

FOUNDED UPON ROCK: PART 9:  
THE BEGINNING OF THE AGE OF REVOLUTION AND THE INITIAL RESPONSE  
THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY BEFORE THE CATAclysm

I. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries featured revolutions on many fronts, intellectual, technological, economic and political. In the midst of all of them, the Church tried to balance the forces and separate the wheat from the chaff.

A. Intellectually, the Enlightenment Era and then the response in the Romantic movement, emphasized one aspect of human nature, while the Church promoted a faith that emphasized the whole.

1. The Enlightenment Era tried to emphasize scientific knowledge and specialization in order to have a more rational and technologically developed society. This development did increase scientific knowledge and the ability to solve technical problems. However, there was a strong tendency to reduce all knowledge to scientifically testable and quantifiable fields and to diminish the role of the deepest longings of humanity, such as love, faith, and beauty.

2. In reaction to the Enlightenment Era's excessive focus on the abstract and the merely rational, the Romantic movement emphasized the role of such things as sentiment, beauty and individual vision. This movement worked as a counterbalance to the reductionism of the Enlightenment Era. However, there could be an excessive emphasis either upon subjective experience or upon nationalism to the exclusion of universal norms.

3. After some stumbling in the Galileo affair, the Church supported the rightful advancements of science, while emphasizes the deeper role of faith. She recognized the importance of sentiment, emotion and national identity, but also the universal truths that guide us.

B. The rapid advance of technology transformed the economic sphere as increased trade and productivity lead to vastly greater wealth and the ability to specialize, but also to an increased sense of isolation and helplessness in the midst of the powers of the world.

1. During the eighteenth century, colonies were often seen as primarily ways of increasing trade and gaining resources. The result could be a mutually beneficial trade, as with the American and later Canadian and Australian colonies of the British Empire. But there could also be exploitation of natives and a sense of commerce as more important than anything else.

2. Starting with Adam Smith's 1776 work The Wealth of Nations, there was an increased understanding that free trade and specialization can be mutually

beneficial to everyone. However, as even Adam Smith understood, economic powers can be as oppressive as political ones; and specialization can lead to a crabbed spirit.

3. The conquest of colonies in the New World, along with trade in Africa, led to a new increase in slavery, which had almost disappeared from Europe during the Middle Ages. The Popes and most of the missionaries opposed slavery, but their decrees were often ignored in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. This struggle for freedom was largely, although not exclusively, a Christian one.

4. With the Industrial Revolution, business and governments used technological and industrial developments, such as steam engines, railroads, mass production, and advancements in steel production to increase economic activity and wealth dramatically. Poverty became more of a solvable problem. And there were improvements in many ways such as the increased ability to feed people and travel safely. However, there was an increased sense of isolation, and greater vulnerability to unemployment, isolation and domination by great economic powers.

5. Secular philosophies such as materialist determinism, socialism and social Darwinism ignored the supernatural callings of humanity and instead sought to establish an earthly utopia or more powerful society.

6. The Church dealt with the new changes, first in piecemeal fashion, with denunciations of such things as socialism and usury. Then, in 1891, Pope Leo XIII issued a comprehensive statement on the just society entitled Rerum Novarum. That encyclical began a rich tradition of Church social teachings that is still growing today.

C. Politically, this era saw the rise of greater centralized power, both politically and economically. Against this centralized power, many revolutionary forces developed.

1. During the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, many monarchs fancied themselves as “enlightened despots,” which was considered a positive term. They did often give material help to the Church and other Christian denominations, but also often tried to dominate them.

2. Governments increasingly saw themselves as having a right and a duty to govern the economy and culture of their nations according to new philosophies, often secular in nature. At the same time, there were philosophies of human rights that govern governments (such as those used in the American Revolution), but also philosophies that emphasized government power, such as the writings of Thomas Hobbes or Karl Marx.

3. The American colonies and then Revolution created a new experiment with democracy and a government based upon philosophic principles. The result could be a government relying upon the virtue of the people and rights given by God. But there could also be a tendency to believe that majority opinion makes things right. The Church supported the idea of human rights and equality, but cautioned against beliefs that the faith and ecclesial government could be controlled by popular opinion.

4. The French Revolution attempted to destroy the old order, including the role of the Catholic faith in France and, by extension, in other countries. Then Napoleon arose and, despite an early concordat with the Church, tried to dominate the Church, not only in France, but in Rome itself. The conflict paradoxically increased the Church's freedom and prestige once Napoleon was overthrown.

