

Notes on
“Assumptions that Affect our lives”
By Christian Overman

Introductory Concepts

Behind important decisions are some even more important underlying assumptions. Assumptions mold our way of thinking, shape our conclusions, and direct the decisions that lie behind our actions and attitudes. The amazing part is, the “assumption” part of our decision-making process is usually the part that gets the least examination. We continue to live and act in certain ways until we become convinced our assumptions are in need of a change. Everyone’s actions and attitudes are affected by the assumptions they hold.

We need to question why we act the way we do and why others act the way they do. What assumptions affect our lives?

Greek thought versus Hebraic thought

For those of us who live in the “Western world”, our cultural roots go back primarily to two historic starting points: the ancient Greeks and the ancient Hebrews. It was the **Greeks** who laid certain cornerstones of Western culture, shaping our ground rules for *philosophy, science, politics and education*, as well as competitive sports and creative arts. Thales, Anaximander, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and others left their fingerprints on our ways of thinking.

As for the ancient **Hebrews**, our concepts of *morality, law and ethics* are unmistakably rooted in the Bible. Justice, virtue, good and evil, right and wrong all have meaning for us because of the Bible. Hebraic thought patterns were so radically different from those of the Greeks that ancient Hebrews would not tolerate the study of Greek philosophy in their schools.

In the Talmud, the collection of ancient Hebrew writings that provide the basis of authority for Orthodox Judaism, we are told of a young man who wanted to study the “Greek wisdom”. His uncle, a rabbi, reminded him of Joshua 1:8 and said, “find a time that is neither day nor night, and learn Greek wisdom” (Menachot 99b). The difference in culture prompted the early historian Tertullian to ask, “What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?” The implied answer, of course, was “Nothing.”

The **Bible did not come from Hebraic culture, it came through it**. In order to understand the Bible clearly, we need to read it through the eyes of Hebrew culture and custom. For example, “Your belly is like a heap of wheat” does not mean that one has a round, full stomach. That is Greek thinking (which longs for photographic expression, with emphasis placed on how things appear to the human eye). The Hebrews, on the other hand, were concerned with the essence of things. The essence of a heap of wheat is abundant fruitfulness and bountiful harvest. It communicates prosperity and childbearing – something of great value to a Middle Eastern man. This woman was no ordinary girl.

The Greeks thought of history as a never-ending cycle of aimless repetition. Hebrews thought of history as going somewhere with purpose: a straight line, like an arrow toward a target which was the plan of God. These ideas are important as we begin to assess our own assumptions and thought patterns and determine if they are biblical or unbiblical. Consider how different our present culture is from the 1950's. Our present 21st century culture looks remarkable like Ancient Greece during the later years of its decline. It has not happened overnight, but in a single generation our cultural assumptions have been replaced with new ones: new to us, but not new to history.

The Concepts of God and Man

How did life originate? The Bible says that God created the heavens and earth. Thales, sometimes called the "Father of Western philosophy", lived over 2500 years ago and was the first "Darwin Evolutionist". It was with him, among the Ionians in what is now western Turkey, that secular thought was born. The Ionians started an ancient "gods are dead" movement.

Aristotle also believed that life sprang spontaneously from non-living matter. Early Greeks believed that life forms owed their origin to the earth itself: Mother Earth, Nature, Indefinite-infinite, force, whatever it was called – this was absurd to the ancient Hebrew.

In Hebrew thought, God is personal and all-powerful. He loves, He reasons, He has purpose in mind. Only the God of the Hebrews is entirely personal and unlimited at the same time. The Bible presents a view in which God the Creator is as active in the continuance of nature as he was in its inception. He is equally present in the ordinary and the miraculous.

Made in His Image

GODISNOWHERE

Two different people looking at the same configuration can see two entirely opposite messages. So it is with people looking at human beings. This is because the conclusions people draw about the nature and value of human beings is entirely dependent upon the assumptions they start with regarding how man originated. Without God, life has no meaning or value.

