

Dr. Roger Green, Reformation to the Present, Lecture 25, Existentialism

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This is Dr. Roger Green in his church history course, Reformation to the Present. This is session 25 on Existentialism.

Okay, this is lecture number 13. So, what we're looking at now are theological developments from Dietrich Bonhoeffer to the present. It's really not from Dietrich Bonhoeffer to the present. That's just a catchy title. So that's all I've got that for.

So, theological developments, we're just going to try to come into the world in which we live. So, this takes me a couple of days, today and Friday, and I may need to use one of them. We have one class day left. Remember, when we return, we're going to be looking at a video of two days of Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

And then we got a Friday and a Wednesday, and we'll be getting ready for the exam. So, we'll be fine. We're kind of where we should be.

So okay, here are theological developments from Dietrich Bonhoeffer to the present. And we're going to start with existentialism. All right.

And you can see we're going to make representatives, basic features, strengths, and criticisms of existentialism. So that's where we are. I'm on page 15 of the syllabus.

All right, so let's start with existentialism. Well, interestingly enough, existentialism begins with the life and ministry of a Christian, of a believer. And his name is Soren Kierkegaard.

Now, you undoubtedly have had Kierkegaard from other courses, right? You've had Kierkegaard in other courses. So you've talked about him in other courses. So, Soren Kierkegaard.

Very, very interesting. Notice the dates of Kierkegaard. Well, as a matter now, if I can do this.

Here we go. I happen to be in Denmark this summer, visiting friends. And we got to Denmark.

And sure enough, we hit the 200th anniversary of the birth of Soren Kierkegaard. And because he was so connected with Copenhagen and so much a part of that life and everything, here is this book, a little book I picked up at one of the displays. There are a lot of displays of Kierkegaard throughout the city of Copenhagen.

But this little book, Kierkegaard in Golden Age Copenhagen, has a Concise and Pictorial Introduction. And so very, very interesting to be in Copenhagen during this 200th anniversary of Kierkegaard. But here was Kierkegaard.

We would call Kierkegaard a Christian existentialist. A Christian existentialist. So there's a sense in which existentialism began with Kierkegaard.

Because, as a Christian existentialist, existentialism comes from the word, you know, existence, and so forth. As a Christian existentialist, Kierkegaard knew that there were limits to human reason. And remember, he's dealing. Here he is in the middle of the 19th century when he's living.

And so there are limits to human reason. The heart, the emotion, the person, and the whole person have to come to grips with human dilemmas and problems. And so a Christian who is an existentialist is one kind of doing that.

Recognizing the limits of human reason, coming to grips with the human problems, human factors in our lives, and so forth. If there's something you've read about Kierkegaard, it might have been fear and trembling. So just that, those two words in the title of the book, fear and trembling, give you kind of an idea of what Kierkegaard was trying to deal with in his own personal life.

We're just on page 15, Ruth, and we're just doing theological developments, you know, to the present. And we're starting with Soren Kierkegaard. So Kierkegaard, as a representative, I've said there's going to be representatives here.

And as a representative, I started with him because he was the mover and shaker that got this thing going. Now, just for a minute to follow this historically, Kierkegaard was a Christian existentialist, but existentialism coming into the 20th century became divorced from its Christian roots. So existentialism coming into the 20th century was not necessarily Christian, while Kierkegaard himself was.

So, we want to just kind of take note of that. Okay, so that's one person in terms of the personalities we want to notice. In terms of representatives, I guess we're calling them what we want to notice.

Okay, a second person is a New Testament scholar by the name of Rudolf Bultmann. And have you come upon Bultmann in other courses by any chance? Have you talked about Bultmann? But for Rudolf Bultmann, what he did as a New Testament scholar was approach the New Testament by way of existentialist hermeneutics. So, he's going to interpret the New Testament kind of existentially.

He became a very well-known and very influential New Testament scholar. But here's an example for Bultmann. For Bultmann, the definition of sin for him was an inauthentic existence.

So, for Bultmann, sin is an inauthentic existence. You're not living the kind of existence that God intended you to live. And that's kind of a new twist on sin.

That's kind of a new understanding of sin. It's using kind of existentialist categories to define sin and inauthentic existence. So then, for him, salvation is a redeemed existence.

