

On christianity assignment

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From The Philosophy of Enlightenment - The Christian Burgess and the Enlightenment by Lucien Goldman On Enlightenment v. Christianity: " It is both easy and difficult to speak of the relation between the Enlightenment and Christianity. " (Goldman 50) " In analyzing the conflict with the Church we must always remember that the attacks the Enlightenment was making on Christian belief were not attacks on the faith of the pre-bourgeois period, the faith that built cathedrals and preached the crusades.

The philosophies were battling against a faith whose content had been taken from it by the very social and economic processes that had promoted the growth of individualism; this faith had accordingly acquired much the same structural character as the Enlightenment itself. Had it been carried to its logical conclusion, this attenuated faith would have ended in theism, deism, or even atheism; but, just because it was not thought out logically, it turned into superstition and bigotry. (52) " The dialogue between Christianity and the Enlightenment was conducted for the most part on common ground, that is to say, it assumed the mental disagrees of the Enlightenment. " (53) On the changing social values: The rule of the morality of Reason (Reason's morality): " In the eighteenth century, the middle class, as the most important social group, succeeded in rationalizing a large part of its life and organizing it on an intelligible pattern.

In this world the citizen no longer regarded his social position as the outcome of divine grace or punishment, but as the result of his own conduct; whether his actions were appropriate and successful or misdirected and profitless, they were, at least in economic terms, morally neutral and incapable of being judged by standards of good and evil. In the middle ages it was possible to

talk in terms of “ Just” or “ unjust” prices; in the eighteenth century there were only correctly or mistakenly calculated prices.

The right price was the one that fixed the difference between costs and selling price in such a way as to maximize profit; the wrong one was any that failed to secure the maximum gain. ” (Goldman 54) On the emergence of new social divisions: “ educated classes” v. Ignorant masses”: In the eighteenth century, the newly developing economic area of bourgeois life is marked by the fact that probably for the first time in history an important part of the activity of a class growing in social importance has become a wager on the non- existence of God.

The economic life of the bourgeoisie was in fact autonomous and morally neutral, governed only by the internal criteria of success or failure, and independent of the moral criteria of ‘ good’ or Wicked’ and religious criteria of ‘ pleasing to God’ or ‘ sinful. (56) The notion of divine intervention was excluded from a major area of the life of the bourgeoisie and its picture of the world.

It was excluded not only from its economic life but also from its concept of the universe as ruled by general and unchangeable laws of nature. Many people excluded it also from their idea of the social mechanism, which they began to conceive, to some extent, in the same terms as the processes of nature. This exclusion caused many customs and traditions, together with the mental concepts underlying them, to lose all valid meaning in the new picture of the universe.

These were the traditions and customs derived from the possibility of divine intervention in everyday life; but they did not disappear from the lives of peasants and laborers, and so came to look like ignorant superstition and to be contrasted unfavorably with the 'purified and spiritualists' religion of the bourgeoisie. This gave rise to the division of mankind into 'ignorant masses' and the educated classes' (meaning of course the bourgeois 'gentry'). This division is one of the most characteristic features of the Enlightenment. (57)