What makes a human being "human" and gives it worth? According to the Hebrew, it is the fact that we are the result of a deliberate, premeditated act of the triune God. We are as distinct from the animals as we are the plants. Consider:

- 1) God created man on an entirely different day as plants or animals
- 2) God breathed into man, alone, the breath of life
- 3) Man is made in the "image of God"

What does it mean to be made in the image of God? God is highly personal, He thinks rational and orderly thoughts, uses language to communicate meaning and

purpose, makes plans and follows through by a choice of His will, has a wide spectrum of emotion, is creative and is a spiritual being. *God chose to make man this way because he had a very unique and special purpose I mind: relationship.*

If God has value, and certainly He does, then man has value. If God has worth then my neighbors have worth, whether they are Christian or atheist, Hindu or Muslim, black, yellow, red or white.

The Value of Human Life in Sparta and Athens

When a culture fails to recognize this unique basis for human worth the value of man dissipates, man and animals blend into one and people lose their sense of humanity and act more like animals than men. Such was the case in ancient Sparta.

In ancient Sparta, the interests of the state provided the sole basis of human worth and moral values. Young boys were given to, raised by and wholly served the state. There was no greater good than the good of the whole. It was the most brazen examples of statism the world has ever known.

While Sparta worshipped the state, one hundred miles away another Greek city, Athens, worshipped the individual. As the Athenian statesman Pericles said, "Each single one of our citizens, in all the manifold aspects of life, is able to show himself the rightful lord and owner of his own person, and to do this, moreover, with exceptional grace and exceptional versatility."

In Athens and Sparta, infanticide was commonly practiced. In Sparta it was practiced in order to eliminate the weak and small in order to have a stronger military. In Athens it was practiced in order to eliminate any child that threatened the "good life" (to safeguard against overpopulation and the depletion of natural resources).

Two different cities used two very different standards of measurement for determining human worth and values. One exalted individualism, the other, collectivism. And these concepts have never died. Yet, in spite of their seemingly opposite views, they both shared the same bottom-line assumption – as Protagoras himself stated, "man is the measure of all things". This, in seven words, explains why Athens and Jerusalem could not co-exist.

Concepts of Morality, Order and Human Responsibility

Objective Measurements

What do a carpenter, a cook and an airplane pilot have in common? They all depend upon objective instruments of measurement to do their jobs. For the Hebrew, an objective, superhuman source of information was an absolute necessity in defining human values. To look within oneself or within one's society, for the standards by which to measure values was to look in the wrong direction. Man is simply not qualified in and of himself to be his own standard of moral or ethical measurement.

Neither the individual nor the group could rightly shape human values, mold truth or measure morality. It was God's unchanging law which was the highest code. The revelation of God's law was never subject to vote, public opinion nor human approval. It

was simply non-negotiable. The Hebrews believed that without God there was no basis for objective ethics.

The very words “absolute values” were foolishness to the Greeks. To them, “truth” was a matter of opinion (this was the argument of the Sophists). Here then is the basic difference between the Hebraic view of truth and the Greek view: The Greeks based their culture upon the assumption that human reasoning was a sufficient starting point for determining truth, measuring values and molding morality while the Hebrews based their culture upon the assumption that divine revelation was the only starting point for such things. Hebrew faith did not abandon reason. It simply gave it a much different place than the Greeks.

Reason or Revelation?

Revelation is not something that bypasses the human capacity for reason, but rather, it is something to which human reasoning submits, and finds pleasure and satisfaction in so doing. Human reason was not designed to function independently of divine revelation. *The basic question is: Are human minds and senses sufficiently equipped and qualified in and of themselves to be the final judges of what is right, proper, good and true, or does one need assistance from a superhuman source beyond man's limited experience and reason?*

What is Freedom?

Does freedom mean that we are free to do whatever we want whenever we want without being under obligation? No. We live within physical bounds, mental bounds and also moral bounds. Are men free to determine their own moral boundaries or are they already set in place, like the law of gravity? Here is where Hebrew assumptions collided with Greek assumptions like freight trains in the night.

