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Liberalism and Fundamentalism



Church History - Steve Gregg

In this discourse, Steve Gregg explores the emergence of liberalism and fundamentalism in Christianity during the 19th century. He suggests that liberalism arose as a response to societal changes brought about by the industrial revolution and advancements in science, leading many to question the Bible's authority. The rise of higher criticism and the work of Julius Wellhausen helped to establish liberal Christianity as a dominant force in some church circles. However, Gregg notes that fundamentalism also emerged in response to liberalism, emphasizing adherence to biblical teachings and rejecting liberal views.

Transcript

Tonight we're going to be moving into the 20th century. It seems like a very long time it has taken to get here in our series, but it has not taken us as long in our series to get to the 20th century as it actually took the church to get there. And so we've actually been moving fast.

We talked in the last few sessions about events in the 19th century, the 1800s. We'll look at the 1800s again, but move from there into the 20th century. We'll be actually talking about the turn of the century tonight.

In the 19th century, we saw there were some very encouraging movements in the true body of Christ, or what we might be inclined to recognize as the true body of Christ. There were tremendous revivals, both in Armenian and Calvinist circles. There were great thrusts into the foreign realm of missions by Protestants for the first time, because Protestantism had been pretty much confined until the 19th century to Europe and America, but in the 19th century there was a tremendous thrust toward foreign missions so that non-Roman Catholic Christianity was carried to virtually every continent.

There were some heroic pioneers in missions during that century. We looked at those things. Those were encouraging things, but not everything that happened in the 19th century was good.

Now it's hard for me when I'm teaching a series on church history, and as necessity

requires, must be selective. Anytime you teach history, you have to be selective of what things you include and what things you do not. Of course, that selection depends on what things you deem to be significant and what you do not.

The difficulty I have, and have always had in viewing church history, is to what extent to give credence to movements that I don't believe are really part of the true church. For example, during the medieval times, the institution that dominated the medieval Europe was called the church, and when we talk about church history, we can hardly ignore it, since it dominated all of culture and all of religion and all of politics, and yet I have reason to doubt, in my own assessment, that that was the church at all. And that the true church at those times was maybe to be found in some of those non-conformist movements that were persecuted and whose leaders and followers were burned at the stake by the institutional organization at the time.

And likewise today, and in the 19th century, in addition to that which I would easily recognize as the true church, and of course it's not me, it is not I who will make the final judgment, it is God, but we can't live without making judgments. In addition to that which I personally perceive to be the true church, there was much in institutional Christianity that I would say is doubtful as to whether it really is a part of the history of the true church, except insofar as it presented challenges to the true church to defend its credentials, to defend its distinctives. Liberalism and Fundamentalism are the two major movements we're going to be talking about tonight.

Liberalism first, and Fundamentalism which was a reaction to it. And Liberalism was not really a movement per se, it was more of a mindset that grew out of the Age of Enlightenment. It had its roots centuries before the rise of what anyone would call Liberal Christianity.

There was in the, after the century of the Reformation, there was a tremendous freedom of thought that the European people felt that they had not known for over a thousand years, because for those thousand years previous, the Roman Catholic institution had dominated all thinking, and although some people thought differently than it, if they got caught doing so, they were usually burned. And so there was a tremendous stifling of free thought for about a thousand years because of the total dominance of this organization and its refusal to allow people to think for themselves. Well, once Luther and Calvin and Zwingli and the Anabaptists had basically paved the way for alternative movements actually to survive the persecution of the Roman Catholic Church, and it became known that people could in fact think different things than what the church had taught.

Well, a lot of thinking went on, and not all of the thinking really landed the thinkers squarely within the realm of Christian thinking. There was a great deal of non-Christian philosophy that arose in Europe that had not really had an environment in which it could

arise. There was the age of science and discovery that caused many people to begin to think that science had all the answers, and that maybe Christianity was passé, and maybe Christianity's answers were more superstitious than real, and that we should be looking more to the rational scientific and philosophical endeavors of enlightened men to give us answers about the nature of reality.

That's how people began to think. Well, one of the things that led directly to the rise of liberalism in the church was the Industrial Revolution. Now, perhaps this didn't have the determining thrust that caused liberalism to arise, but it certainly was one of the factors because the Industrial Revolution was a major turning point in human history, not just the history of Western civilization, but in human history.

You have to realize that until the invention of the steam engine, which was invented by a man named James Watt, who lived from 1736 to 1819, so he lived right at the turn of the 19th century, early on in the 19th century, there was this invention of the steam engine. Before that time, man had no form of power that was predictable and under his control except manpower and animal power to do any kind of work. For manufacturing goods or for carrying loads or for transportation or for any other thing, if a man wanted to get from one place to another or do a bit of work and had to expend energy, that energy had to come from his own muscles or other human people that were employed.

Manpower, horsepower, ox power, and less predictably, things like wind power and water turbines and so forth had been used to a certain extent. But really, if a man wanted to harness power wherever he was, whether there was wind or not, whether there was running water nearby or not, and to do work that required more effort and energy than man or animals could produce, they didn't really have any way to do that. For about 6,000 years.

And all of a sudden, at the turn of the 19th century, we have a machine, a machine that harnesses power other than manpower, other than wind and water, other than animal power. It's actually a power which was predictable and exploitable and usable in every situation. All it required was that you boil water.

You could do that anytime. And that would produce steam. And this steam was learned.

It was learned how to harness this steam to turn turbines and to cause machines to go and to automate projects. Of course, it wasn't too long after that that the steam engine began to be applied to all forms of industry. As time went on, eventually you had the internal combustion engine as well.

And eventually you'd have electricity as well. And then later on, you would have even atomic power. I mean, coming on into this century.

But the thing that we often lose sight of is that all of these forms of power that were

made available to man to do work have come into man's possession only in the last 2,000 years. Prior to 2,000 years ago, for 1,000, excuse me, 200 years, excuse me, the last 200 years, prior to 200 years ago, man for 6,000 years could only do what his own hands and his own muscles and his animals could do for him. But this steam power made it possible to have ocean-going vessels and locomotive trains and machines and factories and so forth.

And so those who early on grasped the potential of this thing built factories and began to hire people in the factories for mass production of things. And these people moved into areas out of their rural settings into what became urban centers where the factories were located so that you have these big congested cities, the modern industrial cities began then. There were always cities, of course, Rome, ancient Rome and Athens, those were cities.

But in Europe, especially originally in England, you had these big modern industrial cities arising. And along with the industrialization of England, which of course eventually spread to the continent and to America as well and eventually to the whole world, along with this rise of the industrial city began to be crowdedness and poverty and abuse because the people who were manufacturing these things, would pay a very small wage to people compared to what they used to pay because the machine did a lot of the work. And people needed more money and so often the wives as well as the husbands would go off to work in the factories and sometimes their children, children as young as four and five years old commonly were sent into the factories to work and these were not working under the conditions that we know which are rather amenable to our preferences.

I mean, we have today if you get a full-time job, it's a given you're going to have no more than a 40-hour workweek unless they're going to pay you extra for the extra time. You're going to have benefits and you're going to have weekends off and probably, you know, you're going to get a week or two or three of vacation time probably paid. I mean, there's all kinds of moderation in what employers are allowed to do to their employees these days.

In those days no such laws existed and therefore people were paid such low wages that in order to survive sometimes every member of the family had to go into the factory and work from before sunrise to after sundown and there wasn't much to living except making a living. And because of the fatigue and because of the damage this did to family life and because of the harm it did to children in many cases because of industrial accidents from, you know, their incompetence or whatever, there was a great misery that arose in the industrialized cities. Charles Dickens wrote about this in some of his novels and so did others.

