

APOSTATE

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APOSTATE

An Exposé of the Men Who Dismantled
the Christian West

Kevin Swanson

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PREFACE

John Locke. Jean-Jacques Rousseau. John Stuart Mill. John-Paul Sartre. John Dewey. John Lennon. John Steinbeck.

Each of these should be familiar names. They were all “men of renown,” the greatest men of the age. They were men of towering importance in the unfolding, or rather unraveling of Western civilization; and together they defined the modern world. John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau set the trajectory for modern political philosophy. John-Paul Sartre influenced culture and entertainment, and John Dewey was the father of modern, secular education. John Lennon and his band sold more albums than any other musical group in the history of mass media. However, of more significance for the present treatise is their given name. Each of them inherited 1500 years of Christian thinking and culture. They were born in Christian families in Europe or America, and their parents named them John after the Apostle who wrote the fourth Gospel.

Many years ago, the West had a rich Christian heritage. That is why many parents named their sons John. Between 400 AD and 1400 AD, the Christian Gospel penetrated the entire Western world. But after the 15th century another religion or faith commitment called “Humanism” worked its way into the consciousness of the West. It was highly organized, complete with sacraments, institutions, buildings, ethical systems, social theories, and cultural emanations. To this day, the early Christian influence is recognizable: Christianity has made an indelible impact on language, art, architecture, music, education, hospitals and healthcare, charity, science, political freedoms, the treatment of women, respect for human life, names given to children, and the elimination of pagan practices like widow-burning, child-sacrifice, and chattel slavery.

For over a thousand years, Christian burials replaced cremation, and it would have been hard to find the pagan practices of cannibalism, homosexuality, body mutilation, and tattoos (all of which were almost completely absent from Christian societies). Then at the break of the 20th century, everything changed.

Because history often seems to play out in slow motion, it is not difficult to trace the macro trends. Within one hundred years, the powerful ideas of the philosophers began to shape the minds of the most brilliant writers, educators, musicians and artists. In succeeding generations, these ideas formed the course content for the liberal arts universities. Finally, after another hundred years or so, these ideas filtered into the mass culture. It is a three step process, and this is how the West was lost.

First, the intellectual philosophers developed revolutionary humanist ideas which they incorporated into their own lives. These ideas will be thoroughly reviewed in the first section of this book.

Next, the great literary masters and artists incarnated these philosophical ideas in literary and art forms, which were then taught in the liberal arts universities and high schools. There is no better way to infiltrate nations with new ideas than through the educational systems. How else would one overturn all of Western civilization without corrupting each successive generation of pastors, priests, political leaders, and teachers by way of the universities and seminaries? This is how we have gone from the New England Primer's first lesson, "In Adam's fall, We sinned all" to *Heather Has Two Daddies* (pro-homosexual curriculum for first grade children used in public schools in the later 20th century). Profound cultural changes take a civilization from Johann Sebastian Bach's chorales in 1700 to Eminem's popular "rape rap" in 2000. If ideas shape the culture, then these powerful forces replace Puritan leaders like John Winthrop and Oliver Cromwell with secular humanist leaders like Barrack Obama and Josef Stalin. It was the liberal arts education and humanist trends in "literature" that reshaped everything else including seminaries, pastors, and churches. For the purposes of this historical survey, we will look at four prominent works of literature which contributed greatly to the apostasy, the rise in humanist thinking, and the decline of Western civilization.

Finally, the philosophies of the 19th century penetrated the mass culture through mass media in the 20th and 21st centuries. At least 95%

of present day perspectives and attitudes, culture, media, family life, and education are rooted in the destructive ideology of the 18th and 19th century philosophers. It is vitally important that the reader be able to discern those ideas. The incarnation of these philosophies in mass culture will be explained in the final section of the book.

The first phase of the fall of Western civilization took place between 1700 and 1850. The second phase played out between 1820 and 1920, and the final stage is happening right now through mass media. None of this would have materialized without the centralization of power in both universities and mass media outlets that could impose a uniform world and life view on the Western world.

Nevertheless, there is always hope for new civilizations and cultures in the future. The monolith of Western civilization is no more. It is hard to reassemble a deconstructed civilization. Perhaps the best historical comparison available to the present day is the Fall of Rome in 475 A.D. After centralization comes decentralization until equilibrium is achieved in Christian society based on the Trinitarian law-order (that can effectively balance unity and diversity). We are on the cusp of the decentralization of information and media sources, while simultaneously we are witnessing the gradual collapse of the brick-and-mortar university monopoly over Western thought and economics. The time has come to reform and rebuild the ideas and educational systems that make up the Western world.