One might say that man has “freedom” to violate the moral code in the same way he has “freedom” to jump off a bridge. Yes, he can do it, but he will have to pay the inevitable consequences. Man is not free to break God's moral laws. God's laws, when violated, break men. And cultures, too. Greek religion simply did not provide a standard basis for morality common to all men.

What, then, is freedom? Freedom, in a world of transcendent law and orderliness, is the recognition of those laws and living in harmony with them. To be free, then, is to submit oneself to the prescribed order of things, and function responsibly and creatively within the boundaries God has lovingly provided for our good and well-being.

Here, then, is one of the great paradoxes of life: Human freedom is found in submission to the will of God.

Who Rules the Planet?

God's first recorded words concerning man's purpose are, “Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness, and let him rule...over all the earth...” (Gen. 1:26)

True, God made the heavens and the earth, but then he tossed the ball back into our court, right from the start of the game. Yet, while he gave us a charge to rule the earth, He did not give us a license to rule it in any way we please.

We are the only creature that He gave stewardship over the earth, a mandate of great responsibility and honor. Yet, though we are commissioned to rule over it, we do not own it. Man was not crowned king, but only made a deputy. Unlike the monkey, man could not be pre-programmed by instinct to behave certain ways. Being made in God's image would not permit it. Everyone has been given some sphere over which he is responsible. Now, pause and think for a moment. Consider your own sphere of responsibility. What has he placed in your hands? What has he given you to steward? To care for? To cultivate? To dress and keep. What has he placed before you to develop? To foster? To invent? To refine? To advance? In what ways are you using those endowments He gave you in the likeness of himself to care for and cultivate His world?

Four Misconceptions Concerning the Fall of Man

- 1) The fall did not mean that God forfeited His creation, or His position as Lord over all
- 2) The fall does not mean God's intention for man to rule over all the earth was revoked
- 3) The fall does not mean that man no longer bears the image and likeness of God
- 4) The fall does not mean that man lost his innate value or worth

Concepts of Family

Greek Assumptions and Unwanted Children

If a child was viewed as a deterrent of the "good life" of Athens it was eliminated. If a child was viewed as a hindrance to the strength of the city-state of Sparta, it was terminated. In both places, the value of a child's life was measured in terms of social benefit, or social detriment – an idea which has been revived in 20th and 21st century Western culture (Whether Nazi Germany, or the local abortion clinic).

How could our culture change in one generation? Our assumptions have changed. What most Americans assumed to be true about ourselves and our offspring, many no longer hold to be true. Cutting himself from the original Father, modern man has successfully severed himself from any basis of identity beyond that of a colossal cosmic accident, possessing only whatever relative value society may or may not choose to give him. The True view is that children, indeed all people, do not need to achieve anything to earn our utmost respect. They must be regarded as full persons. To be human is to be valuable, for humans are made in the image of God.

Hebrew "Family Values"

In ancient Israel, it was the family that served as the basic building block of their society. For the Spartans it was the army barrack. For the Athenians, cultural individualism brought about an ancient women's liberation movement, the devaluing of motherhood as well as fatherhood.

What assumptions made the difference for the Hebrews? **First**, Hebrew parents viewed children as entrusted to them by God, and received them into their households like divine appointments. **Second**, they believed that the father's duty was to take an

active role in the instruction of the family. **Thirdly**, they believed that the children were not the center of the home.

The Greeks and Nazis exalted youth, while the Hebrews did not exalt them nor look to them for answers. Israel was an elder-oriented society. It venerated age. Hebrew children were to honor their parents and elders for a very good reason – the hope of the future rested in the hands of the adults. For better or for worse, as the fathers went, so went the nation. This was in striking contrast to the attitude of ancient Athens, which treated age unkindly.

Fourthly, the Hebrew family understood that the individual family was but a part of something much larger than itself: a community with a common history, a joint destiny, and shared values.

The Duty of the Hebrew Parent

A man or woman, boy or girl, with self control operative in his or her life is a person who can be trusted with freedom. The scriptures tell us that a person with self-control is stronger than a person who captures an entire city. How rare it is today. We live 1 a day when self-expression is valued above self-control. As unpopular as the view may be, children are naturally foolish and self-seeking and need alteration of their natural behavior. This is the job of the parents.