But the point here is the reason this had something to do with the rise of liberalism is

because in these cities there were social issues to address. The child labor issues, the low wages, and issues like that that began, they became crises in most people's family life. And yet the church for some reason was not perceived as stepping in to address it, to protest the evils or to suggest alternatives, whatever, and instead various social philosophers began to come up with ideas of how this should be rectified, not the least of which was Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.

His companion, which gave rise eventually to the communist movement. But, and we know that in the 20th century communism displaced Christianity in about a quarter or more of the world. And so conservative Christianity began to look like a vestige of a former time.

And the world in the west tended to look very modern. I mean, the machine age had come, the industrial age was here, and the world, everything in commerce changed and in transportation changed. And Christianity did not adjust immediately to this change.

And for that reason Christianity was looked at as something that was sort of a relic of an earlier, less modern age. And newer philosophies were seen to maybe be more applicable to these new times that man found himself in. So that confidence that Christianity held the answers was diminished.

And the general impression that Christianity was a relic of the past, something to be discarded by progressive mankind, was an attitude that began to emerge and pervade western society. Now, about the middle of the 19th century, another thing happened that caused the advance eventually, some of the roots from which later liberal Christianity arose, and that was the efforts of Charles Darwin. Now, we remember Charles Darwin as the founder of the theory of evolution, but of course he was not the originator of the theory of evolution.

His grandfather had taught evolution before him, and even if you go back far, the ancient Greeks, some of them taught evolution, and the Hindus taught evolution. Evolution was not an idea that was new at Darwin. But Darwin gave evolution a plausible explanation in the form of his theory of natural selection, which we have more popularly known as the survival of the fittest.

In this he built upon the works of earlier scientist philosophers. Men like James Hutton back in 1785 and Charles Lyell in 1830 had popularized the idea that the earth is very old, and that it came into existence by natural processes. This in contrast to what the Bible seemed to be teaching.

People who had read the Bible throughout history had believed that the earth was probably only a few thousand years old, and did not come into existence by natural, but by supernatural processes that God commanded, and it was so. And he spoke, and it stood fast. And then he said, let it be, and it was.

That's supernatural. But Hutton and Lyell, earlier than Darwin's time, had popularized in the scientific community the idea of uniformitarianism, the idea that natural processes that were uniform were really to be credited with the formation of the earth's crust. Now the earth's crust was seen to be layered, and it was obvious on the cliffs of Dover that in some of the high layers of the cliffs there were fossils of sea creatures.

And actually there were fossils of all kinds of different creatures. And Lyell had suggested that the layers of the earth's crust were laid down over periods of millions of years by slow and gradual processes that were uniform. Now this was in contrast to the former view held by Bible believers, which view is called catastrophism.

Bible-believing Christians had believed before this that the earth's crust and its features were formed at the time of the great flood, and that the fossils that were found there were the fossils of animals that were killed in the flood, and were forced to become fossilized by rapid movement of silt and so forth that compressed them against other mineral walls that there was no air for them to rot. And so their bodies, the hard parts of their bodies remained intact until the rock around them was hardened and so forth. But Lyell taught that actually these layers in the earth's crust were formed very, very gradually over millions of years as sediment or mineral particles in the oceans just began by natural processes to gradually settle on the ocean floor.

And as they did, of course, they got deeper and deeper, and eventually the weight of the higher layers compressed the lower layers into more solid stone, and eventually by this very, very slow process, the earth's crust was built up. And so Lyell's work in particular had paved the way for the idea of evolution being plausible, because until his time it was largely thought by those living in the Christian Europe that the earth was too young, had only been around a short time, and evolution, you know, how could that happen in so short a time? And the biblical view of creation seemed to make more sense. But if the earth was indeed billions of years old, and if it had taken that long, in fact, for the earth's crust to form, and if the fossils in it represented actually species that became fossilized at different times in earth's history as those layers were being formed, then this gave sort of a foundation for Darwin's view that these long ages were not ages of no activity, but they were ages during which not only was the earth's crust gradually forming, but the earth's flora and fauna were gradually developing as well.

And he taught that in every generation of species, some specimens have a greater and some a lesser set of advantages vis-à-vis the struggle for existence, that all creatures survive by preying upon other things, plants and animals, and that those who had characteristics that made them superior in this struggle to other specimens of their generation would survive, and the others would not. And those that survived would pass along their traits to the next generation and so forth. And over the series of millions of years, the accumulation of the minute changes or the minute advantages, which might be way too small to observe in any one generation, but millions of these advantages

accumulated through the process of time would give rise to new species, and Darwin said that's exactly how it all came about.

Now, Darwin himself was not an atheist. He was an agnostic, or actually more properly, a deist. He believed that God started it, but that nature finished it.

And Darwin had many supporters who had no desire to believe in God, but until Darwin gave them a plausible explanation of how species might arise without God, they had really looked kind of foolish not believing in God. But now that they had an explanation of how nature could bring species into existence, they felt quite at liberty to reject God from the scene altogether. And so the belief in Darwinism, namely that naturalistic processes alone were sufficient to bring the world and the living things of the world into existence, basically tended to close the gaps where God had previously lived.

You see, you may have heard of the God of the gaps. This is the concept that people have to postulate the theory of God to fill the spaces in what they don't know, the gaps in their knowledge. That if we know how something works naturally, we don't need to talk about God being involved with it, but if there's something we can't explain naturally, then we have to say, well, God did that.

And as scientific knowledge progressed, these gaps in knowledge began to be smaller and smaller. Eventually, scientists believed that they would be able to explain everything. And by the time the gaps in the knowledge got minuscule or non-existent, there'd be no more room for God at all.

And this attitude received tremendous impetus with the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859, because it seemed as if one of those great mysteries that only God could solve, that is where the design of various species came from, was now able to be explained without God. And it was a tremendous leap forward for atheism and agnosticism. One of Darwin's greatest defenders, because Darwin, by the way, was a retiring man.

He was a meek man, and he was not a fighter. But his views became dominant in England and eventually in America and Europe, because he had an advocate who was a fighter. Sometimes he's called Darwin's bulldog.

It was Thomas H. Huxley. Huxley is the same man who coined the term agnostic, which is very commonly used among us now, but he's the first man known to have coined the term to describe his view of God. Agnostic means, in Greek, not knowing.

And whereas Huxley did not claim to be an atheist, he felt at liberty because of Darwinism to question whether there was a God and not to have any assurance that there was. He believed that he did not know and could not know if there was a God. And, of course, it's not too far a step from agnosticism to atheism, and that became a very

dominant view in the 19th century.

But Darwinism did not only become the view of the unbeliever. In the 19th century, Darwinism was touted to be the proven facts of science. Now, it was given far more credit than it deserved.

Darwin never proved anything. If you read Darwin's Origin of Species in his later book, The Descent of Man, where he actually indicated that man's ancestors were monkey-like creatures, which was actually a more controversial book when it came out than the Origin of Species was. The first book was less controversial than the second.

But if you read those books, one thing that you... if you're one who's able to recognize arguments and to critique arguments, one thing you'll notice is the total absence of any proof of anything he said. All he did was present what he considered to be a plausible explanation of what could have happened and how it could have happened. And yet, what he said was picked up by the scientific community as acceptable to them.

And although there was much debate, even in the scientific world, not only in the Christian church, but among scientists, there were many who rejected Darwin's views. Yet, eventually, because of Darwin's advocates, his views became dominant and are still dominant in our present society. And, of course, what that has done, it's freed modern man from the requirement of believing in a creator.

