when government is very weak, no crimes are punished; the society has not sufficient strength to embolden it to intermeddle greatly in the affairs of individuals.”<sup>77</sup> Adam Smith believed, much as Beccaria did, that laws change with society progresses. In their most primitive state laws are no more than guidelines in a society, and later become extremely harsh with violent punishments. As a society grows and develops, the punishments become more equitable to the crimes, less harsh, and more balanced.<sup>78</sup> Both Smith and Beccaria seem to agree that the more developed a society becomes, punishments become more fair and humane.

Not everyone was so enthusiastic regarding the progress of society. Adam Ferguson, while a huge proponent of progress also believed that such progress was not necessarily self-sustaining: “This progress indeed is subject to interruption, and may come to a close, or give way to vicissitudes at any of its stages; but not more necessarily at the period of highest attainment than at any other.”<sup>79</sup> According to him, progress can be interrupted by any number of things. No one stage is necessarily more vulnerable, any generation can stall progress and “reverse and decline.”<sup>80</sup> In other words, forward progress takes intentional effort, just as reverse and decline requires only neglect.<sup>81</sup>

In this naturalistic system perpetuated by the Enlightenment, man was the paragon of existence, and God was no longer the only basis for morality. According to these humanists, morality could then come from one of a few sources. One of the most widely

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<sup>77</sup>Smith, 136.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>79</sup>Ferguson, 381.

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid.*, 381-382.

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid.*, 381-382.

held sources of morality was nature, and the morality created by nature was knowable through reason.<sup>82</sup> As one author put it:

To discover the true principles of Morality, men have no need of theology, of revelation, or of gods: They have need only of common sense. . . They have only to commune with themselves, to reflect upon their own nature, to consider the objects of society, and of individuals, who compose it; and they will easily perceive, that virtue is advantageous, and vice disadvantageous to themselves.<sup>83</sup>

So much as to say that man needs only his own faculties, his own reason to derive what morality is and what he should live by. Of course the author was taking for granted that the society he himself was living in was based on Christian principles.

Schaeffer is quick to refute these various arguments and assertions. In all fairness, Schaeffer benefited from the advantage of hindsight; that is to say, he was able to observe how the ideals of Enlightenment played out over time. The results, according to him, are not good. The attitude of the Enlightenment humanists in looking down on those who believed in God, seem to have reaped its own pessimism:

This superior attitude, however, is strange, because one of the most striking developments in the last half-century is the growth of a profound pessimism among both well-educated and less-educated people. The thinkers in our society have been admitting for a long time that they have no final answers at all.<sup>84</sup>

In so many words, the humanist “religion” failed, and horribly so. The ideals so dearly held by Voltaire, Kant, and Hume lead to a hopeless system. The optimism of what humanity could accomplish came to a very empty end, unfortunately, this end was not to be realized for some time. During the time of these Enlightenment thinkers, there was still hope that these tenants could work. Now, hundreds of years later, many of those in

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<sup>82</sup>David Hume, *A Treatise of Human nature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), Part I, Sec I. Kindle Edition.

<sup>83</sup>D’Holback, chap. Intro.

<sup>84</sup>Schaeffer, “How then should we Live,” 354.

the same school of thought admit that many of the answers they expected to find, simply are not attainable.<sup>85</sup> Mankind discovered that his own reason was simply not an adequate basis for hope. When these Rationalists threw out the existence of God, they inevitably created a world in which, when brought to its logical conclusion: “. . . life is both meaningless and terrifying.”<sup>86</sup> This is not just Schaeffer’s opinion, the rationalistic framework failed so horribly that mankind extended its attempt to find answers for life aside from God that it turned away from the rational viewpoint of the Enlightenment. Mankind realized that reason was not adequate, and desperately reached out in hope for what we now know as irrationalism, or postmodernism.<sup>87</sup>

Schaeffer is not alone in these assertions, and the arrival of postmodernism is self-evident in society today. While not the primary topic of investigation, it should be briefly noted that modernism has failed not only in the eyes of modern Christian apologists and theologians, but also in that of many secular thinkers and philosophers today. In Stephen Toulmin’s *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*, Professor Toulmin berates the concept of modernity and its failure, condemning it as a failed attempt:

