

# [PDF] God's Funeral: The Decline Of Faith In Western Civilization

**A. N. Wilson - pdf download free book**

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**Books Details:**

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Author: A. N. Wilson  
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**Description:**

*God's Funeral* is A.N. Wilson's account of the decline of orthodox Christianity in Victorian Britain. The most popular explanation for this widely-recognized phenomenon is the acceptance by intellectuals of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. To disprove the notion that Darwin singlehandedly committed deicide, Wilson describes a host of secularizing predecessors and accomplices such as Hume, Gibbon, John Stuart Mill, Hegel, Marx, and Carlyle. All play major roles in Wilson's brilliantly staged reconstruction of the so-called death of God. *God's Funeral* also takes account of the pain and confusion these intellectuals brought upon themselves when their great achievements helped erode the social and intellectual foundations of their lives. Furthermore, Wilson shows how their crises of faith relate to our own. Like our Victorian forebears, contemporary

readers still must ask, "Is our personal religion that which links us to the ultimate reality, or is it the final human fantasy...?" and, "Is there a world of value outside ourselves, or do we, collectively and individually, invent what we call The Good?" *God's Funeral* helps readers learn to ask these questions in smarter and sharper ways by giving them a clearer sense of how Western society reached its current state of confusion.

**From Publishers Weekly** At the end of the 19th century, Christian theologian Ernst Troeltsch proclaimed that the sun was setting on Christianity, and poet Matthew Arnold declared that in the future poetry would replace religion. As Wilson (*The Vicar of Sorrows*) points out in this splendid book, the 19th century provided the context not only for theories of God's demise but also for the numerous challenges that political thinkers, scientists and artists posed to Christian belief. Yet, as he notes, while the battles between faith and doubt were raging, church attendance did not decline but remained constant. The famous debates between Thomas Huxley, Darwin's "bulldog," and Bishop Wilberforce contributed to an atmosphere of optimism about the perfectibility of humankind and the world. Wilson traces the development of this rise of unbelief from the 18th century to the early 20th century. He contends that Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, with its contempt of Christianity's "highest ideals," and David Hume's skeptical *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, which challenges the very possibility of the existence of the supernatural, provide the groundwork for the demise of belief in the 19th century. Wilson explores some of the most explicit instances of the century's intellectual challenges to faith: George Eliot's translations of Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity* and David Friedrich Strauss's *The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined*; Darwin's evolutionary formulations calling into question the idea of a special creation; Marx and Engels's charge that bourgeois institutions used religion to enslave people and make them weak; William James's reading of various religious states in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* as psychological states of mind. Eliot's translations alone introduced into England both Strauss's contentions that the life of Jesus was clothed in myth pictures like the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection and Feuerbach's claim that God was nothing more than a projection of humanity's wishes. Wilson examines also how the Catholic Church responded to the Modernist thought of Alfred Loisy, who imported much of the skepticism of the 19th century into his religious writings and challenged conventional Catholic teachings on the Church and the Bible. With passionate prose and a lively style, Wilson narrates a first-rate intellectual and religious history. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

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