So, salvation is your existence being redeemed by God, being made what it was always intended to be, and getting away from inauthenticity and finding a redeemed full existence. So now, what's the one thing you know about Bultmann? If you hear the word Bultmann, is there any word that you associate with Rudolf Bultmann? Well, the word might be demythologization, taking the myth out of the New Testament. So, for example, for Bultmann, the resurrection is a myth.

It's an important myth, but it is a myth. And so, for Bultmann, the resurrection was not about a body coming out of a grave, but it was about an Easter faith coming into the life of the disciples of Jesus. So there again, that is kind of an existentialist way of looking at the scripture, looking at the New Testament.

So, it's not about Jesus rising from the dead. It's about us receiving an Easter faith in our lives and, therefore, living the kind of redeemed existence we should live. So, Rudolf Bultmann, what he's going to do is take the categories of people like Kierkegaard and apply them to the New Testament.

So, he'll be the second person we'd want to mention. And the third person we want to mention is Paul Tillich. What Paul Tillich did was take existentialist categories and apply them to theology.

So, while Bultmann applied them to New Testament studies, Tillich applied them to theology. Tillich really believed that if theology is going to be what he called a saving theology, it should speak to the situation of people in the modern world. You can see when Tillich lived.

So, it should speak to the dilemmas of people in the modern world. It should speak to the problems of the modern world if theology at all is going to be a saving theology. So, the great problems that we face in life, Tillich said, are problems of meaninglessness, or despair, or anxiety.

These are all problems that call into question our very being and our very existence. And so, the only way you can kind of come to grips with that meaninglessness,

despair, anxiety, very existentialist kind of categories, the only way you can come to grips with that is to understand who God is. And therefore, you'll understand who you are.

So I don't know if you studied Tillich in any of the philosophy courses, but he has a definition that is interesting for understanding who God is and that God is the ground of our being. God is the ground of our being. Because what threatens us in life for Tillich is non-being.

That's really what threatens us. But God comes along, and he is the ground of our being. So, he gives us, God gives us an authentic existence then.

God gives authenticity to our existence. So, Tillich is an interesting person. As Tillich moved along in his own life, he wasn't committed only to Christianity.

He was a Christian theologian. I actually heard Tillich when I was at Temple University. He came to Temple University to speak, and so I heard the great Paul Tillich.

So very interesting to hear him speak. But Tillich, and you could tell that even by when I heard him, Tillich made a transition in terms of all religions being almost equally worthy of Tillich. He failed to see in his own life the uniqueness of Christianity, the uniqueness of who Jesus was in God, and so forth.

And so, he was a person for whom all religions seemed to answer the same questions. We all have the same questions. All humanity has the same questions, and all religions can answer them in their own way.

So that's Paul Tillich. But he's going to interpret theology existentially. He's going to use existentialist categories to interpret theology.

So, the three first players I would mention here would be Kierkegaard, then Bultmann in the New Testament, and then Tillich in theology. So that just gives you a kind of representation there. Let me go on to number two, some basic features of existentialism and the movement of existentialism.

Then, we'll give some strengths and some criticisms. Okay, one feature of existentialism, as you can tell just by the quip and ask in existentialism, but one feature is the centrality of human beings. This is a very anthropocentric movement in a sense.

It wasn't that with Kierkegaard originally, but it certainly became that. And it's concerned about what? It's not concerned about the nature of God necessarily or that that comes into it, but it's concerned about my meaninglessness and my despair

and my anxiety and so forth. So, the centrality of man is very highly subjective and anthropocentric.

Secondly a second feature of existentialism is what I call the obscurity of God. Now, in that way, if you're going to call God the ground of your being, does that sound like the Old Testament or the New Testament God? It doesn't to me. It's not the language of the Old Testament or New Testament.

It's a kind of philosophical language. So, no wonder the existentialists had an obscure God, a God they couldn't kind of understand, a God they couldn't kind of get their heads wrapped around because that's how they thought about God as the ground of our being. What I like to do when I talk about their understanding of God is I like to compare it and contrast it to liberalism and to neo-orthodoxy.

Liberalism, God had become imminent. In Protestant liberalism, God came down kind of among us. You could see God in the processes of society, for example, and culture and that.

