



The Church in the 17th & 18th Centuries

The Age of Science & the Enlightenment

Introduction

- United Christendom ended with the Reformation.
- New political philosophies and systems emerge.
- Scientific revolution
- Enlightenment ideas & values
- Challenges to the Church's authority & teachings
- Emergence of anti-Christian attitudes
- Powerful rulers challenged the Church.



A Philosopher giving that Lecture on the Orrery in which a lamp is put in place of the Sun, Joseph Wright of Derby, 1766. An orrery was a mechanical model of the solar system.



ABSOLUTISM

Top: Louis XIV of France, Charles III of Spain, Catherine II of Russia, Joseph I of Portugal
Bottom: James I of England, Gustav III of Sweden



Absolutism

Strong monarchies – absolute control.

Resisting challenges to political authority arising out of the Renaissance, Reform, Wars of Religion & Enlightenment values.

- Luther: Monarch responsible for affairs of the visible Church
- Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), *Leviathan: The Matter, Forme & Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiasticall & Civil*: on the need for a strong ruler.
- Descartes: Methodical doubt: threat to certainties
- Enlightenment values

18th c.: European rulers established a system of total, autocratic power.

In the effort to centralize power, the Catholic monarchs often infringed on ecclesiastical jurisdiction, striving to create a Church submissive to the king.

It reached its height with the expulsion of the Jesuits by many governments, & the hostile pressure exerted on the papacy to suppress the order.

E.g. Louis XIV-XVI of France, James I & Charles I of England, Joseph II of Austria, Spain & Russia.

Jacques Benigne Bossuet (1627-1704)

French Bishop & Louis' court. Promoted the 'Divine Right of Kings'

King are by their very office the representatives of the divine majesty deputed by Providence for the execution of his purpose.

Service of God & the respect for kings are bound together.

The royal power is absolute. ... The prince need render account of his acts to no one [but he must render strict account directly to God].

It is necessary that his power be such that no one can hope to escape him.

Majesty is the image of the grandeur of God in the prince. ... He is the image of God ... seated on his throne high in the heavens.

Behold this holy power, paternal & absolute ... you see the image of God in the king, & you have the idea of royal majesty.

This majesty ... is borrowed from God, who gives it to him for the good of the people.

O kings, exercise your power then boldly, for it is divine and salutary for human kind, but exercise it with humility. You are endowed with it from without. At bottom it leaves you feeble, it leaves you mortal, it leaves you sinners, and charges you before God with a very heavy account.

Church & State: Many people believed that rejecting absolute monarch meant rejecting the Church, or that defending the Church required supporting the monarchy, attitudes that lasted into the 20th century. To reject the King was to reject God.



Hyacinthe Rigaud, *Portrait of Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet*, 1702.

Louis XIV of France (1638-1715)

- Became king at 5.
 - Regent repressed a rebellion by nobles. Made a strong impression on Louis XIV who decided to exercise close personal control on State affairs & individual nobles.
 - The 'Sun King'
 - United France after wars of religion. 1685: revokes Edict of Nantes (religious tolerance) & bans Calvinism, Jansenism & Quietism.
 - Gallicanism & struggles with the Pope over control of the Church in France. Almost begins a Schism. (Josephinism in Austria)
 - Very devout
 - 'I am the State'
 - Built & reigned from the Palace of Versailles (1682-)
-



Louis XIV, King of France, 1638-1715.

Versailles

17th century estate of Louis XIV

Over 800 hectares (1,977 acres), 2,300 rooms

French kings lived here until the French Revolution

Treaty that ended WWI signed here.

UNESCO World Heritage Site today with @ 8 million visitors a year

The move from Paris distanced the King from the people & the affairs of the country





