

Coast School of Theology, 11/03/2019, Dan Rupprecht
Session 11: Ageless Faith in an Age of Reason, A.D. 1800 – 1900

The Enlightenment cast aside faith and religion in favor of science and reason. Faith became a private thing—whatever works for you. The question that faced Christians in this era—and still faces believers today—was, if faith is just a personal matter, how do we show that the gospel of Jesus is needed by all people?

Christians responded to this emerging secular worldview in a variety of ways: A burgeoning missions movement was led by individuals such as William Carey, revivalists like Charles Spurgeon and Dwight Moody crisscrossed Europe and North America preaching a simple gospel message, liberal theologians tried to accommodate Christianity to the modern world, and the Catholic Church doubled-down on church authority.

Session 11 Outline

1. The Enlightenment (“Age of Reason”)
 - a. Scientific facts and human reason
2. Challenges to Established Authorities
 - a. French Revolution cast aside the Catholic Church (1793).
 - b. William Carey challenged Particular Baptists and began modern missions (1792).
 - c. Church influence declined while a secular worldview emerged.
3. Five Responses to the Modern World
 - a. Romanticism: Friedrich Schleiermacher tried to preserve Christianity with theological liberalism.
 - b. Reform: Sunday School (Robert Raikes), Temperance, Abolitionists
 - c. Revivalism
 - i. Revival in Cane Ridge, Kentucky.
 - ii. Barton Stone tried to end denominations.
 - iii. Charles Finney’s “philosophical” approach to revival.
 - iv. Dwight L. Moody led evangelistic crusades.
 - v. Charles Spurgeon preached the gospel in simple ways.
 - d. Resistance: First Vatican Council declared infallibility of the pope (1869).
 - e. Rejecting what we must, redeeming what we can: Niagara Bible Conference of 1895 agreed on five fundamentals. (1. Verbal inerrancy of Scripture; 2. Deity of Christ; 3. Virgin conception of Christ; 4. Vicarious expiation [substitutionary atonement]; 5. Bodily resurrection of Jesus on the 3rd day and all people on judgement day)

Key Terms

Abolitionism – Movement in the 1700s and 1800s to abolish the trade in African slaves.

Empiricism – Worldview that sees knowledge gained through scientific observation and the physical senses as primary, discounting knowledge gained through other sources and dismissing completely any knowledge that depends on divine revelation.

Enlightenment – (also called the Age of Reason) Seventeenth- and eighteenth century social and philosophical movement that emphasized reason as the primary source of authority, displacing divine revelation.

First Vatican Council (1869-1870) – Over 700 Catholic bishops convened in Vatican City to deal with issues arising from modernism. Among other things, the council confirmed the infallibility of the pope as church doctrine.

Fundamentals – Beliefs that had been denied in theologically-liberal groups but which were emphasized strongly at certain Bible conferences throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Five of these fundamental beliefs were (1) inerrancy of Scripture, (2) deity of Jesus, (3) virgin conception of Jesus, (4) death of Jesus in place of sinners, and (5) bodily resurrection.

Industrial Revolution – Advancements in technology and transportation in the late 1700s and 1800s that shifted society from farm-based and home-based to an urban, factory-based society. Many people moved to cities to find work in factories.

Inerrancy – Belief that the inspired human authors of the Scriptures never affirmed anything contrary to fact when writing the texts that became part of the biblical canon; as a result, Christians can be confident that the Bible never errs.

Revival – A work of God by which the gospel is applied to people's lives in unusually powerful ways, resulting in salvation of sinners and renewed obedience among saints. The human means by which God brings revival are faithful proclamation of the gospel (Rom. 10:15–17) and fervent prayer among God's people (Acts 1:14; 2:42; see also Isaiah 63:15–64:12).

Revivalism – Religious movement beginning in the late eighteenth century that emphasized the use of human measures to bring about salvation and spiritual renewal. Revivalism was rooted in Nathaniel W. Taylor's New Haven theology and popularized by Charles Grandison Finney.

Romanticism – Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century reaction against Enlightenment rationalism and the Industrial Revolution; emphasized experience and emotion above reason and efficiency.

Temperance Movement – Social reform movement in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that promoted moderation or abstention in alcohol consumption.

Theological Liberalism – Theological movement that downplayed the authority of Scripture; theological liberals focused on the imitation of Christ's ethics and on living with a deep awareness of a divine presence in all of life. Friedrich Schleiermacher is sometimes called "the father of Protestant theological liberalism."