But for liberalism, God came down to us. For neo-orthodoxy, God is above us. They emphasize the transcendence of God, not the imminence of God, but the transcendence of God.

And that transcendent God brings judgment upon the world. So, it's kind of an interesting contrast. Existentialism has an obscure God.

Liberalism emphasizes the imminence of God. And neo-orthodoxy emphasized the transcendence of God, the otherness of God. So, you get various kinds of aspects of God.

I would say that biblically, the most biblical aspect of God is, of course, the orthodox understanding that God is transcendent, as wholly other. We understand that transcendence, however, is in the face of that word becoming flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. But I would say that the existentialists really have this obscure God.

Okay, number three, a third kind of characteristic or feature of existentialism, would be what I would call the inevitability of anxiety. As far as the way we live our lives in this world, we live our lives inevitably in a state of anxiety. And if you've got a God who is obscure, that you can't know, that you can't fathom, that you can't understand, maybe that's going to lead to your anxiety.

And it certainly did. Eventually, existentialists just got rid of the God problem altogether, basically, and just lived with this kind of anxiety in the modern world. Okay, and the fourth kind of feature of existentialism is what is the goal of existentialism.

And the goal of existentialism is authentic existence. That's what we're after. That's what we want.

But there is kind of an irony here because a biblical existentialist like Kierkegaard would say that authentic existence can come only in your understanding of God and Christ and so forth. But when you get to an existentialism that has let go of God, it's like you're going around in a circle. How are you going to find this authentic existence? Well, you're not.

I mean, that's the problem, isn't it? So that leads you back to anxiety and despair and so forth. Now, I just think in today's world, in today's university life, we talk about postmodernism a lot, and that's kind of the going thing, and that's kind of the end word and everything. When I went to university, though, existentialism was very much discussed and talked about, and so forth.

And we were reading people like Kafka, Franz Kafka. And I don't know if any of you guys have read Franz Kafka. It's very interesting reading.

You're going to get a little depressed when you read it because it's existentialist literature. Or have you read Sartre? If you've read Sartre or seen some of the plays of Sartre. So, in my university days, we were reading these people.

I mean, this was kind of part of the common core, to be reading these existentialists. So, I kind of grew up with this in a sense. Nevertheless, as a Christian, I felt I could have something to say about all of this.

But those are some basic features of existentialism. Now, the first feature is the centrality of human beings. It's highly anthropocentric.

It's about me, my despair, my anxiety, my meaningless life. It's all about me. So there was this kind of anthropocentric flavor to existentialism.

Not with Kierkegaard, but with people following Kierkegaard. There are some strengths of existentialism. And I'd like to mention a few of them.

I learned from existentialism myself. I love reading Kierkegaard. But I do read people like Kafka and Sartre and others.

There is something to be learned from this. So let me mention something that can be learned. But let's give some basic criticisms as well.

Okay. One thing that can be learned is that truth is both outwardly experienced, it's objective, but existentialists remind us that truth is also inwardly experienced as

well. Your own experience, your own heart, your own inward kind of sense can help you understand truth as well.

You learn truths by looking inward. Existentialism has taught us that. I think that's a lesson of existentialism.

What I want to do is when, you know, in teaching theology, we want to see truth as both outward, that is objective, and inward and subjective as well. We don't want one or the other, but we want them both. Existentialism's strength is that it emphasizes that truth is an inward experience.

Okay. A second strength I think that I've written down is a recognition that people are unique, that people are kind of one of a kind, and they can't be brought to some kind of objective level. You can't bring people to some kind of objective level where you can analyze them objectively as though they don't have this kind of uniqueness.

You'd probably be familiar with other courses with Martin Buber, and Martin Buber talked about a distinction in the relationship between an I-it relationship. If you have an I-it relationship with God or with people, you've objectified those people. And instead of an I-it relationship with God or with people, the relationship should be an I-what, an I-thou relationship.

Your relationship with God and with your fellow human beings should be an I-thou relationship. And in an I-thou relationship, it shows you haven't objectified these people, but you take them personally, you take them seriously, and so forth. So, Martin Buber comes along, and he, of course, lived during this time, but Martin Buber comes along and kind of reminds us that we shouldn't be objectifying people, no doubt about that.