And liberal theologians who later came along felt they must give credit to what science had now proven. Conservative Christians today, for the most part, do not believe in evolution. I do not believe in evolution.

I don't believe that Darwin was right. I don't believe that evolution happened on a grand scale. I still believe the biblical account of creation.

And there have always been conservative Christians who believe it. But there were Christians who were somewhat embarrassed by this. Because, I mean, the scientists were saying, hey, Darwin's right.

This is what the assured findings of science have shown us. And here you've got a group of people saying, well, you may have proved it. We still don't believe it.

Well, that sounds kind of anti-intellectual. It sounds kind of like an ostrich sticking their head in the sand. It's like they're not willing to change with the times.

They're not willing to acknowledge the truth that's been discovered. And that sense of embarrassment about the perceived conflict between the Bible and what was thought to be the proof, facts of science, was one of the things that led liberalism to rise. To produce a Christianity that didn't have too much confidence in what the Bible said, and that was willing to move with the times, and to accept the findings of science as they

were viewed.

And so Darwinism is one of those precursors to the rise of liberalism in Christianity. Then, during that century also, there was a tremendous amount of philosophical speculation that had bearing on religious thoughts. And when liberal Christianity eventually arose, it was a debtor to many of these earlier philosophers.

Immanuel Kant, who lived from 1724 to 1804, became famous for finding and enunciating what he considered to be the flaws in the traditional proofs of God given by philosophers. Philosophers throughout time had come up with what they considered to be arguments for God's existence. Immanuel Kant felt like these arguments were inadequate and wrote to demonstrate their inadequacy.

And because of that, of course, he taught that you can't prove God by argument. And that was not the same thing as saying there is no God, even if Kant thought it was the same thing. Of course, we've got to remember that to prove that the arguments for a position are flawed is not the same thing as proving that the position is false.

A thing may be true, and people may advance flawed arguments in its favor. As one who has spent some of my time defending the veracity of Scripture, I've become aware of what I would call the embarrassing supporter, the one who supports the veracity of Scripture with the most lame arguments. I wish they weren't saying those things, because the arguments can be shown to be flawed easily by any thinking person.

And the impression is given that if these arguments are flawed, then the position that they are advanced to support must be wrong. But that is a logical fallacy. One of the rules of logic and of argument is that just because you prove that an argument has flaws and is not valid, you have not proved that the thesis that was being argued is a false thesis.

You have to do more than prove that it lacks good arguments. You have to show that there are good arguments for the opposite view. And while Kant, apparently to the satisfaction of most thinking people in Europe, proved that the traditional philosophical arguments for God's existence were not adequate, at least not for him, by the way, I still think they're pretty good, but they weren't good enough for him.

That's fine. They don't have to be good enough for him. But he didn't, and no one can, advance arguments that prove that there is no God.

And therefore, what he did was misperceived by many as eliminating God as a necessary postulate. Now, later came along a couple of important political philosophers, and they had their impact also on the thinking of the Western world and eventually of liberal Christianity as well. One was Karl Marx.

He lived from 1818 to 1883. He is probably the best known to us of these philosophers

we're going to look at because his philosophy conquered much of the world. Eventually, long after his death, he didn't live to see it.

But he, as an exile from Germany because of his radical views, spent a lot of his time in England and seeing the injustices of the Industrial Revolution, the exploitation of the poor by the capitalist factory owners and so forth, he felt like this was a tremendous injustice. And he was influenced by earlier philosophers. He did not believe in God.

And he was influenced even to some extent by evolution. Actually, Karl Marx dedicated one of his books to Charles Darwin, who had been a great influence upon him. And Marx believed that not only the rise of species was a product of evolution and development, but all of human history and its social forms and norms are the result of evolution.

And he felt that the conflict between classes, between the ruling aristocracy, the richer classes, and the proletariat, which were the poorer classes, that this abuse did not reflect the highest level to which society could evolve. And he felt like a much higher and more just level would be one where there is no private property, where the rich are not rich and the poor are not poor. That all things are the common property of the social institution, of society, and administered by the government.

So that, you know, a private property is the enemy of human progress, in his view. And although many liberal Christians would not wish to call themselves communists or Marxists, to a very large extent, much of what liberal Christianity has espoused in some areas is Marxism. For example, the largest liberal institution in the world today is the World Council of Churches.

And there's no question that the World Council of Churches has devoted its monies and its energies and its support and its commendation to Marxist revolutionaries and guerrilla movements that are advancing the Marxist cause, especially in places like Latin America and Africa. And this is called today liberation theology. This is the modern word for it.

Liberation theology is a mixture of liberal Christianity and Marxism. And it is the predominant brand of Christianity in some parts of the Third World now. And it's especially advanced by Catholic theologians.

The liberal movement eventually affected Catholicism as well as Protestantism. And almost all, I shouldn't say almost all, but certainly the majority of Catholic priests and Catholic thinkers in Latin America are liberation theologians. They're liberal.

They take liberal views toward the Bible and toward the gospel. And they also figure that Marxism is the answer, which is really simply an application of Darwinism to the broader realm of social interaction among people. Another philosopher who influenced the thinking of many people in that century was Friedrich Nietzsche.

And Nietzsche is the one who's known for popularizing the phrase that God is dead. He said that God is dead. And, of course, when I was a kid and I first heard someone say God was dead, I figured that they were pretty stupid because God, by definition, can't die.

But I didn't realize that the people who said God is dead really didn't believe God ever was alive, but more properly that the notion of God was dead. There never really was a God. It's just that for centuries people lived with the false notion that there was a God and that this notion had now been abandoned, that philosophers had come up with enough explanations for reality that we don't need God anymore.

And Nietzsche actually taught atheism. And he believed that Christianity was not only mistaken but was somewhat dangerous because the virtues taught in Christianity tended to favor the weak and the helpless. And that really was against the flow of the natural process of survival of the fittest, that in nature, nature should be allowed to have its way so that the strong are able to prey upon the weak and the weak are eliminated and so forth.

But Christianity calls people to help the weak and to support them. And Nietzsche thought this was a very bad thing. And as Karl Marx was sort of the prophet of the later communist movement, Nietzsche was the prophet of the later Nazis.

Adolf Hitler and those that sided with him were followers of Nietzsche's philosophy, whereas, of course, Lenin and Stalin and Mao Zedong were followers of Marx's philosophy. But both of these were very anti-Christian, totalitarian socialist systems, one of them simply interpreting everything as part of the class struggle. And in Nietzsche's philosophy or in Nazism, it was interpreted not in terms of class struggle but race struggle, the Aryan races versus those races that were in competition with them for everything.

In both cases, Marx and Nietzsche were social evolutionists. And depended heavily on the things that Darwin had taught about biological evolution but applied them to the social and economic realms. And they saw survival of the fittest and development, but Nietzsche saw it as a race struggle and Marx as a class struggle.

Now, in all of this, there was a dissenting voice, a philosopher who is known today as the father of existentialism. Existentialism, a very difficult philosophy to define. In fact, this man's writings are hard to summarize.

Soren Kierkegaard was his name. And he was very little known outside of his own home country of, I believe it was Denmark he was from. Was he Dutch or Danish? Anyone know? Was he Danish? Outside of Denmark, Kierkegaard was not really very well known in his lifetime, but in the 20th century, his works were translated into English and other languages, and he's become very popular now.

But he despised systems, political systems and religious systems. He identified himself as a Christian, and he probably was a Christian. I mean, I'm not to be his judge.

Some of the things he taught, I do not agree with. But at the same time, he saw the danger of interpreting God and Christianity in terms of social programs and systems and even of church. He was against the institutional church.