BY THEIR FRUITS YE SHALL KNOW THEM

As we trace the plight of Western civilization, we shall examine both the ideas and the lives of the great civilization changers of the last three hundred years. Generally, the philosophies are difficult to understand for the layman. However, Jesus Christ provided a useful test for identifying false teachers, one that may be employed by even the more obtuse of His followers: “By their fruits ye shall know them,” He said. This is helpful, because most people reading the “great” philosophers find it hard to follow the thread of their ideas. Sometimes they will say one thing, and then contradict themselves more or less in the next paragraph. They will purposefully obscure their true presuppositional framework and only hint at their real agenda (so as to be missed by some and caught only by other apostatizing souls). In the end, the truth is obscured and lost in

their pseudo-intellectualism, convoluted argumentation, and academic hubris. Thus, according to Jesus Christ it is quite appropriate for the average Christian to analyze a man's philosophies by the fruit of his life and his work: "By their fruits ye shall know them!"

This is why it is important to know that Marx's daughters committed suicide, that Rousseau abandoned his five children on the steps of an orphanage, and that Ernest Hemingway wished to kill his father and then took his own life. For those who may not have the time to study the confusing labyrinth of these men's twisted minds, it is sometimes more helpful to examine the "fruits" and draw a quick conclusion as to the nature of the "tree." Even if the student fails to pick up on the trajectory of the ideas laid out in the writings of this book, at the least he should know something about the lives of the men who served as the intellectual leaders of the fall of the Western world.

If the major academic institutions in this nation led the apostasy from the Christian faith, it is important to assess the content of their educational programs. From the beginning, colleges such as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Bowdoin, and William and Mary incorporated a thoroughly Greek and Roman education. It should be understood that this was not a distinctively Christian education. At first, there were men like Increase Mather (the last of the Puritans and an early President of Harvard College) who fought hard to establish a Christian education at Harvard. In 1685, Mather complained that the pastors trained at the college knew more of Cicero and Aristotle than they did of Paul, Moses, and David. He did what he could to purge Aristotle's *Ethics* from the school and replace it with biblical ethics—but to no avail. Harvard College was under complete control of the Latitudinarians by 1705.¹

It wasn't as much the Greeks and the Romans that set the course for the Western world as it was the philosophers who attended those universities. In the end, it was Christian apostates like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, Karl Marx, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Charles Darwin, and John Dewey who made the difference. At first, they may have drunk deeply of the humanist wells of the old Greek and Roman writers, then later developed their own version of humanism for the Christianized west. Whereas Christian thought overwhelmed

1. Michael G. Hall, *The Last American Puritan - The Life of Increase Mather* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1988), 199, 321.

pagan thinking from 475 A.D. through 1200 A.D., it was humanist ideologies that would overcome Christian thought in the West during the subsequent eight hundred years (from 1200 A.D. through 2000 A.D.).

The literary giants took their queues from the philosophical giants and weaned the American liberal arts curriculum away from Christian thinking entirely. It was a gradual process, but by the end of the 19th century John Calvin and John Bunyan were far less important in America's high school literature curriculum than the great Transcendentalists and humanists such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman, William Shakespeare, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Mark Twain.

If American secular high schools of the 20th century were self-consciously humanist in their trajectory, it would be helpful for Christians to consider the lists of core books which made up the liberal arts curriculum. A critical worldview analysis of these books is certainly in order for anybody who cares about the demise of the Christian faith in the West. This is the gist of the second section of the book. Typically the books assigned include classics such as William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*, Stephen Crane's *Red Badge of Courage*, Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, Ernest Hemingway's *Old Man and the Sea*, John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, or J.D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*.²

For those who didn't pay attention in their high school liberal arts classes, there was always college. The university provided even more opportunities for total immersion in the humanist ideas of the philosophers and the liberal arts masters.

Most high schools and colleges in the latter 19th and 20th centuries never used Augustine's *Confessions* or John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* in the literature class. In the vast majority of the schools, they selected the books written by Unitarians, Transcendentalists, Latitudinarians, Atheists, Deists, and Greeks first. For most students, the writings of Nathaniel Hawthorne and Mark Twain were far more important than the Sunday School stories. After all, *these were the "great" books and the "great" authors, and they shaped the thinking of hundreds of millions of American school children for the last five to six generations.*

This is no time for naiveté for the Christian student. Educational

2. Reference <http://nylusmilk.wordpress.com/2008/11/28/top-10-most-taught-books-in-high-school/>, and <http://www.goodreads.com/shelf/show/high-school-literature>

method and content are both important. If we have learned anything from the last two hundred years, it is that ideas can be extremely dangerous. Schools can be intellectually and spiritually fatal for the unwary student. Should a family set their children at the feet of the wrong teachers, they will destroy the faith within a generation or two.

