

The origin of enlightenment essay sample



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During the enlightenment period fact named itself in a manner that would later enlighten compatriots. The Enlightenment was one of rare movements in human history associated with 17th and 18th century. Scholars argue that it begun way back primarily in Paris and London. Basically this period was to see a great positive shift in tyranny, ignorance, superstition and to build a good reputation in the world. With this plan the enlightenment had hereditary domination by aristocrats and religion as their sole targets. The logic behind the Enlightenment period is all about Christianity as far as religion is concerned. From Italy to England to France this was the major vibrant religion that had its ideas affect day to day lives of many. Ideally there wouldn't have been any form of enlightenment without Christianity. Churchmen almost had equal rights and powers as emperors and many other rulers that existed then with some privileges being exemption from paying taxes.

Philosophers, thinkers and scholars like John Locke and Voltaire sparked the enlightenment. Other significant names during this period were Isaac Newton, who was a great physicist and later recognized as father of modern physics, and Baruch Spinoza. These are just but a few intellectuals who saw religion as a “ cage” that bared man from success and development. They also articulated scientific revolution which would later spread overseas to the rest of the world. Popularly known as the “ Dark Ages” this movement brought logical positivism to people. Life initially had been all about God and that the rupture is uncertain when the pure in heart would be live in Heaven forever. Because of this intellects were to be the elites of their time as they acted sources of credible information. There was an overall rise in ideas

based on empiricism and credible philosophy hence their application in a variety of areas like biology, physics, chemistry and political economy. All these theories attacked the church and the state directly. Christians today have the question of possibly knowing the truth as their main foundational philosophical challenge.

The human mindset has taken two dimensions in our society today. Either one is of relativism or skepticism. Relativism is based on the statement that there is really no fixed truth. Skepticism on the other hand says the truth lives but we can't know it. As preachers spread the word across the entire world these two mindsets affect all the claims of truth for Christians of these days.

Religious Perceptions about God

Way back before Enlightenment God was like sunrise. Choosing the path of God was seen as a way of having all human questions answered and accompanied problems solved amicably. Christianity had its feet on the Bible as a way of knowing God. Bibles were Holy books from which people got the relevant knowledge they needed to stay close to their creator. The Old Testament was in its capacity a form of 'constitution' that had all solutions to political questions. Historical events were seen as a service to God's will and they were understood to work according to God's plan. Storms, floods and heavy rains were believed to be a form of "communication" from a supernatural being. Therefore these events were not just chances.

God was always involved ever since He created the world with everything in it many years before Christ with man being the highest level of His creation.

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Christ was the son of God who lived among the people and brought the Godly message and later ascended to Heaven. To this there was a strong belief will be a last Judgment when Christ will return and few will be chosen for an eternal life. This, to some, made the world a frightening and mysterious place whereas some people pictured this as a comfort and a streamliner to ways of living. The debate raged on all over many kingdoms. Some of aristocrats had the religion as a necessity and basic need which called for execution when jeopardized. As major physical features were famous to people, many forms of civilization were not. Discovery of other forms of civilization came as a blow to many. God, the world and man were to be viewed differently henceforth. Humanists were a group of thinkers that cropped in the 14th century with an argument that admiration for God's creation was the basis for worship.

According to them human race was celebrated by people. Compared to gloomy priests and members of the clergy practicing Catholics saw it proper to worship the Almighty. Humility was profound and a measure of how much someone had respect for God.

Shift in thinking

When Sir Isaac Newton discovered gravity the stereotype that natural happenings were only understood by God was also erased. Man could now understand nature and explain it even further. Rene Descartes, a French philosopher, developed the idea of doubt. He argued that any unclear situation or phenomena is subjected to doubt. This came up when he was trying to prove if God really existed. This was rational and opened floor to

many phrases and debates that are still relevant to date. However John Locke opposed Descartes work. He claimed that knowledge is all about experience. This is also the basis of metaphysics. Locke argued that life begins with a blank brain and that experience is the best way of knowledge. Morality and how “ good” something is depends on how pleasant the brain finds it to be. People developed new ways of looking at the world. Churches were no longer final judges on what should be done and how people should live their lives. Many people also became intellectuals as undisclosed information was the only unknown. The future was therefore subject to manipulation as confidence and optimism prevailed.