6. The Greek people successfully fought for independence in the 1820s. The effort did lead to the liberation of Orthodox Christians from the Ottoman Empire and to more freedom for Christians in the entire Empire, and especially in the Holy Land, as that Empire sought British support. However, the issue of the Ottoman Empire would eventually lead to the Christian powers of Europe opposing each other. And the weakening power of the Ottoman Empire was the occasion for some horrific violence between Muslims and Christians in the Adriatic region and some Mediterranean islands.

7. In 1848, there were attempts at revolution in many European countries, including the Papal States. These revolutions were eventually put down, but the Papal States were fatally weakened as the Italian unification effort increased in strength. That unification effort would lead to the seizure of the Papal States in 1870, a move that paradoxically freed the Church for a more universal focus.

8. The Church's responses to the French revolution and the revolutions of 1848 made her seem to be an ally of the governments of Europe. That status did help increase her ability to engage in missionary work even in the Anglican British Empire. But it also led to an increased need to be seen also as a defender of the family and the working man.

D. Throughout all of these dramatic changes, there was an increased devotion to the sacred heart of Jesus and to Mary and to reverence for the Pope.

1. The publication of the visions of Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647 – 1690) regarding devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus made that devotion much more common. Pope Pius VI authoritatively approved of this devotion in 1794.

2. Marian apparitions in such places as Lourdes, Rue de Bac, La Salette, Knock and Robinson, Wisconsin (the latter approved by the local bishop in 2010) increased Marian devotions, as did Blessed Pope Pius's definition of the Immaculate Conception and rediscovery of St. Louis Marie de Montfort's book True Devotion to Mary.

3. The Pope's prestige seemed to be diminished by the domination of European monarchs and then by the French Revolution and Napoleon's imprisonment of Pope Pius VII. But, in the midst of a confusing world, people started looking more and more to the Pope as a fatherly figure and the one stable force in an ever changing world. The decline of the Bourbon monarchy's power in France and the Hapsburg power in Austria, along with the end of the Holy Roman Empire and later the Papal States, freed the papacy from reliance on secular powers. Even as Italians were preparing to invade Rome in 1870, the Vatican I Council confirmed the teaching of papal infallibility.

II. The seemingly rationalist vision of the Enlightenment Era became very powerful from latter half of the seventeenth century into the early nineteenth century.

A. The Enlightenment point of view emphasized such things as: (1) an increase in secular learning independent of faith; (2) attempts to rationalize all aspects of life and sometimes even a belief that there was a scientific explanation for all things; (3) a focus on increasing material prosperity more than increasing devotion; and (4) the growth of great political and economic powers.

- The attempts at advancing scientific understanding and solutions and increasing material prosperity and trade were not inherently atheistic, but there was a tendency towards skepticism about religion in general, and ideas of revelation in particular.

B . There was an attempt to promote the use of reason, and later using reason alone, in pursuing knowledge.

1. Even in the late fifteenth century, knowledge of science, particularly in navigation, building, and explosives, was increasing. This increased use of science did not in itself contradict anything about the faith. And in fact powerful clerics and even Popes were among the patrons of scientists.

2. For example, Fredrico Cesi (1585 – 1630), a citizen of the Papal States and the nephew of a cardinal, joined with some friends to establish the Academy of the Lynxes in 1603. The goal was to use careful observation to increase understanding of the sciences. Galileo Galilei joined the Academy in 1611. The

Academy did not survive Cesi's death. But, in 1847, Pope Pius IX revived it as the Pontifical Academy of the Sciences.

3. Nicolas Copernicus (1473 – 1543), a Polish monk, mathematician and scientist, proposed that the universe could be understood better by seeing the sun at the center, and the earth, other planets and the stars as circling around it. That view contradicted the common understanding that the earth was the center, an understanding that was based upon sense experience. He dedicated his great work, entitled On the Revolution of the Celestial Spheres to the Pope Paul III.