And he believed that God is not known at all through philosophizing or arguing, just like Kant said. But he went on to say that God can be known and there is a God. And God can only be known as he reveals himself to people.

He can't be found by philosophical speculation or searching or thinking about him. He has to reveal himself to people. He believed it was a folly to try to prove God by argument, since God is wholly other, as he put it.

The most influential theologian in the 20th century, whom we will talk about before we're done, Carl Barth, was a follower in many respects of Kierkegaard, and also emphasized that God is wholly other. And the idea is that God is so wholly other than man, that man can't conceive of him, can't reason his way into knowing about him in any way. And the only possible way that man would have a clue about God at all is that God reveals himself to man.

And we can only know God by taking a leap of blind faith, which involves us in committing ourselves to discipleship and following Jesus. So there's some good things in what Kierkegaard suggested. But I don't know that I would proceed from the same philosophical base he would.

Existentialism, the philosophy that he's usually credited with the founding, is an emphasis on the validation of something through experience, rather than through appeal to authority, for the most part. And that's what a lot of these philosophers were really doing. They were basically questioning the whole idea that we should believe things on authority alone, namely the authority of Scripture or of the Church.

For centuries, the Roman Catholics believed things because the authority of the Church said they should. And Protestants believed things on the authority of Scripture. But these philosophers, all of them, were beginning to question whether it's proper to form religious views or any views on the basis of authorities.

And so there's speculation about whether our views should be formed by reasoning or by experience or whatever. Existentialism made experience, personal experience, the basis of knowledge of things. And so these philosophers actually existed before the rise of what we call liberalism.

But when liberalism arose in the Christian Church, it owed a great deal to the ground that was broken by these philosophers, and to a large extent followed a lot of the things

that they had come up with. There's one other factor that was at the root of the rise of liberal Christianity. It was not itself necessarily liberal, although many of the people in this discipline were liberals.

But that was the rise of the disciplines called biblical criticism. Now, the word biblical criticism is perhaps misleading. The word criticism, as we use it today, more often than not means we're finding fault with something.

If I criticize you, it usually means I'm finding some fault in telling you what's wrong with you. And if we talk about someone criticizing the Bible or biblical criticism, we think that they're trying to find fault with the Bible. As a matter of fact, many of the biblical critics did just that, and that's exactly what they set out to do.

But the term criticism doesn't mean that. Biblical criticism just means taking a critical look. Or we might say an analytical approach to the things we believe about the Bible.

And this was not done very much before the 19th century. The biblical critics of the 19th century said, listen, the Bible has been kept on this ivory tower. When we look at other ancient documents, we're allowed to critique them and find what's right with them, what's wrong with them, to find their background, to test their validity.

But the Bible's been held exempt from all these kinds of scrutinies and examinations. We need to be permitted to treat the Bible like we treat any other book. And that was their war cry.

We should be allowed to treat the Bible like we treat any other book. And so they began to do so. They began to look at the Bible through an analytical approach to not so much the doctrines in the Bible, not so much what was God saying through the Bible, but rather what was the origin of the Bible now and whether it could be trusted as a document at all was authentic or not.

There were two forms of biblical criticism, I mean, two major categories. And that was what is usually called lower criticism and higher criticism of the Bible. The lower criticism is also called textual criticism.

And there's nothing innately damaging to faith in textual criticism. All that really means is that the ancient texts and manuscripts of the Scripture are analyzed and evaluated and compared with each other to recognize which ones are more old than others, which ones have the majority of textual support in their favor and so forth, to try to determine what the original document said from which these manuscripts were originally copied. Because, see, the manuscripts of Scripture, like the manuscripts of any other ancient document, don't all agree with each other word for word.

There are some differences in them. And it's evident that they can't all reflect the exact wording of the original. So the textual critic was the one who examined the evidence and

took an analytical approach to all these documents to try to figure out from these documents what the original actually said.

There's nothing really liberal about doing this. There's nothing really to object to in it. I mean, a conservative evangelical Christian can feel quite good that there's people out there doing textual criticism.

And this is what was called lower criticism. But now there's also the other side of biblical criticism, which is higher criticism, or also known as literary criticism. It was not so much an analysis of the text and the strengths and weaknesses of various manuscripts that have come down, but it was a consideration of the literary features and literary content of the Bible.

And this, more often than not, tended to be damaging to faith. Because what the higher critics wanted to do was to challenge everything. They wanted to challenge the authorship.

They wanted to challenge the time that it was allegedly written. They wanted to challenge the integrity of those who wrote. They wanted to challenge whether the people who wrote really were telling the truth or not.

And these are the kinds of things that the higher critics began to examine. They weren't trying to determine what the true text of the Bible was. They were trying to determine whether they should believe what the Bible said.

The first time I encountered this graphically was several years ago when I was teaching a class, a Bible study at lunchtime in Albany. And some people who were listening to me on the radio in those days were coming to the class. That's where I first met our friend Howard, who's probably the one liberal that I'm closest to as a friend.

And he just showed up. He just showed up at one of these things, and we were staying through the Book of Romans. And so I was beginning to read the text and comment on the text of Romans.

And it was a free discussion. Anyone was allowed to say things, so Howard spoke up quite a bit. And I wish he was here tonight, because he wouldn't mind me saying this if he was.

But there was something different about the questions he asked than what everyone else asked. I mean, I was there interested, and so were most of the people, in figuring out what did Paul really mean when he said this. And Howard's questions were more like, should we believe Paul or not? Was Paul biased? What kind of prejudices in Paul are we seeing here? And it was evident to me, I didn't know initially that he was a liberal, but I found out soon enough the difference between the way he thought about the text and the way everyone else there was, was that everybody else assumed that Paul was an

apostle, that what he wrote was scripture and authoritative.

And our desire was simply to know what he was trying to communicate so that we could believe it and follow it. Howard's desire, and it's very typical of what the modern liberal Christian is, he doesn't want to know what it meant. What's it matter what it meant? The question is, what credentials did Paul have in the first place to write it? And should I believe him and agree with him or not? Now, I don't mind someone asking that question initially if they're willing to hear the answer.

I don't mind people questioning authority if they're willing to listen to what authority answers. Because I believe that if someone says, well, why should I believe Paul, or why should I accept the documentation given to me by Luke or by Matthew, I think that a person can look into that and come to very strong convictions, that these are very reliable documents and worthy of trust. But the liberal doesn't ever come with an open mind.

He only pretends to come with an open mind. What he's really there to do is, and this may be unrecognized by him, but it's evident to anyone who looks on and sees the nature of his work, he's coming with an a priori assumption of the worst. His assumption is that religious people who write religious documents are biased, and they're not going to be honest with you.

And this is the assumption that underlies much of higher criticism. And some of the developments in higher criticism that really gave a foothold to liberalism in the Church were, for example, the work of Julius Wellhausen, who lived from 1844 to 1910. He is the one who gave us the now almost universally held documentary hypothesis.

Now, the documentary hypothesis has to do with a theory about how the Pentateuch was written, the first five books of the Bible. The Bible says that Moses wrote them. But the people of the camp of Wellhausen, they weren't sure there ever really was a Moses.

In fact, they weren't sure there was ever an Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob either. They believed that a lot of these Bible characters, maybe they were just mythical characters. And even if there was a Moses, there's no possibility that he could have written those five books because if he lived when he was supposed to have lived, about 1400 years before Christ, writing wasn't even invented yet.

