

# **Big Ideas That Influence Academic Culture**

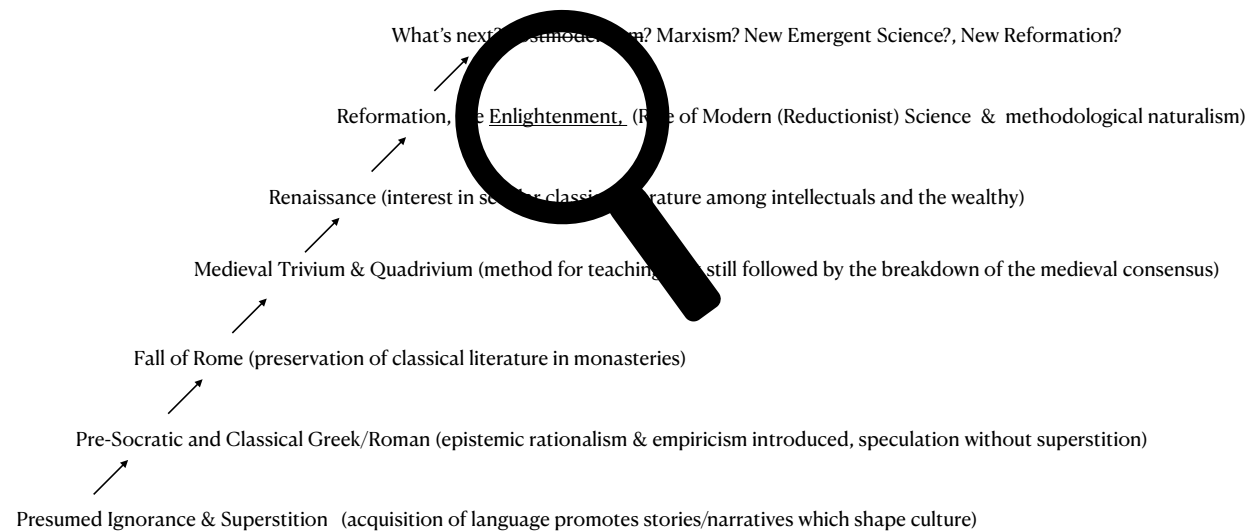
# Introduction

- Ask why People Study the History of Ideas?
- Quick Take on Some Important Ideas in that History
- Ask What Are the Key “Messages” of the Enlightenment?
- Ask Why That’s Important in Academe today?

## **Ask Why People Study the History of Ideas?**

- I think it is fairly obvious when you speak of this in the context of academic culture that some ideas are more important and influential than others.
  - Some ideas seem closer to truth than others.
  - Some ideas are held by those in power are thus influential (more akin to the sociology of ideas).
  - Some ideas are held by those who wish to have influence and power.
  - Some ideas have reached the status of cultural authority.
  - Transition: Here's a quick take on some of those ideas

## Quick Take on Some Shifts in (Intellectual/Cultural) Thinking in the West



“Enlightenment is man's release from his self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage is man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another. Self-incurred is this tutelage when its cause lies not in lack of reason but in lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another. Sapere aude! 'Have courage to use your own reason!'- that is the motto of enlightenment.”