The role of parents is to bring about the external discipline necessary to bring about internal discipline in their children. Responsible parents call children to a standard they would not otherwise enter into by themselves. The Hebrew word for parents (*horim*) and the word for teacher (*morim*) are similar. They sound the same. They mean the same. Both words mean to teach, to instruct. Hebrew parents were instructed to teach the words of God to their children all day long (Deut. 6:4-9), and to their children and grandchildren (Deut.6: 9-10). That pretty well covered a lifetime. The home was the primary schoolhouse. The parents were to live and teach the commands of the Lord. If they do not train the children to acknowledge God, they will, by default, teach them to ignore Him.

Philosophical Concepts

Why the Hebrews were poor philosophers

The Greeks had an enormous influence on the West in terms of philosophy. They have shaped our assumptions tremendously.

Abraham – father

Moses – prophet

Paul – apostle

Socrates – philosopher

Plato – philosopher

Aristotle – philosopher

Not a single Hebrew would we think of in terms of philosophy. Why?

Greeks became disillusioned by the gods of mythology (they were too human to be divine, to unbelievable to be real) They sought to discover another kind of truth, which led them to philosophy based on human reason. Greek philosophy involved the pursuit of wisdom by the light of human reason, Hebrews by divine revelation. The Hebrews

did not go through a cultural crisis of theology, as the Greeks did. They did not spend their time questioning God's existence. Their questions had to do with what He required of them. "The Greeks learned in order to comprehend. The Hebrews learned in order to revere."

Philosophy did not do well in Israel because the "better answers than mythology could provide," which the Greek philosophers sought out, were those the Hebrews believed they had already found.

Plato's Shadow

Ideas do make a difference! And significant ideas cast much longer shadows than the men and women who originally think them. The shadow of Plato is over 2,300 years long, and it has not faded. His thoughts have had more affect on the way Westerners think than perhaps any other mortal man in history.

Protagoras was the author of the famous saying "Man is the measure of all things". He and other Sophists (5th century B.C.) held that truth was what an individual person believed it to be. Among the first Greek paid teachers, they began training young men for successful careers, stressing personal fulfillment. It was during this time that Socrates came into the picture. He did not want to be connected with the Sophists. His focus was on non-materialistic concepts such as "goodness", "justice", "virtue" and "the best way to live." He leaned on human reason to find his answers. His famous dialectic method of teaching involved asking his students searching questions in an effort to cause them to arrive at their own personal values.

Plato, the most famous pupil of Socrates, also reacted to the materialism of the Sophists. The ideals of Socrates and Plato centered around the recognition of unchanging universals (i.e., universal truths and values) which would give true significance to all of the changing particulars in the material world that came and went with the passing of time. Plato's philosophy of metaphysical idealism stressed the value of eternal, perfect, non-deteriorating ideals in contrast to temporal, imperfect, deteriorating things.

Plato split the world into two distinct arenas (dualism): an upper area of eternal, non-material ideals (form), and a lower level of temporal, physical matter (matter). The outcome of Plato's thought was a devaluing of the physical world and a mystical elevating of the unseen world of ideals and eternal "forms."

The Problem with Plato's Dualism

Someone has aptly said, "The most effective lies are those which come as close to the truth as possible."

The truth about Plato's dualism:

- 1) Plato and the Bible teach that there is truly a distinction between the temporal and the eternal. Eternal things are not affected by time. Temporal things are temporary.
- 2) Both Plato and the prophets understood that you can not take it with you, and it is foolish to try to live life as though you could
- 3) Both Plato and the Bible speak of two different aspects of reality – the physical and the non- physical. The Bible, however does not teach that the temporal world is inherently devalued or any less real or significant

than the spiritual world. God is constantly at work in the physical world, which declares his glory. God made it and continues to sustain it – who is man to downgrade it?