Even if there was a Moses living at the time, he couldn't have written these books. So Wellhausen came up with the idea that he felt by studying these books that he found evidence of at least four different authors, at least four different and even conflicting traditions that must, he said, have been passed down orally by the Jews for centuries and centuries and eventually were written down and someone found a way to edit them together into a single document. But actually he felt that the Pentateuch, the first five books, was a hodgepodge of ingredients from four different times and emphases and

belief periods of Israel's history and that they were all written down sometime quite late, much later than the postulated time of Moses.

Well, I don't have time to critique this theory thoroughly, but anyone who comes to the material with an open mind and looking at the evidence can see that there is no reason for accepting this theory. I mean, I'm not saying there aren't some things that a scholar like Wellhausen was able to point to and say this supports my hypothesis, but it's one thing to say I have a hypothesis and this scripture here looks like it fits well my hypothesis. That's one thing.

It's another thing to say that your hypothesis is correct and to prove that. And there are very good scholars who totally reject this documentary hypothesis and still accept what Jesus accepted, that Moses wrote the Pentateuch. Jesus said so, the Pentateuch says so, and the Jews always believed so, and Christians always believed so until Wellhausen came along.

But because of the dominance of liberal Christianity, picking up on Wellhausen's literary criticism of the Pentateuch, now in modern theological institutions you'll almost never find a scholar who believes that Moses wrote the Pentateuch unless you're going to a fundamentalist Bible college where the fundamentals are still taught. We'll say more about fundamentalism later on. But Wellhausen paved the way for doubting the inspiration of the first five books of the Bible and whether they were written by a prophet or not, he said Moses couldn't have.

By the way, later than Wellhausen's time, a discovery was found in Babylon called the Black Stele, which is on display, I've seen it at the British Museum. It's a conical-shaped stone. It's a glossy black stone and in it, all around it, are inscribed little etched figures which happen to be, in Babylonian writing, the law code of an ancient Babylonian king who lived at the time of Abraham, named Haberabbi.

Now the finding of this stone made it very evident that Wellhausen was wrong in at least one thing. He said that Moses couldn't have written because writing wasn't invented yet in Moses' day. And yet Abraham lived hundreds of years, at least 600 years, before Moses.

And so did Haberabbi. And now we have a monument that Haberabbi inscribed and wrote his law code on. There was writing in the days of Abraham, not only in the days 600 years later of Moses.

In fact, more recently, scholars have found what they call the Rashamra texts, which date from the very period of Moses and they belong to the Palestinian region, so that it is demonstrated that in Palestine, in the time of Moses, there was writing, because they have found extra-biblical texts dating from the same time as Moses. So the very reason that Wellhausen said that Moses couldn't have written the Pentateuch is gone. And yet

scholars had so fully imbibed this documentary hypothesis of the formation of the Pentateuch that even though the undergirding foundation for that view is no longer viewed as valid, it is still a dominant view in the modern seminaries and universities where liberal Christianity prevails.

There were other writers in the 19th century, H.S. Reimers and D.F. Strauss, German scholars. This is where most of liberalism arose, was in the German universities. These men were historical revisionists of the life of Christ.

They didn't call themselves that. They considered themselves to be on the quest for the historical Jesus. They believed that the Gospels could not be trusted as they stood.

At least the Gospel of John, which had long been one of the favorite Gospels for those who believe in terms of the theology of who Christ is. These scholars believed the Gospel of John was not reliable in any way, because they believed it was written much later than Christ's time and not written by John. They believed the synoptics, if anything, were more reliable than John.

But they just believed that you couldn't really trust the Gospels at all. There was something called form criticism that arose where the different forms of literature were being analyzed. They were trying to figure out which particles, which portions of the Gospels had some basis in reality and which did not.

These scholars rewrote the life of Jesus, making him in their own image, basically, the way that they thought he was. They did not believe in the supernatural, because they lived in a time where belief in the supernatural was not regarded as fashionable or modern. They believed that Jesus was just an amiable Jewish philosopher or rabbi, who got himself into trouble because he thought that the kingdom of God should break in and replace the Roman Empire.

He was mistaken, of course, and they killed him. They believed that the resurrection never occurred and that that was just a myth that the disciples perpetuated to reverence him. Now, you may recognize that, which is a 19th century idea, as still perpetuated, for instance, by the Jesus Seminar today and by liberals in general.

The Jesus Seminar being one of the most well-publicized modern liberal organizations that perpetuates the myth, really, that the Gospels cannot be trusted. And yet they say it's the assured findings of science, just like Darwinism is called the assured findings of science. There was also the work of F.C. Bauer, who lived from 1792 to 1860.

He felt that in the early church there was a conflict between two factions, one headed up by Peter, which emphasized the law, and one headed up by Paul, which emphasized more Greek notions of grace and no law, and that he felt you could determine which epistles were genuine and which were not by whether or not you found this element

within them. The epistles where you could actually find evidence of a conflict between the Peter camp and the Paul camp in the early church, he considered to be true reflections of the way things were in the early church, and those epistles where there does not appear to be that conflict visible are excluded. Therefore, he decided that only four of Paul's epistles are really genuine, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Galatians.

All the others did not show any evidence of conflict between Peter and Paul, and therefore were considered to be later forgeries. And these are some of the guys in the 19th century who began to cast aspersions on the authenticity of the writings of Scripture. Now, let me just say, in case you wonder what kind of arguments they presented and whether those who disagree with them have good arguments or not, this is a lengthy study.

We will not go into it in detail here. We don't have time. I would encourage you to pick up Josh McDowell's books, *Evidence that Demand a Verdict*, Volumes 1 and 2, where he basically goes into all of the arguments of the critics, and from scholars of the other camp, shows what the arguments are against those critics.

In my opinion, liberalism is wishful thinking. It is not based on solid fact. It is based on philosophical wishful thinking by people who don't want the Bible to be true and look for every excuse they can find to discredit it.

Clark Pinnock, who himself these days is sometimes accused of being a liberal because he takes positions that a lot of evangelicals don't take, himself wrote a book called *A Defense of Biblical Infallibility* years ago, in which he made this statement about the higher critics of the Bible. He said, while insisting on their right to treat the Bible, quote, like any other book, unquote, some critics proceed to treat it like no other book by bathing it in the acid solution of their skepticism and historical pessimism, unquote. And this is a fair assessment.

If you read the work of liberal Bible critics, you'll find that this is true. They bring an undue skepticism to the Bible that they would not bring to any other book that they're analyzing, which shows that whether they notice it or not, they have a bias. They don't want the Bible to pass their tests when it could otherwise.

So it is the rise of biblical criticism that did a great deal to give foundation and to carry forward the liberal ideas about Christianity. Now, I want to talk real quickly about some names. You don't need to memorize these names if you don't want to.

These are some of the names that mark the progress of this movement of liberalism. Usually, the founder of religious liberalism or Christian liberalism is said to be Friedrich Schleiermacher. Now, many of these people are German scholars because it was in German universities that most of this arose.

Schleiermacher lived from 1768 to 1834, so he was a bit early for the general popularity of liberalism, but he was the founding father of it. He taught that experience is more important than authority of Scripture in determining what Christianity is. That Christianity is not to be determined by doctrines found in some authoritative book, but by personal experience of God, and the particular experience that he said is all-important is the experience and feeling of total dependence upon God.

He did not believe in the deity of Christ, but he did believe that Jesus was the perfect example of a man who was fully dependent on God, and in Jesus we see the need to be fully dependent upon God. And that sin is nothing else but not depending fully upon God. Now, obviously, there are people who are biblically informed that could see some attractiveness to this suggestion.

Dependence on God is faith, is it not? Trust. Certainly, the Bible teaches we should depend on God and trust in God. But, of course, to be so reductionistic, to say, well, Christianity is all about just depending on God, and there is no theological or doctrinal content to Christianity, is to reduce Christianity to something far less than what it is.