A third thing I think that's helpful from existentialism is that we can learn we have to be honest. A lot of people in our world find it difficult to believe in God, find it hard to believe in God, and find it even impossible to believe in God. There's no doubt about that.

And as they look at the church, they see people in the church who are worshiping, quote-unquote, but they're worshiping only out of habit. They don't have much to teach us about God. So, I think that's something I've learned from existentialism, that a belief in God, for a lot of people, is difficult.

It's hard. It is not easy. And I think we can say that that's probably kind of a strength.

A fourth thing we can learn from existentialism is a willingness to face the problems of life. Go ahead, Hope. The recognition that people find it hard to believe in God.

Yeah, that one was existentialism. One thing it's taught us is that a lot of people find it really, really difficult to believe in God. And even when they look at people in the church, if they're outsiders and look at people in the church, they look at people in the church, and they say people are worshiping only out of habit.

They don't have any deep-seated belief or faith in God or understanding about God. They're doing that out of habit, and I don't want to be part of that. So people do find it hard to believe in God, and we shouldn't be surprised by that.

As Christians, we should face that reality. Does that help? And then another thing is a real willingness to face death. In existentialism, death is a reality.

It's something with which we all must deal. If Christ is not coming back again, all of us are going to die. None of us are getting out of this alive.

I hate to break that to you, Hannah—Gee whiz, just before Thanksgiving and Christmas and everything. But if Christ does not come back, none of us are getting out of this alive.

Maybe we don't want to think about that. The existentialists thought a lot about that. It kind of was one of the things that drove their meaninglessness and despair and anxiety and so forth.

Now, as Christians, we answer that through the doctrine of the resurrection, of course, and Christ's resurrection and our resurrection. But nevertheless, they are willing to face death. It's something with which people must deal.

And then, finally, what I see as a strength in existentialism is a recognition that a lot of people live lives that are shallow, hollow, and meaningless. It's just a recognition of the human reality of life. Existentialism kind of reminds us that a lot of people are not living very authentic lives.

And existentialism is a reminder of that. So, there were some strengths to existentialism, but there are some criticisms, number four. So, I do want to mention the criticisms of the movement.

I think the first one we've already mentioned is that, ultimately, the existentialism that grew after Kierkegaard was a humanism was a form of humanism. That has to do with that anthropocentric view of existentialism. But we need a theology with God as the center, God in Christ as the center, ministered to by the Holy Spirit.

We do not need a theology with us as the center. We are not the center of the story. God's the center of the story.

And I think existentialism has forgotten that. So that's a criticism I would bring to existentialism. Secondly, existentialism often fails to understand the true nature of people.

Because existentialism looks at people from different perspectives. It's looking at people, and you get into all these problems of meaningless and despair and anxiety and everything. It's looking at people from our perspective.

Rather, the question is not who we are from our own perspective but who we are from God's perspective. Who are we from the perspective of our creator? And I think existentialism has forgotten that. So, you don't begin with us; you begin with God, and then you understand ourselves and so forth.

But that's a second thing I think is problematic. The third problematic thing is that existentialism does not talk about sin. It wants nothing to do with original sin, which I think is a biblical doctrine.

It wants nothing to do with people's actual sin of rebellion against God and so forth. And so, therefore, existentialism, they couldn't understand Barth's doctrine of the triumph of grace. Because if you don't have a strong doctrine of sin, you won't have a strong doctrine of grace.

It's only as you understand the very nature of sin that you can understand the nature of God's grace. So, that becomes problematic for existentialism. And then, finally, is their view of the Bible.

We would begin with Bultmann and say we don't think the Bible needs to be demythologized. So, we would begin with his hermeneutic. But we would then say a lot of existentialists just ignore the Bible.

The Bible, they feel, cannot help them in any way. So, instead of seeing the Bible as the center of life, they see the Bible on the margins of life. And ironically, that leads them to even more despair because they're trying to answer the questions of life from their own self, from their own world, and so forth.

So, I think their view of the Bible is problematic. Okay, so existentialism and some of the folks here have helped us understand that. Kierkegaard's especially important.