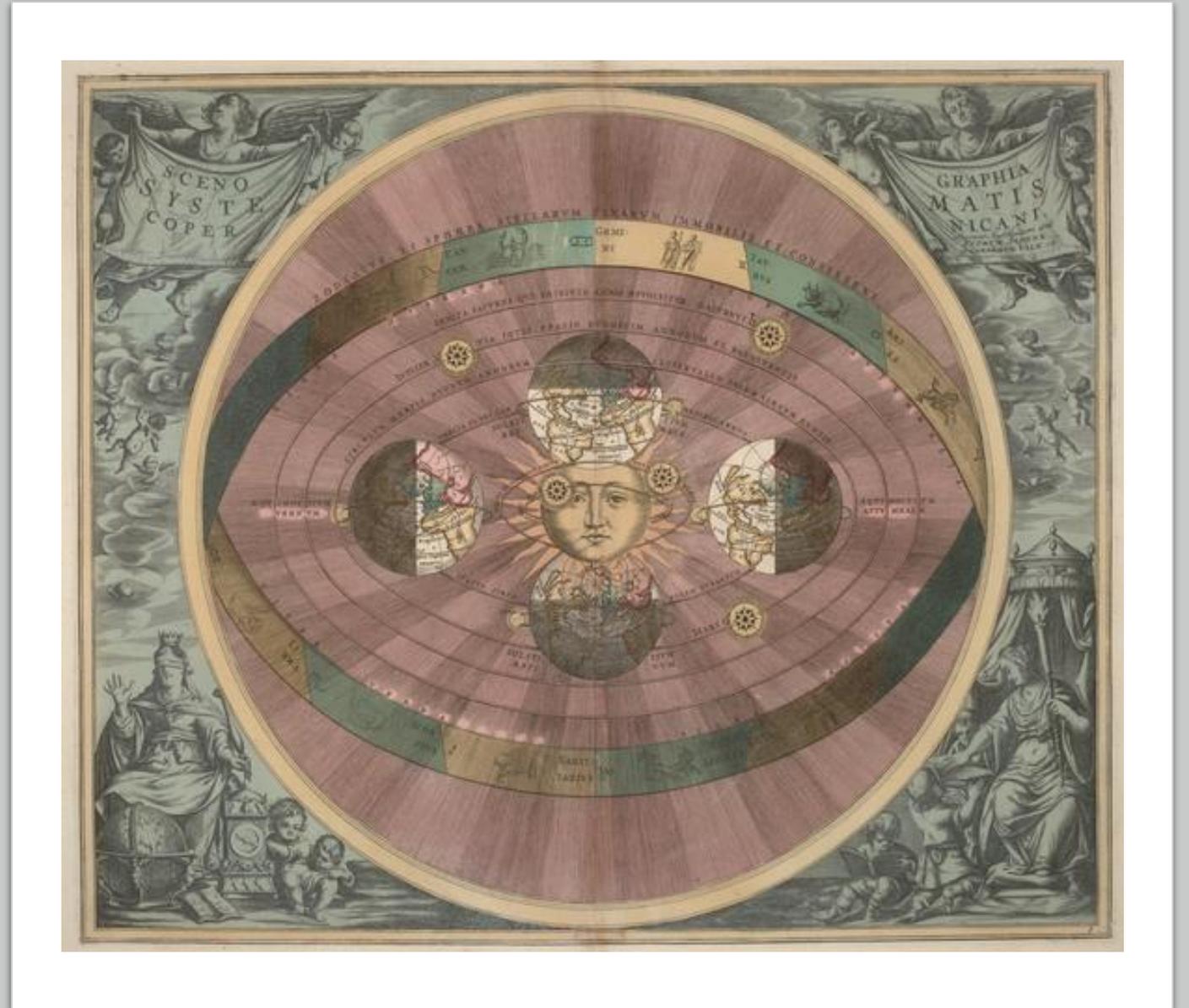
The Scientific Revolution

- New scientific discoveries & methods: belief that science could solve all problems & obviate the need for religion.
- **Rene Descartes:** tried to apply logic to all human knowledge. Used 'methodical doubt' to establish certainty. Unintentionally separated faith & reason.
- **Francis Bacon:** father of empiricism, a new, 'inductive' method of obtaining knowledge.

Francis Bacon is supposed to have stuffed a chicken with ice & later died of pneumonia.

Rethinking the Universe: Heliocentrism

- **Geocentrism:** the sun goes round the earth
- **Heliocentrism:** the earth goes round the sun
- Challenge for faith, reason & science:
- *'The sun rises & the sun goes down, & hastens to the place where it rises'* (Eccl. 1:5).
- Inerrancy of Scripture – does this mean that the science must be wrong?
- Interpretation of Sacred Scripture
- Scripture teaches us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go.
- Nicholas Copernicus: Polish priest. 1543: proposes heliocentrism





Galileo Galilei (1564-16420)

- Galileo: modern empirical experimental method of science
- Scientists including Copernicus, Kepler had proposed heliocentrism and numerous Catholics scientists supported it including Jesuit scientists, although it was still disputed among scientist at the time. Copernicus was wary of publishing his ideas & delayed many years.
- Things changed when Galileo taught heliocentrism not as a hypothesis but as fact, demanded it be accepted as a religious truth, & said that Scripture had to be reinterpreted in light of his findings.
- Clashed with the way Scripture was read at the time.
- When he defied the Church & published, he presented the Pope as a geocentric fool, which didn't help his cause.
- Condemned as 'suspect of heresy' & placed under house arrest. But was also supported by many Catholics including popes.
- 20th century investigation & response:
 - John Paul II, *Address to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences*, 31 October, 1992. <https://bertie.ccsu.edu/naturesci/cosmology/galileopope.html>
See also <https://www.catholiceducation.org/en/controversy/common-misconceptions/the-galileo-affair.html>



The Enlightenment



The Enlightenment

Rulers try to control the Church; Enlightened thinkers to destroy it.
Church will need to adapt the way it transmits its message & fulfils its mission to meet these new times.

