

Theological Liberalism & Biblical Christianity

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The Influence of Liberalism

- Individually:
 - My own experience at Duke U in 1960s.
 - Some others I know.
- Collectively:
 - Europe since mid 1800s
 - United States since early 1900s

The Major Differences

The main differences between theological liberalism & biblical Christianity involve:

- Their view of the Bible
- Their view of the Person & Work of Jesus Christ

The Bible

Is it God's Word?

Its Authority & Inerrancy

- Liberals reject full Biblical authority, noting the problem passages.
- Evangelicals counter by noting the Biblical claims.
- We have a similar situation with:
 - The sinless of Christ
 - The goodness of God
- We cannot prove all objections are mistaken.
 - These are revealed doctrines.
 - But we have good evidence that the Bible is God's revelation.

Its Authorship

- Liberals typically reject the traditional authorship of many Biblical books:
 - Pentateuch
 - Isaiah
 - Daniel
 - Matthew
 - John's Gospel & letters
 - Peter's letters

Its Authorship

- Evangelicals don't object in principle to sources & multiple authorship.
- They do object to claims of contradictory sources and false authorship.
- Liberals reject external evidence for speculation.
 - See CS Lewis' article "On Criticism" in his collected essays *On Stories* and *Of Other Worlds*.

Its Authorship

"Nearly all critics are prone to imagine that they know a great many facts relevant to a book which in reality that don't know. The author inevitably perceives their ignorance because he (often he alone) knows the real facts... Surely he is as well placed for guessing about me as any scholar is for guessing about the dead. Yet he seldom guesses right. Hence I cannot resist the conviction that similar guesses about the dead seem plausible only because the dead are not there to refute them..." *On Stories*, 132-33

Its Miracles

- Liberals reject the historical reality of miracles.
- Liberal Arguments against Miracles:
 - Hume
 - Harnack
 - Bultmann
- What Would a Miracle Look Like?
 - Creation
 - Fulfilled Prophecy

The Person & Work of Jesus

Who is He?

What did He come to do?

His Deity & Humanity

- Taught throughout the Bible
 - OT and NT
 - Gospels and Epistles
- Liberal Substitutions
 - Jesus never made any such claims. His followers got carried away.
 - Jesus made such claims but was mistaken.
 - Jesus was just a good man.

His Sinlessness

- As measured by Biblical standards, not by secular ones.
- Liberalism stresses God's love to the neglect of his righteousness and justice.
- Thus they must reject any Bible passages that disagree with this.

His Death as Payment for Sin

- Liberalism tends to reject this as unworthy and substitute Jesus' death as example.
- But this is also taught throughout the Bible.
 - Isaiah 53:4-6
 - 2 Corinthians 5:21
 - 1 Peter 3:18
- Necessary if God is to be just and also declare sinners righteous.
 - Romans 3:26

Isaiah 53:4-5

Isaiah 53:4-6 (NIV) Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. 6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

New Testament

2Cor 5:21 (NIV) God made him who had no sin to be sin {[21] Or be a sin offering} for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

1Pet 3:18 (NIV) For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit...

God as just, yet justifying sinners

Romans 3:26 (NIV) he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

His Resurrection

- Liberals typically claim Jesus' resurrection was really:
 - Recovery from a coma
 - Fraud by Jesus or disciples
 - Hallucinations
- But Jesus appeared on numerous occasions, for extended periods of time, to multiple witnesses, of whom hundreds were still alive 20+ years later.

His Return

- The liberal rejection of this teaching takes the form of the scoffing pictured in 2 Peter 3:3-4.
- We need to remember (& remind others of) the evidence that Christianity is true.
- It will be too late for them to change sides when they die or when Jesus returns.

Peter on Scoffers

2Pet 3:3 (NIV) First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. 4 They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."

Conclusions

- What can we do?
- Jude 1:20-25 (NIV) But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. 21 Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life. 22 Be merciful to those who doubt; 23 snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear—hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh. 24 To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy— 25 to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

Conclusions

What can we do?

- Keep ourselves.
- Have mercy on others.
- Trust God.

The End

Some form of unbelief will
continue till Jesus returns.