Today, the program of Modernity – even the very *concept* – no longer carries anything like the same conviction. If an historical era is ending, it is the era of Modernity itself. Rather than our being free to assume that the tide of Modernity still flows strongly, and that its momentum will carry us into a new and better world, our present position is less comfortable. What looked in the 19<sup>th</sup> century like an irresistible river has disappeared in the sand, and we seem to have run aground. Far from extrapolating confidently into the social and cultural future, we are now stranded and uncertain of our location. The very project of Modernity thus seems to have lost momentum, and we need to fashion a successor program.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 355

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 355.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 374.

<sup>88</sup> Toulmin, 3.

Toulmin further proclaims that the “. . . rationalist dream was always illusory. . .” and that the rejection of Modernity “. . . marks our awakening from a transient, ambiguous daydream.”<sup>89</sup> Essentially, Toulmin rejects the idea of rationalism and Modernity as unrealistic ideas. While Toulmin’s postmodernist framework is not compatible with Schaeffer’s Christian worldview, this is one area in which they agree.

Schaeffer is specific in refuting the Enlightenment ideas regarding religion. Schaeffer does not agree with Voltaire’s conception of religion as merely a tool, nor the belief that all religion is essentially the same. True religion, true Christianity, must be based on truth, and therefore all religions are not necessarily true just because they teach good morals.<sup>90</sup> When Schaeffer speaks of God he does not mean merely the idea of God, some vague concept to unify mankind, but the God.<sup>91</sup> Nor is He the detached watchmaker of the Deists.<sup>92</sup> Schaeffer is a strong proponent of absolutes and the antithesis. Schaeffer defines absolutes as “A concept which is not modifiable by factors such as culture, individual psychology or circumstances, but which is perfect and unchangeable.”<sup>93</sup> In other words, absolutes are truths that do not change, ever. Antithesis is a basic principle which states two opposing concepts cannot both be true at the same time.<sup>94</sup> According to Schaeffer, the existence of absolutes necessitates antithesis.<sup>95</sup> Subsequently, if Francis Schaeffer is to be believed, all religion cannot be the same merely because it teaches morals and keeps mankind contained. A true religion,

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<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>90</sup> Francis Schaeffer, “He is there and He is not Silent,” *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: A Christian View of the West*. 2nd ed. (Illinois: Crossway Books, 1985), 156-157.

<sup>91</sup> Schaeffer, “He is there and He is not Silent,” 158.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 386.

<sup>93</sup> Schaeffer, “The God Who is There,” *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: A Christian View of the West*. 2nd ed. (Illinois: Crossway Books, 1985), 200.

<sup>94</sup> Schaeffer, “The God Who is There,” 386.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

then would not only teach morals, but should be based on reality. If it is not based on truth and reality, then it has no absolute foundation. Many religions are completely antithetical in their very basis and thus incompatible. If religion and morality proceed from some absolute source, such as God, then all religions cannot be equal in truth, though they may all attempt to teach some form of reality. If mankind tries to usurp God's position and choose what religion is, and subsequently religion, then they have no firm or unchanging basis. Religion and morality would then be dictated by the whims of man's ability to reason.<sup>96</sup>

In regards to the assertion that religion is harmful to scientific progress, Schaeffer also disagrees. Author Alister McGrath concurs with Schaeffer. On the one hand McGrath concedes that religion as a whole is hard to categorize in its relation to science as religion is an incredibly diverse concept.<sup>97</sup> Even Christianity has several different sects and denominations that vary markedly in their approach to science.<sup>98</sup> Historically, science and religion have been viewed as in conflict, but McGrath does not believe this must necessarily be the case.<sup>99</sup> It is possible that a number of apparent conflicts resulted from mistaken beliefs and misinterpretations of scriptures.<sup>100</sup> Also, a large number of apparent conflicts between Christianity and science may only appear to be conflicts, and may later be resolved through a greater scientific understanding.<sup>101</sup> In fact, belief in God can actually motivate people to understand the natural world. Many times the belief in a Creator allows people to believe that there should be a natural order the universe that is

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<sup>96</sup> Schaeffer, "He is there and He is not Silent," 156-157.

