The Epistemological Crisis

The Terms in the Crisis of Reality & Knowing
“Epistemological Crisis”

Explained:

Epistemology is the study of how we know. So the epistemological crisis we are speaking of is simply the crisis of knowing.
Schaeffer's Crisis

In the 1950's Dr. Schaeffer experienced a spiritual crisis. After several years of working against the influences of Religious Liberalism in the church, he found himself overwhelmed by the lack of "reality" in the various Separatist movements he was involved in.

Schaeffer's crisis brought him to his knees. He stripped his thoughts down to a bare agnosticism. After months of pacing and searching, God opened his eyes to the REAL reality of TRUE-TRUTH. He discovered that the Christian has been given substantial truth, and that it makes sense of reality, answering the questions of life. Through a prayerful moment-by-moment relationship with the God who is there, and is not silent, one arrives at the Biblical basis of True Spirituality.

His crisis of reality would provide him real, compassionate answers to the epistemological crisis with which the world is struggling.
The following slides are an attempt to explain the complex terminology one will encounter in the study of this struggle. We apologize in advance for any errors in our understanding.

If you have any questions, suggestions for corrections or updates please contact us via any of our social media channels or specifically on our facebook fan page or group:

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Theological Liberalism

Theological Liberalism or “Religious Liberalism” is generally the umbrella term used to describe the various systems of theology that deny historical Christian doctrine, especially doctrine related to Biblical revelation and inerrancy of scripture. Such systems include but are not limited to the following:

- Modernism
- Naturalism
- Humanism
- Post-Modernism
- Neo-Orthodoxy
- Existentialism
Modernism

In general, Modernism is simply the rejection of traditional ideas in favor of modern ones.

Theological Modernism is a rejection of the historical doctrines of the church about spirituality in favor of naturalistic explanations.

- Critical of Biblical miracles
- Skeptical of Biblical revelation and inerrancy
- Belief in a pluralism of religious truths and revelation
- Over emphasis on natural theology.
Naturalism

Naturalism in philosophy is generally the assumption that things traditionally labeled as "supernatural" are false or can be explained by natural means.

Theological Naturalism is primarily a revisionist movement of Theological Modernism to synthesize science with Christianity. The general methodology is to strip Christianity of its various doctrines where science and Christian doctrine conflict.

- Higher Criticism
- Darwinism
- Genesis as evolution
- Historical Jesus movement
- Psychology, behaviorism
Theological Humanism

Humanism originally was consumed with searching out the historic origin of things. However, movements toward a "Theological Humanism" generally emphasize human autonomy and that "man is the measure" of revelation. It seeks to harmonize Christianity with the principles of Humanism. The general modern humanist movement was somewhat formalized in 1933 by the "Humanist Manifesto" and held to the following points of "doctrine."

- Scientific
- Ethical
- Democratic
- Religious
- Marxism
Post-Modernism

Post-Modernism in general is the reactionary movement to Modernism.

Theological Post-modernism in Christianity was originally a reaction against Modernism. However, in general it is not a positive reaction but rather, it is an attempt to accommodate the Christian religion to either...

1. Modernist and Naturalistic ideas
2. A rejection of Naturalism in favor of forms of mysticism.

● Is contrasted with Modernism by *any* reaction to it.
● Generally denies Biblical inerrancy
● Promotes subjective revelation
● Promotes Pluralism
● Can promote rationalist or mystical premises
Neo-Orthodoxy

The Neo-Orthodox movement characterizes itself as a reaction to naturalism but asserts a more positive teaching of the doctrines of the Protestant Reformation. This merge has had the effect of creating a watered down Protestantism with mystical and academic overtones in it's adherents. While one might categorize it as somewhere between Evangelicalism and Modernism, it is now generally considered just another form of Religious Liberalism.
Karl Barth

Considered the father of “Neo-Orthodoxy,” and is commonly called a "Neo-Orthodox" theologian, he personally rejected the term.

- Swiss Reformed, Trained in German Liberalism.
- Significant in the political reply against Nazism.
- Not communist, but against anti-communism.
- Separated theological truth from historical truth.
- Believed the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy to be in conflict with own abstract mystical Christological focus.
- Opposed any relationship between theology and philosophy.
Existentialism

In general Existentialism is the discussion of the philosophy of existence.

The central doctrine of Existentialism is: "Existence Precedes Essence"

Existentialism asserts a naturalistic notion that one's existence is more significant than one's essence. That is, that one is not defined by human nature but by human conscience. Thus Existentialism places a premium on experience to define one's own existence (meaning, morality, value, & identity).
"Ideas Have Consequences:"

Dr. Schaeffer taught that "ideas have consequences."
The consequences of all of these various forms of Liberalism produces crisis in the basis of human Epistemology (How that we know and understand reality).

Naturalistic systems:
1. Devalue the Bible as a means of truth
   ○ Seeks to undermine the authority of the Bible as the Word of God.
2. Promotes Religious Relativism & Pluralism
   ○ Confuses the search for Truth
   ○ Often characterize all ideas as equally true
   ○ Inconsistently views Christianity as absolutely not true
3. Degrades the uniqueness of man to a mere biological animal/machine
   ○ Loss of Identity
   ○ Loss of meaning and purpose
We hope this resource has been a help to you!

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