The God of the Bible is the God of the physical as well as the spiritual. Hebraic thought affirms the physical world with vigor and thanksgiving. Instead of elevating the soul and downplaying the body, the Hebrews sought to worship God fully in both. Hebrews sought to enjoy every legitimate pleasure as gratefulness to God. They valued manual labor (which the Greeks thought beneath them).

Tracing Plato through the Church

Plato's dualistic views became mixed with Christian teaching and this has produced long-lasting negative effects in the Church. This mixture took place especially in Alexandria, Egypt (the chief center for Greek thought near the time of Christ), under the guiding hand of Philo Judaeus, who is thought to have died in about A.D. 50.

As we saw earlier, there are certain similarities between Plato and the Bible, just as there are certain similarities between a man and a monkey. When you merge the man and monkey, the monkey never becomes human, but the human becomes, in popular belief, an animal, losing his unique identity as an image-bearer of God. The same thing happens when you merge Plato and the Bible, the true identity of God's Word is lost.

Greek thought brought dualism into the Church. Philo, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Plotinus (a third-century Roman philosopher who influenced Augustine) and Augustine all had a hand in bringing Platonic ideals into the Church. A group called "Gnostics" later taught that salvation was a matter of removing oneself from the world as much as possible so that a mystical union with God could be attained. This early heresy taught that the world itself was an evil prison from which man needed to be rescued.

The Hebrew concept of holiness does not mean that a person detaches himself from the physical world or legitimate pleasures found therein. Holiness does mean, however, that a person learns to control his passions instead of being controlled by them, submitting to God's good authority throughout every aspect of creation. The Christian must not view the body as something evil, or a prison from which to be rescued, but rather as a temple indwelt by God himself. One cannot deny the physical world and be a responsible steward over it at the same time.

Even today, spirituality is often focused on the contemplative life of the inner experience of the soul, indirectly de-emphasizing the value of active roles of Christians in the world of temporal concerns. If I want to become spiritual, I need to become a pastor, not a politician or plumber.

The Influence of Aristotle on Western Civilization

Aristotle was a student of Plato, but his interests were much more in the here-and-now world of physical matter, covering ethics, politics, science and metaphysics. He is sometimes called the father of the Scientific Method and the founder of logic. His writings were not incorporated into the thinking of the early church. They were,

however, nurtured by the Moslems via Arabic translations and became known to the church in the eleventh century.

With the coming of this knowledge, came a new interest in the physical world. Aristotle accumulated his knowledge apart from the Bible, based on reason – here the church was not an authority. Reason is part of God’s likeness in man. However, when one leans wholly upon reason independent from revelation, reason reasons out revelation. This is what slowly took place on the European stage between the 1200s and the 1700s.

In the 1200s Thomas Aquinas sought to accommodate the work of Aristotle with the church. This Thomistic Scholasticism brought together reason-based and revelation-based thinking into a new acceptable whole. He did this by dividing life into two distinct realms: the realm of Nature and the realm of Grace.

- Grace: God, angels, prayer, worship, matters having to do with the supernatural, eternal, spiritual realm
- Nature: Science, logic, economics,, etc. – matters having to do with the natural, temporal, material realm

Although Aquinas never intended for the two realms to be in opposition to one another, by the 1700’s the “dark ages” gave way to the “Enlightenment”, a new period of disregard for revelation and a high regard for reason. This is the Age of Neopaganism. We are still living in this age today.

Overcoming Dualism

Aristotle’s Dualistic thinking causes us to divide our world into:

Sacred	Secular
Cathedral	Skyscraper
Bible	<i>Black Beauty</i>
<i>How Great Thou Art</i>	<i>Beethoven’s 5th</i>
<i>The Last Supper</i>	<i>Mona Lisa</i>
Pastor	Factory Worker

In reality however, there is no part of our life that is not connected with God in a very direct and significant way. God is relevant in all aspects of life. God holds both the skyscraper and the cathedral together. God gave the architects the ability to contrive and design them both. God gives the ability for any musical or artist to do their creative work. Neither the color black, nor beauty, nor horses are “secular”. In short, the “secular/sacred” dualism is not legitimate. It confuses the real issues and misleads people into thinking that certain aspects of life pertain to God, while others do not.