<sup>97</sup> Alister McGrath, *Science & Religion: An Introduction* (Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 1999), 28-29, eBook Collection, EBSCOhost (accessed October 18, 2011).

<sup>98</sup> McGrath, 44-45.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 44-45.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

understandable, which causes them to pursue knowledge and understanding relentlessly. Religious faith need not be an unreasonable thing. McGrath argues that one can logically believe in God and pursue knowledge in a rational manner.<sup>102</sup>

Furthermore, Schaeffer does not believe Evolution provides a sturdy basis for progress and significance. So far, time has not brought great “Enlightenment” to humanity through the doctrine of Evolution. Evolution may bring with it the possibility of progress, but progress towards no definite or necessarily good end. With no intelligence to guide the situation, evolution is random chance, part of a system without any final or absolute value for mankind over any other animal.<sup>103</sup> We may cling to our superiority over other life forms, but there is no inherent value given us; we are not made in the image of God, we have no soul, and in the end we are just advanced creations of random biology.

A further complication of the evolutionary framework is the devaluing of human life. In this framework man may be an advanced animal, but still an animal. As such, there is no ultimate way to assign more value to his life than that of a lab rat.<sup>104</sup> It is likely even Voltaire, would deny that any number of atrocities have been committed under the Evolutionary belief system.<sup>105</sup> The acts of tyrants such as Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin are the most obvious examples, but Schaeffer claims there are more subtle atrocities justifiable by the evolutionary worldview that are more prevalent to society.<sup>106</sup> Abortion, euthanasia, and even assisted suicide could easily be included in this list.

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<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 53-54.

<sup>103</sup> Schaeffer, “How then should we Live,” 356.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 383.

<sup>105</sup> Voltaire, *The Portable Enlightenment Reader*, 376.

<sup>106</sup> Francis Schaeffer, “What Happened to the Human Race,” *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer: A Christian View of the West*. 2nd ed. (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1985), 345.

These are all practices that were once considered morally wrong, but have since become more acceptable (to varying degrees) in the modern worldview. In this naturalistic framework, it is man who decides what the value of human life is, and when his opinion changes, so does the value of life.<sup>107</sup>

In addition to removing the sanctity of life as an absolute principle, morality as a whole was left without concrete basis. Just as the rest of humanism leaves mankind without a solid base for morality, so does Evolution. Man, though he may want to believe there is some form of morality, is left with only a pittance of what he once had. The truth is, man is left with a form of relative morality, a form of changing morality.<sup>108</sup> Many cling to the good nature of mankind. Many who hold to the Enlightenment way of thinking believe that mankind will choose to do the right thing, that given reason and freedom he will choose to find the right path and seek out the moral high ground. The sad fact of the matter, so well pointed out by Francis Schaeffer, is that the world is left without an unchanging set of guidelines to which it can cling. No matter how badly people may wish to believe that mankind is inherently good, his morality is subject to change, and change it will.<sup>109</sup>

In the end, morality and significance are placed on an altar of humanism, and sacrificed to the god of reason for nothing more than an illusion of progress. Even though the theory of Evolution is intended to demonstrate the progressive nature of humanity, in the end it is only an empty promise. While it gives some people a sense of

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<sup>107</sup> Schaeffer, "How then should we Live," 353-356.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 373.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 356.

purpose, in the end even this purpose is limited.<sup>110</sup> While proponents of a humanistic and evolutionary worldview might claim that their views are superior to those of Christians, in the end the hope for purpose is at least as mystical a jump of faith. Schaeffer claims that while such beliefs do make people feel superior to other life forms, the problem is that this superiority is really only a matter of complexity. The end result is that there is no real such thing as superiority as we would like to think of it.<sup>111</sup> Mankind is actually in a lower and more pathetic state than the rest of creation: “Those things that make him a person – hope of purpose and significance, love, notions of morality and rationality and beauty – are ultimately unfulfillable and are thus meaningless.”<sup>112</sup> In other words, everything mankind looks to for significance is unobtainable, and mankind is left in a hopeless state.