4. The controversy over Galileo Galilee's heliocentric proposal involved largely personality disputes and arguments over power that got in the way of a scientific debate.

a. Galileo Galilee (1564-1642) was a professor at the University of Padua and well known for his research on mechanics and motion. He took the recently invented telescope and used it to investigate the sky and outer space. In so doing, he discovered many new things, such as the mountains of the moon and the moons of Jupiter. His discoveries made him famous and even a celebrity in Rome.

b. Eventually, he proposed in clear terms that the earth must rotate around the sun. There were scientific opponents, most prominently Tycho Brahe and Francis Bacon, who held that the earth was the center.

c. The heliocentric (sun centered) view was controversial, and there was a papal investigation. The committee, headed by Cardinal (later Saint) Robert Bellarmine, concluded that Galileo's views were contrary to the most likely meaning of the Bible; and therefore, Cardinal Bellarmine told him that he should not continue advocating his theory as fact until and unless he could present definitive proof, which was not yet available.

d. For a time the compromise held. But later Galileo published his Dialogue of the Two Chief World Systems in 1632. That work insulted the proponents of the terra-centric (earth centered) view, and the Pope himself. At that Pope Urban VIII ordered a new trial for grave disobedience and disrespect. That trial held Galileo guilty and put him under house arrest at a villa.

e. The condemnation was certainly a serious blunder. But, as Blessed John Henry Newman pointed out in his Apologia Pro Vita Sua, it is the single case where Church authorities came into conflict with authentic science.

5. Francis Bacon (1561 – 1626) promoted using empirical research and experiments to test commonly understood views of the universe. He also argued that practical uses of science are more important than seeing them as reflections of divine order. He was also very much involved in English politics, becoming for a time Attorney General of Britain. In the latter role, he promoted a view that one can ascertain good legal principles from empirical research into the past. In his literary works, he argued that there is no conflict between science and religion.

6. Sir Isaac Newton (1643 – 1727) used calculus and principles of physics to explain motion upon mechanistic principles.

a. Until his day, no one understood why things move at all. He used scientific principles of inertia and force to explain motions, including motions of the planets.

b. He developed calculus, which helped advance scientific measurements enormously.

c. Isaac Newton himself was a practicing Christian and thought of his discoveries as glorifying God. However, many thinkers such as David Hume, Voltaire and Karl Marx, took his discoveries into the field of human behavior and maintained that all of history could be explained by deterministic principles.

C. Although the most prominent scientists of the sixteenth and seventeenth century did not intend to undermine religious belief, the scientific perspective led some other thinkers to conclude that a notion of religious faith was a sign of an ignorant era.

1. Empiricism, the view that our experience is all that we can know, began to be popular. Thus, for example, in his 1660 work Essays on the Human Mind, John Lock argued that sense experience is the basis for all of our knowledge, leaving no room for supernatural faith.

2. David Hume (1711 – 1776) argued that all rightful morals come from sentiments that are either useful or pleasing to oneself or society, with no reference to God, an eternal order, or an immortal soul. And he argued that all legitimate knowledge can be established by reason and our empirical experience.

3. Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804) argued that our experience, combined the ideas inherent in the human mind, are the basis for all knowledge. He considered religion to be rightfully based simply on an experience of the numinous, and interpreted the Bible as an entirely symbolic expression of general moral principles.

4. There were some people, such as the philosopher Voltaire (François-Marie Arouet) and the historian Edward Gibbon, who mocked the idea of religion, and Christianity in particular, as unreasonable. Other thinkers, such as the Americans Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, thought of religion as good, but as reducible to principles that can be established by reason.

D. In the meantime, the monarchs of Europe and many other wealthy people were growing vastly in power. At the same time, new secular ideas of government were spreading.

1. The most powerful monarch of the seventeenth and eighteenth century was Louis XIV of France, sometimes called The Sun King. His reign, which lasted from 1643 (when he was five) to 1715, brought France to great prestige, but also to conflicts with other nations and with the Church.

a. France expanded her colonial settlements, which helped missionary activities, but which would eventually bring France into conflict with other nations.

b. France built up her military and political power, and tried to influence the affairs of other nations, including Spain and the Holy Roman Empire.

c. The French government gave the Church a great deal of material and political support. However, the French royal court promoted the notion of Gallicanism, the idea that the French government had final say over the operation of the Catholic Church in France. This view would lead to conflicts, but never quite to a final break with Rome as had occurred in England.