While the word “secular “ may be used to identify a sphere in life in which God is ignored, it cannot be used to identify a sphere in life in which God is irrelevant. Such a “secular world does not exist.

How then should we think of life? We would view it more correctly if we saw things more like Abraham and less like Plato.

(Greek thought)	Form ----- Matter	=	(Modern thought)	Sacred ----- Secular
			chu/rch sch/ool a/rt ho/me	
Hebrew Thought:	Things in conflict with God's design (evil)		mu/sic dra/ma spo/rts busi/ness l/aw la/bor s/ex medi/cine	Things in harmony with God's design (good)

Any particular aspect of life may shift from one side to the other.

For the Hebrew, life and worship were inseparable. For them, there were no sacred moments interspersed among secular pursuits. The Hebrew word for worship and work are the same: *adovah*. This gives us a hint to the view of the unity and wholeness of life under God, in which one's work is as much an expression of response to Him as one's prayer. On the other hand, in ancient Greece religion played a part, but remained just that – a part.

Biblical dualism, then, is not between "sacred" and "secular," in contrived upper and lower levels of life, but rather between that which is in harmony with God's design or in conflict with it, that is, between good and evil.

Concepts of the Kingdom of God, Civil Government and Education

What are the Borders of the Kingdom of God?

Our Lord is Lord of heaven and earth, even though not everybody on earth knows or acknowledges him as such. By virtue of His creating and sustaining of the whole earth, all its contents are His. Because of the Fall, man now lives in an abnormal and distorted world. Things are not the way God originally made them to be. Satan, to, is very much a ruler on planet earth, at least for a season. Yet, he is the ruler of this world system. The kingdoms of heaven and of this world are simultaneously operating on earth today. Until the harvest, both good and bad seed are growing in God's field, which is God's created earth itself.

The health and well-being of the local church is vital to each and every community. We must have strong churches, but we need strong city councils, businesses, farms, schools and homes as well. We are responsible to be salt and light. In abdicating responsibility throughout God's kingdom at large, Christians have created a cultural vacuum of labor, influence and leadership which the ungodly have come in to fill. The fact is, someone is going to exercise rulership in the earth. If not the godly, then the ungodly.

Christian Principle, Civil Government and Early America

The United States was founded on the Hebrew ethics of the Bible. Daniel Webster said, "Whatever makes men good Christians makes them good citizens." In 1852, Robert Winthrop put it this way: "Men, in a word, must necessarily be controlled either by a power within them, or by a power without them; either by the Word of God, or by the strong arm of man; either by the Bible or by the bayonet."

The very basis of law in early America was founded on the Bible. Our culture was emphatically Christian. It is not so today. Today there is a notion that there must be a "separation between the church and the state" (a phrase which does not appear in the constitution). In reality, Congress was forbidden from interfering with the right of American people to freely exercise their religious convictions. Yet, the First Amendment was not intended to divorce Christian principles from civil government. There is a big difference between separation of church and state and separation of God and government.

An Hebraic Education

Our schools are in a mess, but significant and lasting educational reform requires ethical, moral and spiritual reform, which will produce a reform our assumptions, and thus a reform in our way of educating.

According to William Barclay, education in Sparta was for "the obliteration of the individual in the service of the state". Athenian education was almost entirely individualistic. Barclay termed it "the training of the individual in the service of culture." As far as the ancient Hebrew was concerned, education had a much different goal. Among the Jews, Barclay wrote, education was for "the training of the individual in the service of God."

An authentic approach to education springs from a philosophy of life. The biblical model of educating the next generation begins with family, in the context of a home where two people, a father and a mother, are committed to each other and view the child as a temporary addition to the home for the purpose of nurturing and training in self-government under God. A second major component in the Hebrew model is a community of families with a commonly-held worldview. The Hebrews did think that it took a village to raise a child – however the definition of "village" was not a network of government social workers and programs. To them the "village" was a network of caring families and friends who share the same values.