The Evolutionary framework simply does not grant man the purpose he is so desperately searching for. The Christian worldview so casually thrown away by the humanist worldview, provides for purpose despite man’s finite nature. While within this framework man is a created and finite being, it gives him a purpose and significance. Man is specifically created in God’s image. Each person is unique and qualitatively more special than the rest of creation.<sup>113</sup>

Most of the critique in regards to humanities’ ability to progress as individuals is meted out long before Schaeffer’s response. In fact, he hardly needs to respond as many of the Enlightenment thinkers were already cynical about the individual’s potential.

Schaeffer’s primary argument is similar to Hume’s in many respects. His primary

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<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 371.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 371.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 372

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 383.

critique is, man still exhibits the same base nature he always has. While civil government may bridle it to some extent, it is still evident within the individual.<sup>114</sup>

For all of Schaeffer's disagreements with Enlightenment ideals, he would probably not disagree with the idea of movement towards civilization. While he would object to any number of assertions regarding society's ability to progress, he would not likely object to the assertion that societies and civilizations must start from more barbaric states, and in time, tend to build more advanced and complex civilizations. However, there are a few points at which Schaeffer would strongly disagree with our Enlightenment thinkers.

He would object to the ability of civilizations to progress infinitely. This objection was already visited once in regards to the progress of individuals; however, it also relates to society as a whole. Many of the Enlightenment thinkers believed that the individual can exist in a less than perfect state while society can move towards perfection. However, Schaeffer would point out that society is composed of individuals. These individuals will always be finite, limited in their own ability. If they can never reach a state of ultimate perfection due to their finite nature, than neither can a society built on these individuals. A society based on man as the center will always be limited, limited by its pieces, and because of this, progress as a society cannot be infinite.<sup>115</sup>

The assertion that societies always progress towards betterment, even in war, devastation, and decay, hardly seems to require much refutation. Nevertheless, the assertion does not escape Schaeffer's critique. It is true that technology has tended to

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<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 353.

<sup>115</sup> Schaeffer, "Whatever Happened to the Human Race," 361.

advance in a forward motion so far, but just because technology is progressing, does not mean that society is necessarily getting better. Nor does the increasing capacity of society necessarily indicate improvement. Man has done good things with this technology, but he has done bad with it as well.<sup>116</sup>

Furthermore, how can a society be measured if not by how it treats the individual members, Schaeffer asks.<sup>117</sup> A society built on man and his ability to reason will often excuse morally objectionable actions, sacrificing the individual for the sake of the whole. A previous mentioned, Hitler and his regime is one such example. Though now the world at large condemns most of their actions, it must be taken into account that much of what was done, was done in the name of scientific and more significantly, societal progress. Many of the scientists working on such projects probably believed they were doing the right thing for their country and people. They believed their race was superior, and therefore had the right to treat others as their inferiors. The West has in some case, taken lesser, but still morally objectionable actions for the sake of society including abortion and eugenics.<sup>118</sup>

To supplement Schaeffer's argument, author J. Bury makes some more pragmatic arguments against modernism. The first objection is that, while humanity is obviously capable of movement which some would call progress, such progress is based completely on human willpower and decision making. It is quite possible that humanity is moving in the right direction, but who is to say what "right" really is? It is humanity alone that defines what is progression and what is regression according to the humanistic

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<sup>116</sup> Schaeffer, "Pollution and the Death of Man," 57-61.