And yet it gave rise to the movement that we call Christian liberalism. Another major mover and shaker in this movement, in fact, the most influential in the first decade of this century, was Adolf von Harnack, another German scholar. He lived from 1851 to 1930, and he basically said Christianity can be reduced to three central truths and nothing else.

Those truths are the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, and the infinite value of the individual human soul. He said that Christianity is nothing else but the teachings of Jesus. And Jesus' teachings all boil down to these three points.

The fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, and the infinite value of the individual human soul. Now, obviously, if you've read the Gospels, you know that Jesus did say some things about some of this. Certainly, he indicated that God is our father, and he also indicated that we are brothers.

Although, the way Harnack understood it, all men are brothers, and God is all men's father, regardless of their religious convictions. All people are one great brotherhood of man, and God is the great father of all, and every man is equally valuable, and infinitely so. Now, this kind of takes away from some of the things Jesus taught, like that some people are going to hell, and that some people are children of the devil, and things like that, and that God is not everybody's father.

The devil is the father of some. But Harnack did not believe that. Liberalism, generally speaking, is a feel-good kind of a philosophy, whether we're talking about political liberalism or religious liberalism.

In fact, the word liberal means generous. That's what the word liberal literally means. It means generous.

So, to have a liberal attitude is to have a generous attitude, generous toward people you disagree with, toleration toward all, and so forth. And liberalism is more based on feeling good about what you believe than it is about finding any truth in what you believe or assessing the truth claims of alternative beliefs. And so, even though Jesus taught something on these subjects, he did not teach about these subjects what Harnack said he taught.

But Harnack, like the liberals in general, is very reductionistic. He reduced all the things Jesus taught as if they could be compressed into these three statements, which, of course, isn't the case. And he ignored everything else Jesus said on other subjects.

Walter Rauschenbusch, another German, in 1861 he was born. He died in 1918. He was kind of the founder of liberal Christianity in America.

These others were Germans. But he was of German extraction, but he was a Baptist pastor in New York. And he saw a great deal of misery there in the industrial city, and he felt that a Christian ought to have more compassion on the plight of the downtrodden and of the unfortunate, the suffering in the cities.

And so he began, although his theology originally was somewhat orthodox, but he just began to emphasize social action. Eventually he changed his theology to reinterpret the gospel as what we call the social gospel. He is the founder of what we call the social gospel, Rauschenbusch.

And the social gospel basically teaches that the message of Jesus and of Christianity is not about individual redemption of souls from the bondage of sin for salvation. It's about redeeming society, transformation of society by social action and by alleviating the poor and the downtrodden. So that's what Christianity is about.

Well, obviously, I mean, there is some truth in that. It's just not the whole truth. Conservative Christianity has always taught that the main essence of Christianity is the salvation of souls.

But the liberals were not the first to come along with the idea that Christians ought to do something about social injustice. Long before these liberals were around, you had the Salvation Army and you had the Quakers and you had Finney, all of whom were very socially active people and doing a great deal. Finney did a great deal to protest against slavery.

It was his influence very strongly in this country that can be credited for the abolition of the abuse of slavery. And the revivals of Finney had a lot to do with that. So, I mean, it doesn't take a liberal to recognize that social action has its place in the Christian life and

that Christians ought to be socially sensitive.

But what it does take a liberal to do is to say that's all it is and to eliminate any aspect of sin or forgiveness or salvation in the supernatural sense because liberalism is, by definition, anti-supernatural. I mean, that is one of the things that is a foundation stone of liberalism. Supernatural does not need to be invoked.

Another person who advanced the cause of Christian liberalism was Hermann Gunkel, another German. He lived from 1862 to 1932 and he is one of the principal representatives of what's called the History of Religion School. Now, what could possibly be ominous about the History of Religion? The study of the History of Religion? That should be very interesting.

I would like to study the History of Religion. But what was referred to as the History of Religion School was really not so much the study of the History of Religion but speculation about the History of Religion and particularly an attempt to find parallels to the Bible in pagan cultures that antedated the biblical records. That is to say, what the History of Religion School tried to do was to try to find in myths that were taught by the Babylonians or by the ancient Greeks or in some of their religious systems to try to find parallels between those and what the Bible said so that the creation stories of Genesis were thought to have been borrowed from the Babylonian creation myths.

And the ideas of Jesus' resurrection were thought to have been borrowed from Greek myths about dying and rising gods and so forth. And this is what was called the History of Religion study. It wasn't really a study of the history of Christianity or really the history of other religions.

It was trying to find an explanation for the elements of the biblical teaching in finding their origins in pagan religions. And there are still a great number of liberals who buy into this. I've seen modern books that have recently come out that try to say that the ideas of Christianity, they just come right out of ancient Greek mystery religions.

But anyone who examines the evidence will see how lopsided the arguments are and how non-objective they are. There's certainly no reason to believe them. There is also Henry Nelson Wiemann in the Chicago School.

The University of Chicago is the only university in America that was founded to promote liberal Christianity. And this liberal Christianity was of the most extreme left-wing type. There's two kinds of liberal Christianity.

There's that which would be called evangelical liberalism where they still try to maintain something of a connection to the gospel, although they are liberal in their philosophy. There's also that which is called modernistic liberalism, which is naturalistic. It rejects the Bible and supernatural altogether.

And basically, although continuing to operate within the fold of the Christian rubric, interprets everything as if there's no supernatural, no miracles, no nothing, no God. And the Chicago School and the University of Chicago were great centers for this particular viewpoint. Perhaps in this century, the most influential exponent of liberalism in the church was Rudolf Bultmann, another German scholar.

He lived from 1884 right up to 1976. And he is famous for his advocacy of the demythologization, is that how you say it? The demythologizing of the New Testament in particular and the Bible. The idea is that in the gospels, we don't really read about the Jesus of history.

We're reading about the Christ of faith. Now, you might say, what's the difference? Well, the Jesus of history, it is thought, was an ordinary historical guy who really had a life and really was born and lived and died and did things and said things. There was really a historical guy named Jesus.

Unfortunately, however, according to liberalism and Bultmann, Jesus as we have come to read of him in the gospels is not really the Jesus of history because the gospels are the products of the church. The church wrote the gospels, and that's some time after their theology had developed so that they read back into the stories of Jesus elements that were never really there in the historical life of Jesus. And by the time the gospels were written, there had been an elaborate Christology, a theology about the Christ, that he was the Son of God, that he was the Messiah, that he was God himself incarnate, and that these ideas that the church developed were read back into the story of Jesus and intruded into the gospel narrative so that we've got in the gospels a mixture of some historical things, but a great deal of mythology about Jesus, legends that the church came up with.

And therefore, Bultmann said we need to, the study of the Bible requires that we demythologize the gospels. We try to identify the mythological elements and remove those so we can get back to really seeing who the Jesus of history really was. Of course, once you decide that the gospels have mythological stories in them, there is really no objective standard by which we decide where to stop demythologizing.

We could, I mean, we can save a lot of time and just say the whole thing is a myth. Jesus never existed. But no one really who's a Christian wants to do that.

And yet liberals don't want to believe in all the things in the Bible. Now, why not? Why don't they want to believe everything in the gospels? Because the gospels presuppose a supernaturalistic worldview. In the gospels, miraculous things happen.

There are demons and angels and the devil. And Jesus is not an ordinary man. He is a supernatural being which came into existence by God taking on a human flesh.