The principle aim of learning was to gain wisdom and understanding. Abraham Heschel wrote, "To us, wisdom is the ability to look at all things from the point of view of God." For the Greek, education began and ended with man. Socrates said, "Know Thyself", while the cry of the Hebrew was, "know God."

The Hebrew model of education rests upon a moral base, not an academic one. The point is that knowledge and virtue must go hand in glove together. Knowledge being the glove and virtue being the hand that fills it, directs it and employs it for proper purposes.

Did the Puritans Know Something We Don't?

John Milton, famous Puritan leader of seventeenth century England, wrote concerning education, "The end then of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love Him, to imitate Him, to be like Him, as we may the nearest by possessing our souls of true virtue..." Milton's words capture the heart of the Hebrew model.

It is no surprise then that the Puritans saw value in all spheres of knowledge, and did not limit themselves to only so-called "religious" concerns. They had a balanced appreciation for both the spiritual as well as the intellectual aspects of life. They valued book learning as well as bench making. Although their zeal sometimes produced an unfortunate extremism in certain respects, they were passionate about seeing God honored in all of life. In fact, Yale was established in 1701 to be an institution where "youth may be instructed in the Arts and Sciences who through the blessing of Almighty God may be fitted for Public employment both in Church and in Civil State."

How Did We Get So Far Off Track?

As time went on, the prominence of Puritanism began to fade as the rising tide of the Enlightenment reached the shores of the New World, eventually leading to a rejection of revelation-based faith and an acceptance of reason-based faith. Reason-based faith entered Christianity in the form of Deism. Deism claimed that God created the world, but equipped man so that he could determine right and wrong by means of his own reason. The Bible was only true to the extent that it was in harmony with reason. The world was governed by "natural law". Reason eventually reasoned out both God and the Bible altogether.

The replacement of the God of the Bible with "Nature" [capital N] in the 18th and 19th centuries was a critical factor in the change of direction taken by Western thought, just as it was for the Greeks some two thousand years earlier. It only took a small step to go from Deism to Darwinism. Few, if any, ideas have had a greater impact on the modern world as has the theory of evolution. The incorporation of these changes into education took place largely through the work of John Dewey (1859-1952).

Dewey was influenced by the writings of William James, who carried Darwin's revolution into the field of psychology. James began with the assumption that truth was relative, always in a state of change and never in a fixed or absolute state. Only the fittest truths survive. This way of thinking, called pragmatism, is America's distinctive (and destructive) contribution to the stream of Western philosophic thought.

All schools, churches and civil institutions are faith-based. It can be no other way, for all ideologies are based on certain assumptions which can only be accepted by faith. It is not a question of whether or not religion will be allowed to mix with education, but which religion will be allowed to mix.

While Dewey incorporated these ideas into education, he did not try to conceal the fact that his way of thinking was indeed a faith – a nontheistic faith, but a faith nonetheless. Dewey's faith was called Secular Humanism. As non-theists, Humanists begin with humans, not God, with Nature, not deity (as did the Greeks). Ethics is autonomous and situational, needing no ideological or theological sanction. The Roman Empire could not survive with Greek assumptions, and neither will we.

Twenty-four Major Distinctions between Greek and Hebrew Thought:

1. Greek: Mother Earth is the impersonal source of all life on the planet
Hebrew: Father God is the personal source of all life on planet Earth as well as the planet itself and all things beyond
2. Greek: Nature is a self-generating force, operating according to its own closed system of laws and acting independently of any authority outside itself
Hebrew: Creation is generated by the Creator-God who made it for His purposes, operating according to laws designed and sustained by Him and subject to His authority.
* While the Greek sees laws of Nature, the Hebrew sees laws over nature.
3. Greek: Nature is “God” and “God” is Nature. All that is, is natural. The supernatural simply does not exist (Ionian thought)
Hebrew: Creation is God’s handiwork. God is not to be confused with what He has made, for He existed prior to and is distinct from that which He created. He is a supernatural being, inhabiting a supernatural as well as a natural, created world.
4. Greek: The Olympian Gods are personal, yet limited, while Nature is unlimited, yet impersonal
Hebrew: The God of Abraham is unlimited and yet personal
5. Greek: The gods are created in the image and likeness of man
Hebrew: Man is created in the image and likeness of God
6. Greek: Man is classified as an animal, distinguished by this specific difference man is a rational animal (Aristotle)
Hebrew: Man is differentiated from animals and unique from all other living things in that he is the only creature made in the likened and image of God.
7. Greek: Man’s appearance on earth is the result of an impersonal, Non-rational act of force called “Nature”. No purpose is involved. No meaning of existence is given. Mother Nature is silent
Hebrew: Man’s appearance on earth is premeditated by a personal, rational Being; a deliberate and decisive act of intelligence with purpose.

