
7 Men Who Rule the World From the Grave

A Book Study based on the book by Dave Breese

#7: Soren Kierkegaard

A Brief Review

- Charles Darwin (1809-1882) changed the way we look at origins
- Karl Marx (1818-1883) changed the way we look at value and necessity
- Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918) changed the way we look at the Scriptures
- Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) changed the way we look at ourselves
- John Dewey (1859-1952) changed the way we look at truth
- John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946) changed the way we look at economics

Soren Kierkegaard and the way we look at reality

- Though Kierkegaard died in 1946, his work became influential 100 years later.
- The difference between Kierkegaard and the others is that Kierkegaard claimed to be a Christian.
- Kierkegaard filled a vacuum that was created in the first 40 years of the 1900s.
 - As a result of Wellhausen's rational view of the Scriptures, classic liberalism reigned supreme in religion from 1900-1940.
 - Harry Emmerson Fosdick was the most prominent of the classical liberal pastors of the day.
 - J. Gresham Machen: "The question is not whether Mr. Fosdick is winning men, but whether the thing to which he is winning them is Christianity."
 - Pastor of First Presbyterian Church of NYC, then resigned under pressure brought by William Jennings Bryan, and became the first pastor of the new Riverside Church (built by John D. Rockefeller).
 - In classic liberalism:
 - The Bible was a human book
 - Jesus was an interesting teacher
 - The death of Christ was an inspirational event (if it even occurred)
 - Salvation was deliverance from _____.
 - The Christian's hope was not the return of Christ but the advancement of the church.
 - The unity of the church would mean the "salvation" of the world.
 - After the destruction of WWII, people were asking, "what shall I even believe at all?"
 - Classic religious liberalism died in the 1940s and was replaced by "neo-orthodoxy."
 - Kierkegaard is the father of *existentialism*, which is the father of *neo-orthodoxy*.
- What is *existentialism*?
 - It is something that nobody understands, because it makes no logical sense.
 - Kierkegaard, "I conceive it as my task to create difficulties everywhere."
 - The title of one of Kierkegaard's books summarizes *existentialism* very well: *Truth is Subjectivity*.
 - He put a division between the *objective realities* and the *subjective realities* of Christianity.

- Objective: *the truth of Christianity*
 - Subjective: *the relationship of the individual to Christianity.*
 - Kierkegaard came down heavily (almost exclusively) on the *subjective* rather than the *objective*.
 - A classic *existential thought* is this: *the problem is not that a Christian lacks knowledge of Christianity, but that he/she lacks the **passion** of Christianity.*
- Two key aspects of Kierkegaard's influence:
 - Individual Passion is everything.
 - Because of this, thinking moves from rational to irrational and reason gives way to feeling.
 - Examples:
 - Gender identity
 - This week's "March for Science." (Science ceases to become science when it is ideologically driven).
 - From Wikipedia: *While the supreme value of existentialist thought is commonly acknowledged to be freedom, its primary virtue is authenticity.*
 - Individualism is everything. "The crowd is the untruth."
 - In existentialism, the individual makes all definitions and defines *meaning*.
 - The refusal to be classified into any stream of thought is a result of existentialism.
 - The *moment* is all that matters.
 - Why does nobody like *labels* anymore? Because of existentialism.
 - I am not a _____.
 - I am what I feel like I am.
 - Illustration: why did we at one time debate whether names like *Baptist* should be removed from churches, but now it is largely not debatable?
 - Combine *passion* and *individualism* and you have the *pragmatism* of today's church environment.
- In a sentence, existentialism is that *there is no truth*.
- How *neo-orthodoxy* removed objective truth from modern Christianity: *it changed the definitions*.
 - *Inspiration* is not a "God-breathed" sentence, but the result of God's word on a person's heart.
 - From "The Bible *is* the Word of God to the Bible *contains* the Word of God."
 - Consider the *Baptist Faith and Message*
 - 1963: The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and **is the record** of God's revelation of Himself to man.
 - 2000: The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and **is** God's revelation of Himself to man.
 - *Salvation* is not being born again by the blood of Jesus, but having a *spiritual transformation* journey.
 - *Theology* has changed. Now we have *urban theology, black theology, liberation theology...*