

# ***Protestant Theology in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century***

## *Sources*

David Fergusson, ed., *The Blackwell Companion to Nineteenth-Century Theology* (2010)

Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century* (2002)

James McGoldrick, *God's Renaissance Man: The Life and Work of Abraham Kuyper* (2000)

Mark A. Noll, *The Princeton Theology, 1812-1921* (1983)

Daniel G. Hummel, *The Rise and Fall of Dispensationalism* (2023)

Craig Blaising and Darrell Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (2000)

## I. Introduction

### A. Broad context: "Nineteenth Century"

1. 1815-1914: Waterloo to World War I
2. "Great Century"
  - a. Expansion in missions and more
  - b. General era of peace
3. "European Century"
  - a. Economic Preeminence
  - b. Imperial Expansion
  - c. Cultural Dominance
  - d. Leading role in religion

### B. Theology: Liberal vs. Conservative

1. Liberalism: Human-centered authority
2. Conservatism: Scripture-centered authority

## II. Liberal Theology

### A. Influences

1. Darwin: Evolution
2. Hegel: Progress in history (See González, 390-93)
  - a. History guided by "Spirit" or "Idea" or "world spirit" (God?)
  - b. Hegelian dialectic: Thesis → Antithesis = Synthesis
3. Kant: Idealistic Dualism (See González, 246-48)
  - a. Realm of time and space ("things as they appear to us")
    - 1) Realm of sensory experience
    - 2) Where reason brings knowledge
  - b. Realm of "things in themselves"
    - 1) Realm of God, religion, faith
    - 2) Reason doesn't work because there are no data
  - c. Reason may be applied to phenomena of this world (e.g., Bible)

### B. Leaders

1. Friedrich Schleiermacher: Religion found in experience, not doctrine (See González, 388-90)
  - a. Religion is a feeling of absolute dependence
  - b. Fueled by Romanticism (stress on nature, emotional, subjective inspiration)
  - c. Heightened emotion as a source of knowledge
2. Albrecht Ritschl: Religion reflected in ethics
  - a. Stressed "kingdom of God," an ethic of love

- b. Liberal postmillennialism → solve “Social Question,” effects of industrialism, economic change
- c. Foreshadowed American “Social Gospel” (González, 343)
- 3. Julius Wellhausen: Religion as evolutionary
  - a. Example of destructive higher criticism
  - b. Documentary hypothesis for the Pentateuch (JEDP)
  - c. Scripture the result of an evolutionary development
- 4. Adolf von Harnack: Religion found in historical research
  - a. Historical research removes “husk” of tradition from Jesus teaching
    - 1) “Husk” = teaching *about* Jesus
    - 2) “Kernel” = teaching *of* Jesus’ teaching
  - b. Parallel: Search for the historical Jesus
    - 1) Historical research finds the real Jesus
    - 2) Criticized as creating Jesus in the historian’s image
- 5. Harry Emerson Fosdick: Religion to be modernized
  - a. Make religion acceptable/understandable to modern man
  - b. Represents a synthesis of liberal ideas
  - c. Example of liberalism in the pulpit

### III. Conservative Theology

- A. Confessional: Traditional systems emphasizing historic confessions
  - 1. Lutheran Example: Theology of Repristination
    - a. Leader: E. W. Hengstenberg
    - b. Revive the “pristine” Lutheranism of Reformation confessions
  - 2. Reformed Versions
    - a. Dutch Neo-Calvinism: Abraham Kuyper
      - 1) Minister, educator, prime minister—and ecclesiastical separatist
      - 2) Extremely influential on contemporary evangelicalism
        - a) Forming a Christian world view (“antithesis”)
        - b) Transforming the culture: cultural mandate
        - c) Sphere sovereignty: Society structured by God w/ overlapping but sovereign institutions (family, church, state)
    - b. Princeton Theology
      - 1) Upholds Westminster standards
      - 2) Defends Inerrancy
      - 3) Leaders: Charles Hodge, B. B. Warfield
- B. Evangelical: Oriented toward conversion/experience
  - 1. Holiness theologies
    - a. Sanctification associated w/ a post-conversion experience
    - b. Varieties: Methodist, Keswick
  - 2. Dispensationalism
    - a. Part of resurgence of premillennialism
    - b. Focus on ecclesiology and eschatology
    - c. Distinctive: Major discontinuity between Israel and the Church
- C. Where Conservative Theologies Agree
  - 1. Supernatural outlook (not naturalistic)
  - 2. Religion is *revealed*, not discovered by humans

3. Authority of Scripture (not reason, emotion, etc.)
4. Jesus Christ
  - a. The God-Man (not a great teacher or “guide”)
  - b. Atonement → objective, substitutionary, vicarious (*not* subjective)
  - c. Second Coming → Bodily, visible