**Immanuel Kant**

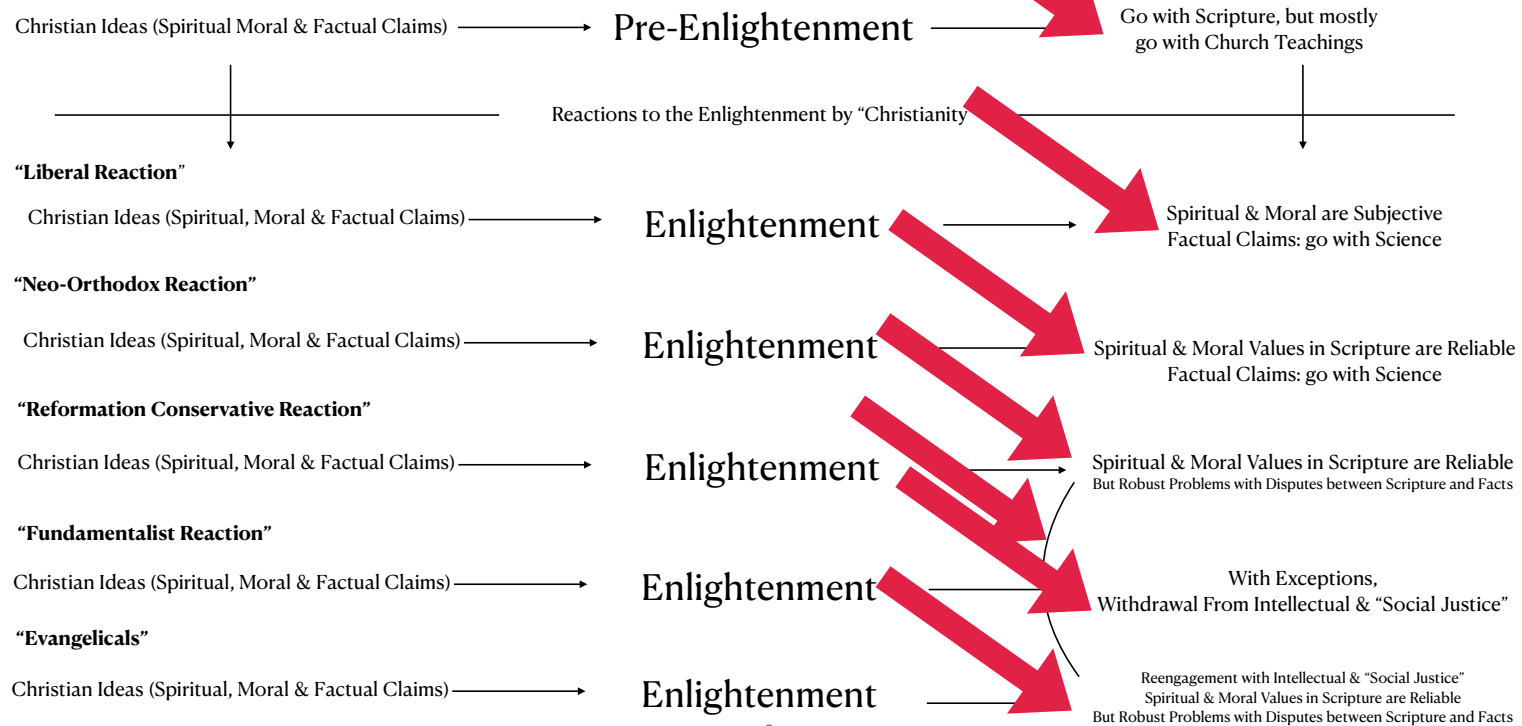
# What are the Key Messages of the Enlightenment?

- The message of the Enlightenment: stop listening to authorities—think for yourself, the importance of Reason, run experiments, think critically
- Its legacy: Reason over revelation as authority; the triumph of the empirical over intuition (or just thinking about it); skepticism of certain things—especially religion, normative morality and aesthetics; the rise of “modern” science: explanation of phenomena in terms of natural events produced (only) by natural causes; reductive explanations in the sense that biology can be reduced to chemistry and chemistry reduced to physics—>Newtonian physics, Einsteinian physics (special and general relativity), Quantum Mechanics...toward a final theory of everything where classical physics and Quantum Mechanics are reconciled.
- Conclusions (roughly speaking): investigation of the empirical world is good—Christian faith is bad.

## **Why Are These Messages Are Important to Christians in Academe?**

- In general terms it seems that:
  - Historical Christian faith is incredible. It's belief and not knowledge. It's irrelevant to science, doesn't produce testable hypotheses.
  - Historical Christian faith has been attacked on just about every level in academe: truth value, sociologically and relevance to name a few.
  - It is very difficult to critique science without being marginalized even though science is admittedly fallible and therefore uses a deflationary notion of "knowledge," even though a metaphysical Realist account of science involves unprovable assumptions on purely naturalistic terms and on naturalistic terms may undercut its epistemic foundation.
- Specifically it seems that:
  - Historical Christian faith makes you a "bad" person—divisive, "against" the current conceptions of human rights, an impediment to complete secularism—academically, socially, and politically—look at the trends in academe. Evangelicals have become the most disliked religious group on campus by academics.
  - Look at trends in how Christian faith among evangelicals has evolved in response to the Enlightenment and how evangelicals as a Christian movement is currently evolving
  - This is what we want to take a look at next in this series.

# The Enlightenment: How Have Christians Responded?





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