

Rise & Response to Theological Liberalism

- Disclaimer
- Definition

1. Rise of Theological Liberalism

“The idea of liberal theology is nearly three centuries old. In essence, it is the idea that Christian theology can be genuinely Christian without being based upon external authority.” (Gary Dorrien, 2001)

Enlightenment (Immanuel Kant)

- Reason
- Individual autonomy
- Progress
- Innate goodness of man

Higher Criticism

The goal: reformulating Christianity for the Modern Age

Ends with the Masters of Suspicion: Marx, Nietzsche, Freud

2. Rise of Theological Liberalism

- Undermining the Bible (Reason Over Revelation)
- Downplaying Major Doctrines
- Emphasis on Ethics, not Doctrine

Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878 – 1969)

- Social Gospel

Walter Rauschenbusch (1861 – 1918)

“The essential purpose of Christianity was to transform human society into the kingdom of God by regenerating all human relations and reconstructing them in accordance with the will of God... the Christians Church has never undertaken to carry out this fundamental purpose of its existence.” *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1913)

- Redefining Missions

William Owen Carver (1868 – 1954):

“A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgement through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross.”

(H. Richard Niebuhr, 1937)

3. Response to Theological Liberalism

People

- Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield (1851-1921)

- J. Gresham Machen (1881 – 1937)

“Modern [theological] liberalism not only is a different religion from Christianity but belongs in a totally different class of religions.”

Christianity and Liberalism (1923)

“The truth is that if Jesus be merely an example, He is not a worthy example; for He claimed to be far more.”

Christianity and Liberalism (1923)