And that Jesus went around doing things that people can't do, like walking on water and telling storms to be quiet, and they do. And healing sicknesses and even raising dead people. And those supernatural things just don't happen to a person who is committed to a naturalistic, that is a non-supernatural worldview.

And therefore, the things in the gospel cannot be taken at face value to a person who rejects at the outset supernaturalism. And that is why liberalism exists in the church. I want to give you several distinctives of the modern 20th century liberalism and they're all part of what liberals stand for and what makes them liberals.

First of all, as I've been saying, anti-supernaturalism. Without this commitment to anti-supernaturalism, there's no basis for liberalism. Liberalism takes anti-supernaturalism as a starting point.

And since there is no supernatural, obviously there can be nothing like, for example, the inspiration of Scripture. That would be a supernatural thing. There can be no such thing as genuine prophecy, where God reveals to a man an event that hasn't happened yet, and then it happens a few hundred years later.

That just can't happen. So that the liberal assumes those things that are allegedly prophesied must have been written after the event, because it could not be possible that someone could know these things in advance. That would be supernatural.

And so there's this a priori commitment to what is called metaphysical naturalism or anti-supernaturalism. This is the predominant mood and philosophy of Western culture today, and it is the predominant mood of liberalism. By the way, the liberals would not mind if we said that their philosophy seems to follow the worldly philosophy, because that's exactly what they think Christianity needs to do.

They don't believe there's any objective historical truth in the Bible or any unchangeable dogmas that Christians need to be committed to. There's just the concept of the Christ, the essence of love and morality, the lover of all men, and the teacher of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men. And so long as these basic essentials are there, Christianity can change its beliefs with the time.

And therefore, if liberalism is said to be seen to follow very closely the philosophy of the world, they say exactly and on purpose, because Christianity has to be able to change and develop with the times. It's an evolutionary process. And as man evolves into a higher understanding of reality, Christianity has to keep in step.

Otherwise, it's going to be enmeshed and entangled in some obsolete, obscure, ancient idea that man has outgrown. And so you've got this anti-supernaturalism and liberalism, because that's part of the world's philosophy. You've got, as I mentioned earlier, the concept of the fatherhood of God, which means God would never spank anyone, because

of course spanking isn't okay for fathers to do.

God is not ever angry. God doesn't have wrath. He's an indulgent, kindly father.

Actually, a little more like a grandfather in their thinking. Grandfathers never really get mad. Fathers sometimes really do.

But maybe they should really say the grandfatherhood of God, because the God that they envisage is a nonjudgmental, indulgent, happy, friendly to all kind of a guy. Sort of like a dad who doesn't care how his kids behave. And then, of course, there's in liberalism this essential doctrine, the supreme moral example of Jesus.

We may not know very much about Jesus, and we may know very well that he isn't the son of God, because that would be supernatural, but we can know this. He was a very good guy, and he was a great example to us all, whatever he did. Whatever it was he said, it was great.

Whatever it was he may have done, we may never know, but he was a wonderful example to us all. And that is what liberalism stands for, with reference to its view of Jesus. He was a great moral example to someone.

Also, liberalism teaches the essential goodness of man. I'm not really sure how liberalism can maintain this as a credible belief when there really aren't any examples of people who are consistently good. And most people, when they're not affected by either Christianity or some other religious view of God, are quite un-good.

But somehow liberalism maintains its rosy opinion that man is essentially good. He's not tainted by sin, and he doesn't need a savior in that sense. He just needs to learn how to love other people and work for social justice and things like that, but he doesn't need any salvation from sin because he's a good guy at heart.

And the final, or the fifth point that modern liberalism stands for is the responsibility to reduce or destroy conditions that denigrate mankind. In other words, if women don't want to be confined to the home, then Christians need to advocate women in the workplace, and feminism becomes part of it. If there's slavery, that denigrates mankind.

Christians need to abolish slavery. If there's child labor laws, then Christians need to abolish that. Now, some of those things we might not disagree with.

Some of them we would. But the point is that liberalism takes it as its basic ethic, that Christians need to work for the diminishing of those structures and conditions in society that are hard on people and that denigrate people. Now, as I hope you can see, liberalism, if it were never counteracted, if it was never rebuffed, would be an attractive belief system.

I mean, it's kind of a feel-good kind of thing. We're all really God's kids. We're all decent folks.

We're all just here to love each other, and God loves us all. And, you know, we're getting better and better all the time. We're moving up.

We're evolving toward higher spiritual states all the time. That's a feel-good kind of thing to believe. Unfortunately, it isn't true.

And the reason we know it isn't true is because the Bible tells us otherwise, and the Bible is a revelation from God. But, see, that's the first thing that had to be dispensed with. In order for liberalism to prevail, you had to dispense with the notion that there is a word from God in the Bible, an infallible, authoritative word.

And although liberalism became very dominant in many sectors of the church, it was not universal. There were conservative Christians who did not believe it and fought against it. And this resistance to liberalism formed a movement that came to be called fundamentalism because of its emphasis on fundamentals.

That, in the early part of this century, which was called fundamentalism, was really just a reassertion and an emphasis of classical Protestant orthodoxy, and especially the points of Christianity as a religion with redemption as its object. That is, redemption from sin is the purpose of Christianity. And also that Christianity is a supernatural religion.

It was a reaffirmation of the supernatural reality of Christ. And also, of course, fundamentalism was characterized by confidence in the veracity and the authority of the Bible as the authentic revelation of God's mind and will. So the inspiration of Scripture, the supernatural element in the Bible, the deity of Christ, and, of course, the issues of sin and redemption, atonement, these issues were the things that were emphasized by the fundamentalists.

Now, there were very excellent scholars in this movement, although since that time fundamentalism has almost come to be regarded as a label for people who just are bigots, who don't care about the facts and won't look at evidence, and they just want to stick with their old ways and they don't want to move on. Actually, fundamentalism was not advanced initially by people who fit that description at all. They were some of the most qualified scholars in Christianity, resisted liberalism.

Among them were the Princeton scholars, Charles Hodge and his son A.A. Hodge after him, B.B. Warfield, that's Benjamin B. Warfield, and Robert Dick Wilson, one of the probably the most knowledgeable scholar of Semitic languages of his generation. I think he was fluent in 20-something Semitic languages. And G. Gresham Machen, also one of the better scholars of his generation.

These men were all professors at Princeton Theological Seminary, and they were sort of

the core of the, at least in the Presbyterian circles, of the resistance to liberalism coming up, and they wrote books. G. Gresham Machen wrote a book called *Liberalism and Christianity*, where he made it very clear that he did not think liberalism was Christianity. Now, see, that was kind of a slap in the face, because liberals still thought of themselves as Christians.

In fact, they thought that they were the cutting edge of what Christianity is and should be. But Machen wrote the book *Liberalism and Christianity*, saying, no, there's a clear line of demarcation here. There are certain fundamentals that are essential to the definition of what we call Christianity, and liberalism does not hold to those fundamentals.

And his reassertion of those fundamentals is what gave the movement the name Fundamentalism. And in addition to the Princeton scholars, there were some other things happening. Between 1870 and 1910 especially, there was a move in the conservative churches toward dispensationalism.

And I don't have time to tell you what dispensationalism is if you don't know. But in 1830, a man named John Nelson Darby formulated a scheme of interpretation of the whole Bible called dispensationalism. Now, he was a very conservative Bible scholar, although I disagree with his conclusions about his interpretation about some things, and I'm not a dispensationalist, yet because of his advocacy of the authority of Scripture, his views became very popular among fundamentalists.

See, the Princeton scholars were not dispensationalists. None of those guys, Hodge or his son or Warfield or Wilson or Gresham, these were Presbyterians. They were not dispensationalists.

