
7 Men Who Rule the World From the Grave

A Book Study based on the book by Dave Breese

#3: Julius Wellhausen

The Suicide of Western Society

- Western society was built on Christianity, and Christianity built Western Society.
 - In the past, *orthodoxy* defined religion, and religion defined society.
 - “The Bible was the authoritative book, the government was to be respected.”
- Western society is in the process of removing Christianity completely from its being.
- The fundamental questions of Western society were, at one time, answered with a Biblical worldview.
 - What is man?
 - Who is God?
 - What is government?
 - Why are we here?
- In Western society today, *Christianity* still exists, but its *core* is all-but gone.
 - From, “Empty Churches Go On Sale,” *The Wall Street Journal* Jan 2, 2015, “Every denomination in the U.S. is losing both affiliation and church attendance. In some ways the country is a half-generation behind the declining rate of Christianity in other western countries like the U.K., Australia, Germany, Sweden, Norway, France, and the Netherlands. In those countries, what were once churches are now art galleries, cafes and pubs. In Germany more than 50 percent say they do not believe in any god, and this number is declining rapidly. In the U.K., church attendances have halved since the 1970s.”
 - “The idea that God was in the midst of it all and that He had revealed Himself in His inspired, infallible Word—that idea, that life, slipped through the fingers of an unsuspecting church” (Breese, pg. 91).
- Religious liberalism is what killed the Christian faith, first in Europe, and now in America.

The Root of Religious Liberalism

- The “father of religious liberalism” is Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918).
- Wellhausen brought a change to the Christian religion that cannot be underestimated: *a new way of understanding the Bible*.
- The Pre-Wellhausen way of looking at the Bible:
 - The Bible was the true and inerrant word of God.
 - “Man’s reason may be incorrect...but the bible was infallible” (91)
- Wellhausen taught *German Rationalism* rather than *Biblical Revelation*.
 - The Bible is “a sublime collection of human documents” (91).
 - Moses did not write the Pentateuch, but it was compiled by various writers from different perspectives.
 - The story of Adam and Eve was a myth to illustrate certain truths, but there was no real Adam or Eve.
 - For a modern example of this in an evangelical setting: <https://youtu.be/-3PS7yLqVyi?t=11m8s>

- Before Wellhausen: *Can I trust my Bible? –yes, a thousand times, yes.* After Wellhausen: *Of course not, you must look to human reason to understand God, creation, man, sin, etc.*
- The *German Rationalism* or *Higher Criticism* method of interpretation took root in the 1870s. (And it is no accident that prior to 1890 there were very few translations of the Bible, since 1890 there are literally hundreds, almost all built on the *critical text* created by *Higher Criticism*.)
- By 1900, seminaries taught *Reason* not *Revelation*, and convinced students the Old Testament was compiled by four sources of authorship: J,E,D,P.
- Higher Criticism jumped from Europe to the United States, and infected almost every form of denominational seminary (including Southern Baptist seminaries, as is seen in the Crawford Toy and Ralph Elliot controversies).

The Tenets of Liberalism

- We are here because of an evolutionary process (as we were taught by *Almighty Darwin*).
- Not only has the body evolved, but the mind has as well, from the simple to the complex.
- In this evolution, the ideas of man, therefore, have evolved.
- Since our ideas have evolved, we now think of God differently. He is a God of love, not judgment.
- This God of love is not offended by the archaic idea of disobedience to commands, but sin that offends God is lack of enlightenment.
- The answer to lack of enlightenment is education. We don't need forgiveness and redemption, we need the spark of divinity to be fanned by enlightenment.
- When man is enlightened, there will be no more war, hatred, and famine.

The Antidote: Fundamentalism

- Religious liberalism and the political left have always slept together.
- In the USA, a new thing was born to combat liberalism: *fundamentalism*.
 - It took root in smaller cities and towns.
 - It eventually had tabernacles that filled tens of thousands.
 - First Baptist Church of Fort Worth (J Frank Norris), Moody Church of Chicago (Harry Ironside)
- Tenets of Fundamentalism:
 - The inerrancy of Scripture
 - The deity of Christ
 - The finished work of the cross
 - Salvation by grace alone
 - The premillennial return of Christ
- Fundamentalism has largely been succeeded by *evangelicalism*.
 - "An evangelical is the son of a fundamentalist." (101)
 - Less willing to fight for core convictions.
 - More willing to work with the left on matters of social action.
 - The *bellwether* to discern "fundamentalist" or "evangelical" is the willingness to be involved in ecumenical matters.
- Fundamentalism is what saved American Christianity from the death experience by European Christianity...but fundamentalism is dying in America today.

Next Week: Sigmund Freud