

The God of the Deists

Many other Western Christians, however, became convinced that the universe is closed system in which God no longer plays an active role. On the whole, the Western world did not abandon the idea of a Creator until the nineteenth century. What changed first was our understanding of God's relationship to the cosmos. Sure, God created the heavens and the earth. Before Darwin's theory of evolution sparked humans to look at other aspects of the universe through the lens of natural law, most folks assumed God made the material world. However, Westerners increasingly assumed that God no longer tampered with the world he had made. He was a master watchmaker who skillfully creates a quality timepiece, winds it up and then lets it run on its own. No longer was God assumed to be the sustainer and maintainer of the universe. He was now a distant deity whose relationship to creation ceased after the event of creation. He left the world to operate according to rules and laws, which he prescribed. The God of the deists, whom we've been describing, was a creative genius, but he was not an engaged father. Increasing knowledge of the natural world did not, in general, inspire greater awe of and dependence upon God, but less.

(E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O'Brien, *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible*, Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Books, 2012, 159; Excerpt from Part Three: Deep Below the Surface, Chapter 7. First Things First: Rules and Relationships)