What was the Enlightenment?

18th century intellectual climate that set the foundations for political, cultural & social revolutions of the late 18th & 19th c.

Features

- Exalted reason & nature
- Religion: Rejected faith, tradition & Revelation.
- Acceptance of dogmas is the sign of a retarded intellect.
- The 'God of the Gaps'
- Anti-Catholic & anti-clerical.
- Anti-Christian. Deism or atheism.
- Identification of the Church with Political Structures or Systems
- Materialistic tendency
- Unrealistic optimism regarding man's natural goodness, human progress & science, excessive anthropocentrism, self-sufficiency.
- Intellectual rebellion
- Scorn of the past. Invent the term 'Middle Ages'
- Spawned many modern ideologies.



Who was involved in the Enlightenment?

- Enlightenment ideologies were strong in France, Scotland, England and, in a modified form, in Germany. Spain and Italy were not greatly affected.
- France: the aristocracy & upper bourgeoisie, even the urban middle class.
- A small but influential minority. They determined the spirit of the new era starting with the outbreak of the French revolution.
- Most people kept to their religious faith & practice.



Big Names

- **Rene Descartes (1596-1650)** Influential Forerunner. Rejected everything which does not present itself with absolute clarity to human reason. Descartes was a Catholic. He held that God's existence was absolutely certain & immediately clear to human reason (wrong).
- **François-Marie Voltaire (1694-1778)** Hated religion, especially Christianity. Aimed to eliminate it. 'Jesus Christ needed twelve Apostles to spread the gospel; I am going to show that one is enough to destroy it'. Advocated free speech, freedom of religion, separation of Church & State.
- **Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)** a 'philosophe'. Wrote *The Social Contract*, and *Emile: On Education*. Influenced the French Revolution.
- **Denis Diderot (1713-1784)** The *Encyclopédie* (1752). Popularised enlightenment values. Aimed to cover all rational & scientific knowledge. Rejected Christianity & Revelation as sources of truth, declaring them incompatible with reason or science.
- **Immanuel Kant (1724-1804)** 'Sapere aude' (dare to know). Absolute priority of reason. Tries to establish a universal morality on non-Christian foundations. Emphasis on autonomy, obeying your 'own law – autonomy' as established by your own reason.
- **The libertines:** materialism leads to epicurean lifestyle. Life was about pleasure & indulgence.
- **Joseph Banks (1743-1820)** English Enlightenment. 'Natural Philosophy'.





Deism

- Part of suite of enlightenment values; accept only what can be proved by reason.
- God: 1st cause of the universe; no interest or involvements in its affairs.
'Watchmaker'. God asks for nothing.
- **Freemasonry**: Secret fraternities, spread rationalistic & anti-religious ideas.
- God is the Grand Architect.
- Extremely anti-Catholic & anti-clerical
- Condemned by Clement XII in 1738.

The United States

Enlightenment 'free-thinking' also pervaded the United States.

The American Revolutionary War (1775-1783) occurred during this period & had a great impact on France.

Separation of Church & State (the pilgrim fathers had left England seeking religious freedom).

Advocated toleration of all faiths. American freedom of worship was based on the pluralism of denominations present in American society. In Europe, enlightenment thinkers were principally about relativism.

Benjamin Franklin & George Washington were freemasons.



Suppression of the Jesuits



- Enlightenment-influenced rulers saw the Jesuits as a threat due to their intellectual abilities combined with loyal Catholicism, & the Jesuits were banned from many places in Europe.
- Absolute monarchs resented their inability to control the order.
- Portugal's prime minister blamed various political issues on the Jesuits (eg attempting to assassinate the King), killed many Jesuits, banished the order & confiscated their property.
- Jesuits expelled from Portugal, France & Spain & their territories.
- French & Italians threatened to overthrow the Pope if he did not dissolve the order, & Spain threatened a schism. Clement XIV dissolved it in 1773.
- This success encouraged the monarchs to continue intimidating the Pope.
- Suppression had a big effect on evangelization, education, etc in mission countries.
- Restored by Pius VII in 1814.