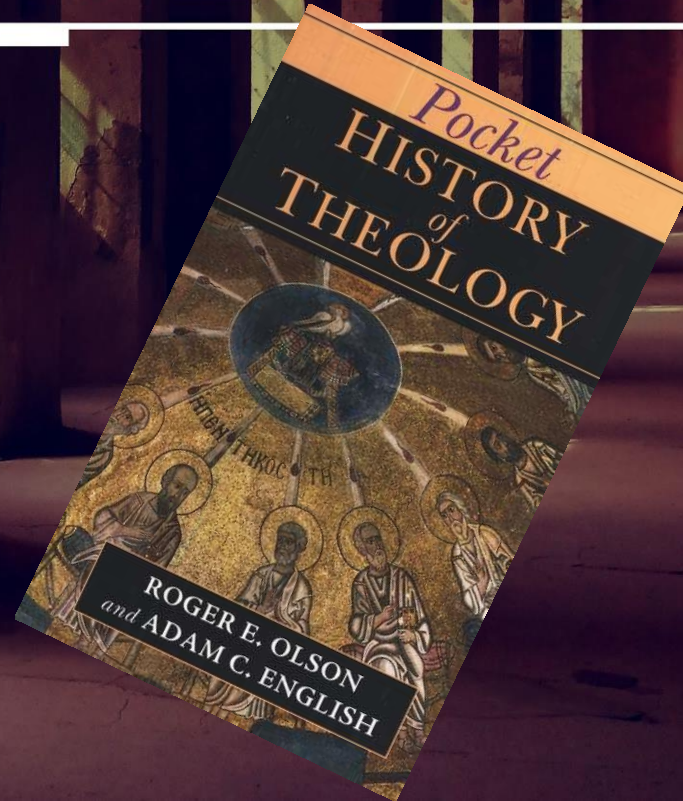


# CHURCH HISTORY

12



# Liberal Theology

- Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834).
- The “Father of Liberal theology”.
- Pastored the large and influential *Trinity Church* in Berlin as well as helped found the University of Berlin.
- He was a German national hero, powerful preacher and great intellectual.
- When he died in 1834 the people of Berlin lined the streets for his funeral.

# **Friedrich Schleiermacher**

- **Religion does not lie in rational proofs of the existence of God or supernaturally revealed dogmas.**
- **Religion lies in the feeling of being utterly dependent on something infinite that shows itself in and through finite things.**
- **We all have a deep inner awareness of something infinite beyond ourselves on which everything is dependent.**

# Friedrich Schleiermacher

- This *feeling* is a universal human God-consciousness.
- Schleiermacher removed external, authoritative and objective revelation from the center of religion and replaced it with inner feeling.
- i.e. “You ask me how I know he lives. He lives within my heart.”

# Friedrich Schleiermacher

- In the “Age of Reason/Enlightenment”, in which religion was being pushed to the side as irrational and superstitious, Schleiermacher was attempting to maintain a place for religion by moving it to the inner and private sphere.

# **Friedrich Schleiermacher**

- **Theology is not so much reflection on supernatural divine revelation as it is the attempt to set forth the Christian's feelings and experience into speech.**

# Friedrich Schleiermacher

- **Theological ideas like Christ's divinity, the atonement and the Trinity cannot be verified by reason and are not accessible to experience.**
- **i.e. A person may have an inner awareness of God, but not of the Trinity.**
- **Theology, therefore, became much more about ethics and psychology.**

# Friedrich Schleiermacher

- **Theology is about sharing one's personal testimony rather than God's revealed truth.**
- **The key Christian religious feeling is of being totally dependent on the redemptive work of Jesus Christ for one's relationship with God.**
- **It is on this basis that one interprets scripture.**
- **i.e. "What does this passage mean to you?"**



# Friedrich Schleiermacher

- Talk about God is always talk about the *human experience of God*.
- The Bible is the record of the most significant experiences people have had with God.

# Schleiermacher on Christ

- **The two natures of Christ is rejected – that Jesus was fully God and fully human.**
- **Instead, Jesus was just like every other human being other than that “he had an absolutely potent God-consciousness.”**
- **From Jesus’ birth on he lived in full awareness of his dependence on God and never sinned so as to violate that relationship.**

# **Schleiermacher on Christ**

**“The Redeemer, then, is like all people in virtue of the identity of human nature, but distinguished from them all by the constant potency of His God-consciousness, which was a veritable existence of God in Him.”**

# **Schleiermacher on Christ**

- **Because of Jesus' God-consciousness, he was the saviour of humanity because Jesus was able to communicate this God-consciousness to others.**
- **Jesus did this through the community he founded - the church.**