Scientific Research

Aristotle had initially adopted deductive ways of understanding nature. This was full of theology that as people championed for prime evidence in phenomena. Likes of Bacon Francis championed for inductive and experimental approach which left tradition with little authority. The truth and false would later separate to create a formidable way of life based on factual orientation. Initially scientific inventions were not convincing to many. However science would later rise to be a pillar and source of strength. For example the long term belief that the earth was a huge flat mass of land was to be letter overshadowed. Human beings were seen as centers of creation and earth was at the centre of many centric planets according to Aristotle. This also came to change with discoveries of other planets and heavenly bodies revolving around the sun. There was a significant shift in thinking because everything people had known before were highly debatable and in most cases past discoveries never made much sense to people.

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Christians were not so comfortable with the directions that everything had taken so far. All these discoveries questioned religion and God. As explorers went places they found many races and people who all believed in themselves. Europeans had always thought they were the only people on earth making them feel superior. All these races explorers found were not Christians but in one way or the other they had strong beliefs in supreme beings. This raised a question whether humans were really important at all. The change in thinking was why other races lived easily and survived all that time yet they were really not Christians. By then all beliefs were facing question, weaklings emerged and there was a looming division in the church. In Europe the formation of numerous nation states killed political power of the church. There was a new wave of secularism with introduction of major political and economic ideologies that would later shape the future.

Major economic ideology was capitalism. Many people pulled out from Christianity owing to the fact that they never found much "sense" to religion any more. The renaissance period saw a powerful legacy of that would end witchcraft that had flourished over time. The sole aim of this period was to celebrate capacity of human beings who had been considered the best creation of all time. During this time man could reshape some of the many religious beliefs and antiquity tools. The belief and dependency on superstition was also a major set back as far as mental prosperity was concerned which needed a fast reaction. This created a major raw considering claims and discoveries that were now rampantly tarnishing everything. For example all along it had been believed that the sun moved

through the sky yet in 1632 there was discovery that the earth rotates around the sun on an axis by the Copernican notion.

Galileo Galilei had always relied upon observation as source of truth and shun superstition. The Holy inquisition took offence and protected the Bible. With all these happening the Church could not take it. In fact they hit back at Galileo asking him to disown and take back what he had said and never do any more discoveries in an effort to tackle looming confusion that was just about to hit humankind. However the victory was short lived. Silencing Galilei was not the solution to many more scientific discoveries and methods to come. The century itself experienced a turn in manner of doing things as many questions were asked on which direction to take. Monks termed religious doctrines as “ absurd”. Non-Christians emerged with names like Michel de Montaigne playing significant role. Christianity had their own way of shutting down the absolute truth.

Montaigne asked “ What do I know” in his essay that would defend cannibals as not wasting human flesh. The shift was based on understanding newly discovered peoples and had a great effect on European mindset. It was like a raging war of minds and thinkers. In the essay What Do I know focus was undue credit to God. Montaigne could not understand why man imposed actions on others yet he claims values are given by God. During this time questioning all these assumptions came to be a measure for scientists. Knowledge was always growing over time with nothing rendered absolutely true. Scientists made discoveries but were ready to face questions so their work could be disputed. To this some found relief and wondered why

Christianity did not need any questions yet still did not provide the evidence they needed. Science had limits.

The 17th Century

The Enlightenment combined common sense with reason. Skepticism was the only way of mental freedom so thinkers favoured it. Avenue of truth became logic and observation. These two were also used for defending weird notions. The era of fanaticism was slowly changing. The Catholics claimed universality of their religion initially facing rebellion from the other half of the church to form Protestants. The later could not stand most of Catholic practices and doctrines so there was a religious war concerning numbers. Protestants had always accused Catholics of practicing Satanism in the previous centuries which created a row. These two turned insults at each other with Protestant criticism being powerful. Later there emerged many churches. Each claimed the right of path to eternal life and had their own way of arguing what they stood for.