2. In Spain, the War of Spanish Succession was followed by an era of absolutist monarchs.

a. When King Charles II (1665-1700) died without children, Louis XIV tried to place one of his grandsons on the throne, while the Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I also tried to get one of his sons on the throne. The resulting War of Spanish Succession ended with Louis XIV's grandson Phillip V becoming king of Spain, but with a guarantee of independence for Spain.

b. Phillip V (1724 - 46) and his sons Ferdinand VI (1746 – 59) and Charles III (1759 – 88) ruled Spain in an absolutist fashion. In some ways, they supported the missions, but they also increasingly opposed

what they considered to be interference by religious orders, particularly the Jesuits.

c. Unfortunately, kings of France, Spain, Portugal and the Kingdom of Naples turned against the Jesuits, who were both willing to criticize the decadence of the royalty and nobility and help natives establish their own communities. Each of these kingdoms expelled the Jesuits from the homeland; and they tried to get them out of the colonies. Popes Benedict XIV (1740- 1758) and Clement XIII (1758 – 69) opposed the moves, but did little to stop them, and in fact had little ability to do so. To make what he thought of as the next of a bad situation, Pope Clement XIV suppressed the order in 1773, transferring its assets and priest to dioceses and religious orders. Ironically, Orthodox Russia and Protestant Prussia allowed the Jesuits to continue. Pope Pius IX would restore the order in 1814.

3. After the Thirty Years War and the resulting Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, the most powerful new nation to emerge was Prussia, whose territory encompassed roughly what would later become East Germany. In the nineteenth century Prussia would forge (and force) agreements with other nations to become the nation of Germany.

a. Prussia was basically Protestant and a force for the Lutheran Church.

b. Its most powerful ruler was Frederick II (later called Frederick the Great), who ruled from 1740 to 1786. He built up Prussia's army, economy and international prestige.

4. Meanwhile, in Russia the Emperors Peter I (Peter the Great), who ruled from 1682 until 1725 and Catherine I (Catherine the Great), who ruled from 1762 until 1796 built up their armies, economy and prestige of that nation. Like other monarchs, they ruled their country with absolute authority. They did also promote learning and a more free economy, but not dissent. Their increased power allowed them to acquire more and more land, especially in Poland and Lithuania.

5. The Holy Roman Empire survived a threat to its existence under the rule of the Emperor Stephen and the Empress Maria Theresa. However, it unfortunately declined under their autocratic but less capable successor Joseph II.

a. When the Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI died in 1740, he had no male heirs. And so his son-in-law Stephen became Emperor, under the name Charles VII. He was amiable, but not powerful; however, Maria

Theresa, his wife and the daughter of Charles VI, proved more capable than anyone thought.

b. Sensing weakness when Charles VII and Maria Theresa rose to power, Frederick the Great of Prussia invaded Austrian territory in 1741 and demanded it for his own. Believing that he would not be satisfied with only a part of the realm, Stephen and Maria Theresa rallied the Austrian people to a defense; the French king Louis XV eventually came to their help. The result was the 7 year War of Austrian Succession, which resulted in victory and a renewed prestige for the Empire.

c. Charles VII died in 1745, but Maria Theresa continued ruling as co-regent with her son Joseph. After the war, she improved the tax system, the courts, and the army and began to promote universal education. She also strongly supported the Church; and, at least compared to other monarchs, she did not try to exert as much control over the Church.

d. However, when Maria Theresa died in 1782, her son Joseph proved to be much less capable and decisive. At the same time, he tried to exert even more control over the Church than his predecessors.

6. The strongly Catholic nations of Poland and Lithuania did not keep up with the neighboring countries in terms of economics and military strength and as a result lost their independence.

a. By 1700, Lithuania had come more and more under the influence of Poland. But Poland itself was becoming more politically unstable and Russia was playing more and more of a role in its affairs

b. By 1770, Frederick the Great and Catherine the Great came up with a plan to divide much of Poland and Lithuania between them. In 1772, Maria Theresa joined with the plan to get at least part of the land for the Catholic Empire. Then, in 1793 and 1795, the three nations took over then entire country with little resistance. Russia and Prussia tried to keep the Catholic Church down, while the Holy Roman Empire was more supportive.

7. The British government grew rapidly in strength in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, establishing a world- wide Empire. As its strength grew, the situation for Catholics gradually became better, but the discrimination continued.

a. The eighteenth century saw the situation for Catholics gradually improve in the British Empire, but Catholics were still under disabilities.