# **Schleiermacher on Christ**

- **Jesus draws believers into the power of God-consciousness and imparts it to them.**
- **Schleiermacher's view of the cross, then, is close to Abelard's moral influence model.**

# **Liberal Theology**

- **The great themes of doctrine developed over the hundreds of years of Church history were muted.**
- **Christianity was reduced to a few simple religious statements, a socialist political and economic program and the experiences and inner life of believers.**

# Liberal Theology

- **The height of liberal Protestant theology was the early 20<sup>th</sup> century – especially in the USA.**
- **It swept through the seminaries and many mainline denominations.**
- **Through many church and denominational fights and splits a strong reaction to liberal theology developed.**
- **Its most intense attack came under the name of “fundamentalism” in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.**

# **The Conservative/Fundamentalist Reaction**

- **Inspired by the revivals of DL Moody (1837-1899) and energized by the orthodoxy of theologian BB Warfield (1851-1921) at Princeton Seminary.**
- **Its passion was to defend the verbal inspiration and absolute infallibility/inerrancy of the Bible as well as all traditional doctrines of Protestant orthodoxy perceived under attack.**



# **The Conservative/Fundamentalist Reaction**

- **Fundamentalism began around 1910.**
- **At that time a series of booklets called *The Fundamentals* was sent free to thousands of pastors, denominational leaders and professors throughout the USA.**
- ***The Fundamentals* was a collection of 12 essays by leading conservative scholars.**

# **The Conservative/Fundamentalist Reaction**

- ***The Fundamentals*, and several other anti-liberal Christian documents, attempted to formulate what they believed were the fundamentals of the faith.**
- **The core beliefs as stated in the Apostle's and Nicene Creed were upheld.**
- **However, with these lists, other beliefs were upheld as “fundamentals” that were never before considered essential Christian doctrines by any significant group of Christians.**

# **The Conservative/Fundamentalist Reaction**

- **i.e. A strict view on the inerrancy of scripture and a literalist reading of it.**
- **i.e. A six day - 24 hour days - creation. (Some even dating creation at 4004 BC).**
- **i.e. Christ would return visibly and bodily to rule and reign on earth for 1000 years before the final resurrection and judgement.**
- **i.e. A rejection of any “social gospel” with the sole focus being on “saving souls” for “heaven.”**
- **Even some very conservative Protestants were shocked by these rigid positions.**

# **The Conservative/Fundamentalist Reaction**

- **From 1910-1960 the fundamentalist project became increasingly intense and militantly separatist as leaders within the movements fought and condemned each other as to what the fundamentals of the faith were.**

# Carl Henry and Billy Graham

- Conservative theologian and intellectual giant Carl Henry challenged fundamentalism's anti-intellectualism, divisiveness and rejection of social causes in his 1947 book *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*.
- Billy Graham challenged fundamentalism with his openness to working with all Christian groups (including Catholic) in the work of evangelism.

# Carl Henry and Billy Graham

- Together Carl Henry and Billy Graham begin the more inclusive and moderately conservative magazine *Christian Today* in 1956.
- Of *Christianity Today* Billy Graham hoped it would “plant the theological flag in the middle of the road, taking a conservative theological position but a definite liberal approach to social problems.” (Billy Graham letter to Harold Lindsell, Jan. 25, 1955).
- Modern day evangelicalism begins with Carl Henry as theologian, Billy Graham as evangelist and *Christian Today* as its flagship magazine.

# Evangelicals

- **The (new) evangelicals rejected what they saw as fundamentalism's divisiveness over relatively minor doctrinal and moral issues.**
- **They wanted a more inclusively conservative and more culturally and intellectually engaging Christianity.**
- **For them the "fundamentals" were essentially what was in the early Christian creeds.**

# Evangelicals

- **Biblical inspiration implied scriptural infallibility but not necessarily absolute technical accuracy of every detail recorded in the biblical literature.**
- **Nor did it require a literalistic interpretation, especially with regards to the origins of creation and end times issues.**
- **They allowed for great variation of opinions of interpretation on these and other issues.**



# Five Evangelical Core Beliefs

- God is transcendent and supernaturally active.
- The Bible is inspired and infallible *in matters of faith and practice*.
- Jesus is the crucified and risen Saviour and Lord of the world.
- Conversion to Christ is the only way to salvation.
- Evangelism is the calling of all to Christ and is done through communicating the gospel in word and deed.

# **Evangelicals**

**The outer wings of evangelicalism's spectrum continue to fight and call each other names like "fundamentalist" and "liberal", but most evangelicals have learned to live in the middle, accepting the diversity of opinions on secondary matters and respecting those who do not share their opinions with them.**