In this book, we will first proceed with the seminal thinkers: the philosophers who dismantled the Christian faith in the Western world and replaced it with humanist ideas and institutions. As always happens to empires built on man-centered ideas, these humanist empires will soon collapse. The Christian foundations of Western civilization were sound before the humanist empires came along. But when their philosophies introduced dryrot into the foundations that were originally Christian, they planted the seeds of their own destruction. By the end of this book, I hope the reader will fully understand how this happened.

THE WAR OF IDEAS

Why then spend any time grappling with the philosophies of these great thinkers who led the Western world to its present state? The answer should be obvious because it is contained within the question. If these ideas are widely incorporated into modern life, certainly we ought to understand something about the ideas upon which our system operates today. However, we are also called to battle. Not all ideas contain equal truth value, and some ideas can bring about unimaginable destruction! For the Christian to refuse to fight in the war of ideas is to capitulate and to lose the war against the world, the flesh, and the devil. Paul delivers these marching orders in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5. It is our duty to “cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself above the knowledge of God in Christ.” It is not for us to fear evil. It is for us to fear God, and reprove the unfruitful works of darkness.

For the love of our families and our fellow man, we need to be aware of the influence of the exceedingly powerful humanist philosophers, and the real and present danger that attends the outworking of their ideas. Dr. Benjamin Wiker, in his book *Ten Books That Screwed up the World and Five Others That Didn't Help*, tells the story of the Scottish essayist, Thomas Carlyle. He “was once scolded at a dinner party for endlessly chattering about books: ‘Ideas, Mr. Carlyle, ideas, nothing but ideas!’ To which he replied, ‘There once was a man called Rousseau who wrote a

book containing nothing but ideas. The second edition was bound in the skins of those who laughed at the first.” Of course, Carlyle speaks of the bloody nightmare of the French Revolution that formed out of the ideas of Rousseau.

The battle of ideas is harrowing and difficult, so as a father, I am hesitant to have my young children engage it by themselves. The great thinkers can be dangerous men, and they are very accomplished at what they do. Our young men and women may have a hard time comprehending the writings of the philosophers, let alone understanding the harmful character of the ideas expressed. On first pass, they will not catch all of the nuances, the double entendres, and the worldview perspectives conveyed in the writings. I want to bring them into the battle of ideas, but I know they will not be able to wage war at the level of these literary masters.

I would freely admit that the battle is not for everybody. It is neither for the faint of heart, nor the faithless, nor for the immature student. But the reader must understand that liberal arts education at the high school and college levels, in secular schools, Christian schools, classical schools, and home schools have generally failed to properly address the antithesis. The source of much of Western apostasy is found in the liberal arts classroom. *An uncritical consideration of the “Great” Literature programs is perilous and corrupting.* I place the word “great” between quotations for a reason. Aristotle was *not* great, and Thomas Aquinas was *not* great.³ Karl Marx and Mark Twain were *not* great thinkers or writers. They may have been skilled at wielding the sword of the pen, but they used it for the wrong ends. These men openly opposed a biblical theory of truth and ethics. For some reason, even Christian academics are very reticent to

3. The Reformers understood these issues clearly. John Knox’s dying words included the warning, “Beware of the universities!”

Also, the great German Reformer, Martin Luther warned of Aristotelian thinking that had crept into the church: “My soul longs for nothing so ardently as to expose and publicly shame that Greek buffoon, who like a spectre has befooled the Church. If Aristotle had not lived in the flesh I should not hesitate to call him a devil.”

Luther continued, “The schoolmen had forced the contents of divine revelation into the thought forms of the Aristotelian philosophy. In course of time they had borrowed from him not only the dialectical forms, but also his definitions and principles. Aristotle had behaved himself as the proverbial camel. At first the schoolmen had allowed him to protrude his nose into the tent of Christian theology. He had ended by forcing his way in completely. Philosophy at first had acted as the handmaid of theology, but finally became its mistress. Hagar had usurped Sarah’s place. The teaching of the Church had been corrupted by a rationalism, in which Aristotle had been permitted to sit in judgment on Christ and the Apostles. . . The greatest part of my cross is to be forced to see brothers with brilliant minds, born for useful studies, compelled to spend their lives and waste their labor in these follies.”

criticize the major humanist thinkers who destroyed the Christian West. *Incredibly, one philosophy professor from a Christian college even attempts a soft sell on Karl Marx*, claiming that, “Marx, at least philosophically, must be credited with good intentions, but his ideas have been applied badly. Any great idea can be perverted.”⁴ This analysis of Karl Marx is at best blindness. At worst, the professor renders complicit aid to a madman whose evil ideas resulted in the deaths of hundreds of millions of people! All of Marx’s “great” ideas stand in stark opposition to a biblical metaphysic, a biblical epistemology, a biblical theory of history, a biblical ethic, a biblical social theory, a biblical political theory, and a biblical economic theory. How could any Christian ever approve of this man’s “great” ideas?