The Catholic and Protestant Churches lost most of their followers to the array of churches that were rampant. However Catholic Church still had the numbers and boasted of a majority, which it does to present. With the Church not able to solve its own misunderstanding and denouncing the other science propelled even much further. Meanwhile states were to approve of any discoveries that were to be made. Many writings and scholarly work had to pass through the state for scrutiny. This is when the Church had its take especially because it was working closely to the state. They were not ready to lose the battle and control over people. Power disposition by monarchs

would come to an end and slavery would be a thing of the past. These powers had initially been seen as ordained and given by God as kings' rights. Any form of opposition to this was rendered illegal and subject to execution.

Many thinkers and scholars of that time died as they were trying to falsify the existence of God and any other institution that stand in God's name. Royalties that had strongly believed in Christian teachings saw such thinkers imprisoned arguing that detesting was against His will. Naturally people turned from demanding faith and some came to admit that the church did not really deserve all authority it claimed. Faith was seen as a mask that would not allow any form of unfolding. The Church's influence to the society was at its worst. With the invention and adoption of printing press they were left with very little authority over people as they were initially the champions of communication. There were also many institutions that distracted people from the church. Businesses thrived leading to establishment of stock banks and stock exchange. These were just out of control from any other institution because they had prosperity of the people as their key interests and goals. There was a change on how things are done.

To this the clergy hit back and preachers spread the word which they insisted will stand against all odds. There was a state of mayhem especially when the Church through its institutions termed all the other practices as being secular and worldly. This didn't necessarily undermine Christian teachings instead it made people realized there is more to life. In fact people could now read about teachings and discussed it. Still weakness of the Church was of great concern. New matters called on people to think through things before they indulge in anything that could make them regret later.

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The all idea behind this was to ensure that all the authority and influence religion had on people could be seen at an individual angle so that rational decisions are arrived at in any circumstance. The past and all the other traditional practices were therefore of no use and mystery together with miracles were downplayed. With people gaining their own conscience there were many differences involved.

Doctrines were never the same owing to the fact that people go through different experiences and are subjected to different influences from their immediate environment. Loss of power by the Church was blamed on two things. One was the Protestant church being consistent in its revolution and scrutiny yet the other was with the government that had the authority. The Church did not have as much support as they had initially from many aristocrats and monarchs. The nobles had seen some sense in science and were at a midpoint between science and religion. It is because of this that historical incidents like the French and the American revolution took place in tough conquests aimed at independence. There was a weak bond between the church and the aristocrats yet people had embraced the ideas of being free to think and act as they wanted.

Coupled with other unacceptable capitalistic and totalitarian form of government the French had enough of it and therefore needed a " change". This also saw that the Church and related institutions paid taxes and let go of many tracts of land it had earlier acquired through force. The ideas of belief and religion were beginning to change so as to suit the new intellectual style of living. It became an issue of personal devotion. Creed was no longer adhered to when the Church eventually revised its stands

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about life and belief. Some unclear and historical discomforts in the Bible could now be questioned and scrutinized. Anything that had its basis on authority and stereotype was shun and even rejected. Issues like if hell is real were up for strong debates. Meanwhile politics alienated itself from the church.

Political History

Although politics has still remained a necessity, many changes were made. In Europe alone many charters were signed to form what would be the present day nations. Pressure for change mounted as the newly formed institutions yearned for a stable and new life. Merchants became prominent members of the society. They would go as far as the Americas and Asia in search of wealth trade products. Governments were quick to form but they were did not embrace totality as seen before. People became agents of change in everything they do. However in cases of absolute monarchs and dogmatic churches change would not come easy as anticipated. People such as merchants faced the same problem as did philosophers. As religion survived with many changes aristocracy dwindled beyond recognition and the beginning of the 18th century saw a different world in lifestyle and governance. Many institutions were keeping pace with change around them.

The idea of inheritance of any form from wealth to power was to be termed lazy. This was because of immense adoption of capitalism and other economic ideologies. However social stratification was still a major threat to change, individualism and freedom of the people. This worked to the advantage of many scientists who worked for many days machines and

inventions that would give life a new turn altogether. The Church still insisted it is the only source of truth and salvation.