- After the so-called Glorious Revolution of 1688, the Parliament and King William agreed to the Act of Toleration, which gave full rights to all sorts of Protestants, but not to Catholics.
- There were a couple of unsuccessful efforts to put the former Catholic King James II and then his son Prince Charles back on the throne in the early eighteenth century. These efforts increased suspicion of Catholics for a time.
- As Britain became more secure and interested in economic trade during the eighteenth century, discrimination against Catholics lessened. The increasing freedom for Catholics led to the anti-Catholic riots of 1780, during which the clumsy and reluctant response of the British armies in protecting the innocent became an embarrassment. After the riots, sympathy for Catholics increased.
- Many members of Parliament wanted to give more freedom to Catholics, but King George III prevented such legislation, thinking that it would be a violation of his obligation to protect the Anglican Church.

b. Meanwhile, the British Empire was growing with increased possessions in the New World and the coasts of Africa and India. Also crucially important for the economy, the British Empire's navy became the strongest in the world, giving it a great advantage in trade. The British Empire was centered heavily on trade, with India highly prized for providing such very prized commodities as tea and spices.

c. Britain and France fought wars throughout the eighteenth century, which were at first inconclusive. But in the Seven Years War (in America the French and Indian War) from 1756 – 63, Britain won dramatically and established dominance in North America and in trade with the Far East.

E. As the national governments were becoming stronger, secular theories of government were developing.

1. Most famously, John Locke (1632 – 1704) in his Two Treatises of Government defended the idea of natural rights on the basis of a social contract theory of government, focusing on the idea that governments are established by the people for their own benefit and the defense of their rights. Along similar lines Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712 – 1788) argued in his book The Social Contract that governments are formed by the people and can only be justified to the degree that they are helpful to the rights of the people.

2. Earlier, the British philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588 – 1679) published his most famous book Leviathan, in which he defended the need for very strong government as necessary to restrain human impulses. It should be noted that he also said that the government should, as a practical matter, limit its scope, so as to perform its duties better.

3. Such theories did have the good effect of focusing government on the service of the people, rather than the interests of the powerful. However, they tended to downplay notions of an enduring morality, with the goal instead what the people perceive as their good. While it was not the intention of most of the philosophers of the time, their views could easily lead to the conclusion that whatever the people want should be granted without reference to a higher law.

F. The American Revolution was based heavily upon these new philosophies, but also had a strong Christian influence. Religious liberty was not initially a central theme at the beginning, but the Revolution had the effect of promoting this right as its implications played themselves out.

1. The Revolution had backing from such Enlightenment era people as Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson. But it also had a strong evangelical religious strain as well, for it came on the heels of the First Great Awakening in the 1740s. The two sides joined forces for the time. The Declaration of Independence, and most of the Founding Fathers, premised the Revolution on the law of God and believed in His providential guidance. The Revolution was not specifically Christian, but most of its adherents were.

2. Some of the Founding Fathers, such as George Washington and Benjamin Franklin, strongly promoted religious pluralism, in part based on principle and in part to unite the different sections of the country. In addition, with the colonists seeking French help, it was essential to be at least somewhat friendly to Catholics.

3. Charles Carrol of Carrolton, a prominent and wealthy Maryland citizen and a Catholic, was at first not allowed to hold public office in that colony. However, his strong defense of the principle of no taxation without representation and his willingness to put his great wealth behind the Revolution paved the way for more religious liberty there.

4. During the Revolutionary War, the Virginia House of Burgesses passed the Statue of Religious Liberties giving all citizens equal religious freedom. It was an accomplishment Jefferson was especially proud of.

5. As part of the deal to join the new Constitution drafted in 1787, several states insisted that it would soon be amended to contain a Bill of Rights. That demand

resulted in the first 10 amendments to the national Constitution. The First Amendment began by stating that the federal government must stay out of religion. Only later, with the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 1866, and later Supreme Court decisions, was that provision applied to states as well.

6. There was still much discrimination against Catholics in many parts of this country, which at times flared up as with the Know Nothing party in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. But it gradually diminished over the long course of time.

7. This religious liberty could be based upon a positive foundation or upon a negative one. The positive idea was that, as expressed in the Virginia Statute on Religious Liberty, religion is both more sincere and stronger when it is free. The negative idea is that religious truths are either unimportant or unknowable, and thus that religious differences are irrelevant. Christianity in general, and Catholicism in particular, would try to take advantage of the positive side, while combatting the negative.

8. As a practical matter, as Alexis de Touqueville observed in his 1832 book Democracy in America, Christianity did well in this nation. He wrote, “America is still the place where the Christian religion has kept the greatest real power over men’s souls; and nothing better demonstrates how useful and natural it is to man, since the country where it now has the widest sway is both the most enlightened and the freest.”