8. Greek: Mankind has no mandate from any source above man himself
- Hebrew: Man's divine mandate is to care for creation and to rule responsibly over the earth
9. Greek: Man's value and worth is determined by the society into which he is born
- Hebrew: Man has intrinsic value because he is created in the image and likeness of God. He has God-determined worth, independent of society's opinion
10. Greek: Truth is measured by Man's intellect and reasoned judgment. There is no divine standard or measure of truth which stands over and above man's determination of it. "Man is the measure of all things."
- Hebrew: Truth is determined by God, independently of man. God's word is the measure of all things. Man's opinion doesn't affect it in any way.
11. Greek: The faith of Greek philosophers is built upon reason acting independently of divine revelation
- Hebrew: The faith of the Hebrews is built upon revelation from God, to which human reason submits.
12. Greek: Religious expression is centered around rituals such as food offerings to gods and other rites. Correct ritual receives more emphasis than conduct. The gods do not speak to such issues as business, law, relationships, labor or family
- Hebrew: Religious expression is a commitment to a way of life. God is as relevant to behavior on the Sabbath as He is to what is done during the rest of the week. His word speaks to all spheres of life, be it business, law, relationships or family.
13. Greek: Religion is a personal choice, a private matter. There are many gods to worship and creeds to choose in Athens
- Hebrew: God and His Word are not dependent upon human acceptance or rejection. His reality and man's accountability to this reality stand, regardless of human consent
14. Greek: Moral conduct is relative to public opinion and/or individual conscience. The Greeks had no Bible to regulate thought or conduct. Values are relative to the social environment.

- Hebrew: Moral conduct is relative only to God's Word, and in this respect is absolute. Public opinion and individual conscience have no power to alter what God has declared true or morally right
15. Greek: For the citizen of Athens, to "show himself the rightful lord and owner of his own person in all the manifold aspects of life" is an exalted right (Pericles)
- Hebrew: For the Hebrew, to show himself the rightful and obedient servant of God his maker and owner is his joyful blessing, privilege, obligation
16. Greek: Human freedom is self-determined
- Hebrew: Human freedom is God-determined
17. Greek: Wisdom is found from within
- Hebrew: Wisdom is found from without. Foolishness is found from within
18. Greek: "Know thyself) (Socrates)
- Hebrew: Know God
19. Greek: "The Greeks learned in order to comprehend..."
- Hebrew: "The Hebrews learned in order to revere" (Abraham Heschel)
20. Greek: The Greek asked, "Why must I do it?"
- Hebrew: The Hebrew asked, "What must I do?" (Abraham Heschel)
21. Greek: In Sparta, education is for the obliteration of the individual in the service of the state." In Athens, it is for "the training of the individual in the service of the culture."
- Hebrew: In Israel, education is for "the training of the individual in the service of God" (William Barclay)
22. Greek: Manual labor is viewed by the philosophers as vulgar and beneath a citizen's dignity
- Hebrew: Trades are honored and manual labor is respected so much that the rabbis are expected to be proficient in a trade as well as Law.

23. Greek: Old age is feared

Hebrew: Old age is honored

24. Greek: History is viewed as a cycle of aimless repetition. The same basic pattern of life and death goes on with no particular end or destination in sight

Hebrew: History is viewed as going somewhere, like an arrow to its target.

There is a straight-line concept of history, with God working His purposes in the earth, culminating in the messianic reign of Israel's Redeemer