But outside of their ranks, there were a number of Bible conferences and Bible schools established, largely dominated by dispensationalism. In fact, in 1909, the Schofield Reference Bible was published, which became the official Bible of most fundamentalist Bible schools, and it was basically a Bible with notes written by C.I. Schofield, who was not a theologian but a lawyer. But he basically promoted the ideas of John Nelson Darby or dispensationalism, so that when people read the Bible, along with the Bible, they got Darby through Schofield's notes.

And in this general period, fundamentalism fought back because the universities and theological seminaries were all moving in the direction of liberalism, so the fundamentalists had to start their own schools. And so Nyack Missionary College was founded in New York in 1882. Then in Chicago, Moody Bible Institute was founded in 1886.

Toronto Bible College in 1894. In Los Angeles, Biola, which is Bible Institute of Los Angeles, was founded in 1908. Dallas Theological Seminary in Dallas, Texas, was formed

in 1924, and Bob Jones University in 1926.

Wheaton College, which is one of the most significant fundamentalist bastions for many years, was actually in existence considerably earlier. It was founded in 1860. But as you can see, in the late 1800s and the early 1900s, a number of institutions were formed to promote fundamentalist dispensationalism, and these institutes have had a tremendous impact on what is today called the evangelical church.

In addition to that, one of the important events in the birth of fundamentalism was the publication of a 12-volume series called *The Fundamentals*, published in 1909. Sixty-four distinguished biblical scholars contributed articles to this series and defended, of course, the conservative viewpoint of *The Fundamentals of Christianity*. It was not the case that all good scholars or all well-trained scholars were liberals.

These were 64 highly distinguished scholars. So initially, fundamentalism, you know, it was a rival scholarly movement to liberalism. But from the years 1920 to the year 1930, which was after the First World War but before the Second, there was a bitter, you know, conflict between the liberals in the religious establishment and the fundamentalists, and a great deal of bad blood between them, a lot of causticity.

There were a lot of persons fired from faculties because of their views about whatever it is they believed, one way or the other, on this. And fundamentalists began to be characterized by their opponents as persons not willing to own up to the discoveries of scholarship. You know, the scholars were getting to be more and more liberals because scholarship included belief in evolution and belief in higher criticism and some of these things which were more consistent with liberalism than fundamentalism.

And so by stages, the term fundamentalist tended to mean somebody who was not really very scholarly, not very well educated, more, you know, bigoted and superstitious than anything, so that many fundamentalists began to not really like the label fundamentalist very much. It tended to have that connotation. And more and more, Christians of those convictions began to be called evangelicals.

And today, not very many people call themselves fundamentalists, but the people who would be called that are now usually called evangelicals. And an evangelical is usually a person who simply believes the Bible is the inspired word of God and the final authority on all matters, and they tend to believe the fundamentals of Christianity as a result of that basic belief. During this period of great strife, of what's called the fundamentalist modernist controversy, liberalism actually became dominant in Princeton.

Now, the Princeton scholars were some of the early champions of fundamentalism, but the college went more and more in the direction of liberalism so that the remaining fundamentalist scholars left in protest. Machen and Wilson left, and along with some other guys, Oswald T. Ellis and Cornelius Van Til, they founded a new seminary to

promote the fundamentalist alternative in Presbyterianism, and that was called Westminster Theological Seminary. They founded it in 1929.

So today you've got the bastion of liberal Presbyterianism is Princeton, and the bastion of conservative Presbyterianism is Westminster Theological Seminary. From 1930 to 1950, we see basically the rise and the dominance in the church of what's called neo-orthodoxy. It was not exactly liberal.

In fact, in some ways it was a reaction against liberalism, but it was not exactly fundamentalist either. It accepted many of the findings of biblical criticism that the fundamentalists would not. It accepted outright the possibility that evolution was a means by which God would work, and it was therefore not strictly fundamentalist.

And fundamentalism became more and more marginalized as sort of a group of know-nothing, anti-scholarly, anti-intellectuals, which is not what they really were, but what they began to be perceived to be. The dominant spirit in evangelicalism or in Christianity came to be neo-orthodoxy. Even liberalism is on the wane, although there are still plenty of them out there.

The major denominations would be more likely to embrace neo-orthodoxy than liberalism, it seems. The main theologian who is credited with the rise of what's called neo-orthodoxy, which was considerably more conservative than liberalism, is Karl Barth. He was a Swiss theologian, not a German, although he did teach in Germany much of his career.

He was kicked out of Germany by Hitler because he would not sign an oath of allegiance to the Fuhrer. But even before that, he made his mark on Christianity. Karl Barth lived from 1886 to 1968, and during World War I he was a pastor in Switzerland, and he saw the cruelty and the suffering and so forth caused by World War I. Although he had been trained in Europe, as all pastors have been in liberal theology, he began to see that liberal theology didn't make sense.

This idea of the innate goodness of all men and so forth just didn't wash when he saw the things he saw human beings doing in World War I. He began to feel that liberal theology was bankrupt, that man was not getting better and better. He was not evolving into a higher and higher moral creature. The World War seemed to prove that to him, and that society was not getting better either.

So he committed himself with another pastor friend of his to study the Bible afresh and to reexamine his liberal training. And upon doing so, he rejected much of his liberal training, and he went public with what he had learned in 1919 when he published his commentary on Romans. Now, Barth's commentary on Romans is considered to be one of the most significant theological works written in this century, and it was a bombshell because he had all the scholarliness of the best of the liberal scholars.

His commentary included a great deal of acceptance of biblical criticism and things like that and a command of it, and his arguments were cogent, and it shook up the liberal community because he emphasized a lot of things that were more conservative than the liberals believed in. He emphasized the sovereignty of God, God's grace. He emphasized God's revelation of himself, which is supernatural.

His emphasis was on man's finiteness and sinfulness, not the innate goodness of man. So he really came out as a reaction against liberalism, but he didn't go as far as the fundamentalists did in rejecting all things that contributed to liberalism and sticking to an absolute literal interpretation of every part of the scripture. He was, that is, Karl Barth was influenced by Kierkegaard's beliefs, and like Kierkegaard, he taught that God is wholly other than man.

Man cannot aspire to know God by philosophizing or seeking or anything like that, but can only know God as God sovereignly chooses to reveal himself to the individual. But he did believe, unlike the liberals, that God reveals himself only through Jesus Christ and through the word of God. So in many ways, Karl Barth's influence was a move back in the direction of orthodoxy or in a more conservative direction than liberalism had gone, and his views and those that have followed him, he's still greatly admired, considered to be the greatest theologian of this century by most, is called neo-orthodoxy.

And today, if you would examine most denominations, you'll find that almost every denomination that is historic and has been around for hundreds of years is split and has a liberal branch and a conservative branch. The Methodists are split. The United Methodists are liberal.

The Free Methodists are conservative. The Presbyterian Church and the Lutheran churches have their liberal branches and their conservative branches each. The Baptists have their liberal denominations and their conservative denominations.

Perhaps the only denominations that don't really have, even the Mennonites do. There's liberal Mennonites now and conservative Mennonites. But the only denominations I'm aware of that really don't seem to have a liberal element would be maybe the Pentecostal denominations.

And we have not yet discussed the rise of the Pentecostals, which was also early in this century. And in our last session, which will be next time, I do want to talk about the rise of Pentecostalism and basically some of the more significant things of this century and the rise of the charismatic movement and some of the things that are current in the church today. It's always hard to know what to include and what not to because a great deal is going on in the church today.

And it's not easy to know which things are most significant. But there are some major movements we have not discussed yet, and we will take those next time. .