<sup>117</sup> Schaeffer, "Whatever happened to the Human Race," 281.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 281-301.

worldview. The optimism of modernists and Enlightenment thinkers is based, according to Bury, on our experience so far, and as human beings our experience is extremely limited.<sup>119</sup> Furthermore, for the past few hundred years, society has been progressing, at least in regards to medicine, art, and technology. But do we have any real guarantee that this trend will continue? According to Bury we do not. It is conceivable that at some point in the future, we could come across a barrier to progress that we will not be able to overcome. Additionally, just because we perceive our movement as positive progress, does not mean that this is necessarily the case. If we have only ourselves to guide us, then we have no guarantees. It is possible that, though we are advancing in many ways, we are actually moving towards the opposite of utopian future. We have no guarantee against this end, and only our limited experience to say otherwise.<sup>120</sup>

Probably three of the best practical and historical examples of the differences that each of these views led to is the American Revolution, the English Bloodless Revolution, and the French Revolution. All three had some basis in the Enlightenment way of thinking, but the French Revolution most strongly so. The French Revolution not only embraced many of its ideals, but completely rejected the Christian base as well. Just as the Enlightenment tried to build its foundation on a basis without Christianity, so did the French Revolution.<sup>121</sup> The result was ugly, violent, and utterly terrifying. The French National Assembly's attempt at forging a new government fell prey to the same violence that destroyed the monarchy.<sup>122</sup> As the failure of the Revolution became more and more apparent, the massacres became more and more frequent. In September of 1792 alone

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<sup>119</sup> J. Bury, *The Idea of Progress* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2008), 6.

<sup>120</sup> Bury, 6.

<sup>121</sup> Schaeffer, "A Christian Manifesto," 149.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

1,300 prisoners were executed by the contemporary government; by the end, at least 40,000 people, peasants, and many innocents faced death for various charges.<sup>123</sup>

Ironically, the progenitor of these executions was himself executed a couple of years later.<sup>124</sup> The Humanistic base, so promising of progress, brought only death, gory executions, and chaos to some of its most stringent believers. The French Revolution is still probably one of the ugliest revolutions the world has ever seen.

Much of the reason for the violence of the French Revolution was that it was based on relative morality. Because humanism has no absolute grounding for morality, the means become justifiable to bring some end. This arbitrary morality is what guided the French Revolution, and the gory result speaks for itself.<sup>125</sup>

On the other hand, the American Revolution was far less chaotic, governments did not change every few months, and the American government did not massacre civilians. The new government forged by the American people peacefully transitioned to a new government when the original documents proved untenable. Likewise, England's Bloodless Revolution occurred without the violent chaos of the French Revolution. The common factor for these two revolutions is that they were both based on the Protestant Reformation. That is to say, both countries had roots in Christian thinking, and neither abandoned it. Because of this, both had firm foundations to base their morality and subsequently new governing systems on. Both of these took place far less violently, far less chaotically, with far more honor, and with far clearer resolutions.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 149-150.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the results of two very different viewpoints have now shown themselves in practicality as to what their results can be. The French Revolution, based on the Enlightenment, and the American Revolution based on a biblical worldview. Francis Schaeffer countered the Enlightenment doctrine of progress and human autonomy at every turn. Granted he had the advantage of hindsight, but he used it very wisely. The inception of modernity, and the ideas it brings with it face a clear and logical onslaught from Schaeffer. His defense of Christian ideals in the face of secular humanism, ironically based in logic and reason, readily disprove many of the foundational arguments of the Enlightenment. Many more have simply been disproven with time.

In the end, Schaeffer draws some clear conclusions. First, mankind may progress technologically, but not in his nature. Mankind is a fallen being, whose humanity causes both him and his society to make bad decisions, bad choices, and to regress as often as progress in building society. Society may become larger and more complex, but still it is composed of fallen humans. Morality is something that must be built on a foundation more solid than man, or it is subject to relativity and change at the will of the many, or sometimes the few if they are stronger. The progression of society is not infinite, as it is built by finite beings. Mankind is not his own hope, and by himself cannot hope for salvation. However, the real hope is in the God Schaeffer so clearly believes in. Through reasonable belief and pursuit of the ideals laid down by this God in nature, and the revealed Word of the Bible, Schaeffer believes that man can find hope, purpose, and morality. Man, made in the image of the Creator, is finite, lost, and broken. However,

this man has someone else to look to besides himself for hope. Even many of the Enlightenment thinkers admitted that man always exhibited some of the same vices, but they had no real solution for this. Schaeffer offers a realistic examination of man, and a realistic solution. In the end, Schaeffer offers the far more hopeful argument, the sounder basis for the foundation of humanity.

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