Another liberal arts professor at a well-known Christian college goes to great lengths to defend Hawthorne’s “hell-fired” tale, *The Scarlet Letter* as a “Christian classic” that in this man’s words, portrays “the heart of the Christian gospel.”⁵ Clearly, Nathaniel Hawthorne would have disagreed with the good professor. Many, if not most Christian liberal arts professors hesitate to criticize the philosophical method, the metaphysical construct, the meta-ethical theory, the political theory, the social theory, or the economic theory of the “Great” thinkers, because they themselves lack a well-defined biblical epistemology and ethic. The Bible for them is a collection of stories that bears no distinctive worldview. They cannot see that the Bible provides a law-order for life, and the only basis for truth. They prefer natural law or Aristotelian law or Jeremy Bentham’s utilitarianism to biblical law. For this reason, these “Christian” intellectuals render themselves powerless in the battle of ideas, and they only give aid to the enemy.

Some of those who read the great Humanist (or Apostate) writers wish to separate the content of their writings from their method. But can one really enjoy the *experience* of the story while rejecting the *meaning* of the story? The American author, Flannery O’Connor would never separate the story itself from the meaning of the story: “The whole story is the meaning, because it is an experience, not an abstraction.”⁶ Would Paul have appreciated the artistry of the idol sculptors of Athens, while

4. John Mark Reynolds, ed., *The Great Books Reader* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2011), 513.

5. Leland Ryken, *Realms of Gold* (Wheaton: Harold Shaw, 1991), 153.

6. Flannery O’Connor, *Mystery and Manners*, ed. Sally and Robert Fitzgerald (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1961), 73.

at the same time condemning the idolatry of it? Or would he forget to condemn the idolatry in his fixation on the method? This business of remaining “unspotted from the world” (James 1:27) is not easy to achieve. As Christians sidle up to the artistry of the idolatrous and the banquet tables of the idols in Athens, they run the risk of imbibing deeply of the idolatry itself. They may wish to borrow the “turn of a phrase” from humanist authors or they may admire their use of satire. But it is far too tempting for the serious Christian liberal arts student to take on the academic pride of the Greeks, the high-handed skepticism and cynicism of Mark Twain, and the tortured, doubting mind of Nathaniel Hawthorne. How can one approve of a humanist classic (written by the Greeks or the Christian apostates) for its story and method, while rejecting the ideas contained in it?

This is not to say that one can never borrow anything from the pagans. They brush their teeth and trim their nails too. When analyzing their stories and writings, one must cut ever so carefully between the contours of truth and error. I recommend a thin scalpel. This is especially true when the writers themselves are the product of one thousand years of Christian heritage, while at the same time they are nurturing a slow and steady apostasy that will work its way out over three hundred years. When they are in the midst of the war of ideas, Christians must be extremely careful not to synthesize the ideas of the enemy. Regrettably, this is the sad legacy of Christian seminaries, colleges, and schools for the last 800 years of history. One would think that the last few believers remaining in the Western world have learned this lesson by now.

Of course Christians belong in the battle, but they must *do more battle*. Liberal arts instruction in most Christian colleges and secular colleges is more toxic to the Christian faith than any other teaching coming out of these schools.⁷ Because the Christian liberal arts schools fail to engage the antithesis in the battle of ideas, they are responsible for the failure of the faith in the Western world. This is why practically every Christian college and seminary has rejected all semblance of the biblical faith over the last 800 years (since Thomas Aquinas). All the while, these Christian institutions are preparing the future pastors, educational

7. Unbelievably, nearly twice as many Religion Department Heads in Christian Colleges hold to evolutionary naturalism in origins than Science Department Heads; and it is not because the Religion Department heads are better trained in science! The liberal arts students and professors are almost always more likely to compromise with humanism than others. Source: Ken Ham, *Already Compromised*.

leaders, and political leaders to lead our nations towards more man-centered humanism or liberalism. The liberal arts colleges usually tell their students to “join in the great conversation with the great thinkers and writers in Western civilization.”⁸ We say instead, “*Welcome to the Great Confrontation!*”

8. Reynolds, *Great Books Reader*, 12.