If you're going to read anything of any of these people, I'd start with Kierkegaard because he deals with this, but deals within a Christian context. Okay, any existentialists out there? Want to talk about existentialism? Are you reading Kafka and Sartre and all that good stuff? Or I should say all that interesting stuff. Okay, number two is ecumenism.

Ecumenism. First of all, what we're going to do with ecumenism has to do with the unity of the church. Okay, so the ecumenical movement or ecumenism.

What I'm going to do first is look at reasons why Protestantism was divided and then a growing recognition of Protestantism and how Protestantism got institutionalized in terms of this ecumenism. Those of you who heard one of the papers, now I forget exactly which one it was, but anyway, one of the papers dealt with ecumenism during the Protestant time. It was the last paper by, yeah, the last paper dealt with the whole ecumenical movement.

He was very much; the speaker was very much involved in ecumenism, the ecumenical movement, and so forth. Okay, so first of all, with ecumenism, and ecumenism has to do first with Protestantism. It's going to then reach out to Catholicism and Orthodoxy, but the ecumenical movement began with a divided Protestant trying to understand itself.

Okay, what are the reasons for a divided Protestantism? I've got four reasons why Protestantism found itself divided at the beginning of the 20th century. Okay, number one is theological. Theologically, there was a divided Protestantism because of theological, theological dividing, a division of theological divisions.

Some Protestants believed this; some Protestants believed that, and so forth. What we found was that we kind of discovered was, beginning to the middle of the 20th century, these theological things that we talk about are dividing us, and that's becoming problematic. And some of the theological divisions, we would say, were more minor than other theological divisions.

So, the first reason for divided Protestantism was theological, and there is no doubt about that. Number two is social. A second reason for the division of Protestantism was what we call social divisions that could be everything from nationalism, from kind of a national church to national Protestant churches on the one hand, like the Anglican Church in England, or there could be social divisions over certain ethical issues.

And so, Protestantism was seriously divided in this country in the middle of the 19th century over the issue of slavery. So, there could be lots of social issues, there were lots of social issues that divided Protestantism. The issue of slavery is a perfect example in our country because some Protestants were pro-slavery, and some Protestants were anti-slavery.

So that caused a great division. Okay, number three, third reason for the division is economic. There are rich Protestants and there are poor Protestants.

And that division between the rich and the poor, certainly Protestants began to say to themselves, wait a minute, that's dividing us. We should be able to kind of come together, but we're not. And why aren't we? Well, part of it was economic.

Okay, and then finally, part of the reason for divided Protestantism was individualism—an emphasis on me, which comes into the 20th century. You know, enough about me, let's talk about me.

With that individualism and privatization, and it wasn't just Protestants obviously, but privatization in the Western world caused a division in Protestantism. And Protestantism found itself greatly divided and decided that we need to do something about this. What can we do about this? How can we kind of come together? Okay, so let's find out now how Protestants tried to unify themselves in this movement called the Ecumenical Movement.

How did they try to do this? How did they try to come together? God bless you. God bless you. So, okay, the first thing Protestants began to say, and I meant to bring out my Bible, and I didn't, but please jot it down, Ephesians 4, 4 through 6. Ephesians 4, 4 through 6. The first thing Protestants started to say as they started to meet together, they started to say, wait a minute, Ephesians 4, 4 through 6 calls for unity.

What happens with a lot of Protestants at diversity at the beginning of the 20th century is that there must be unity centered on Jesus Christ. Whatever fractures we've had, whatever problems we've had, whatever divisions we've had, we've got to kind of rethink those in the light of Ephesians 4, 4 through 6 and the unity which is centered in Jesus Christ. So, I'm glad to say that the ecumenical movement began as a theological movement among Protestants.

It began with Protestants starting to think theologically. Now, that was not a denial of diversity. It wasn't a denial that maybe even denominations are fine to have within Protestants.

But it was saying that there has to be some kind of a unity that is built on something greater than ourselves and they found that unity in Ephesians 4:4 through 6. I'm not saying that the ecumenical movement was able to retain that theological vision, but I am saying that at the beginning of the movement, it was theology that brought the Protestants together. So that's how it all kind of began. Okay, then another thing we should take note of in terms of this growing recognition of unity, the need for unity, this largely began from missionaries, by missionaries.

Because missionaries had been out in the field and working in the field in the 19th century, they realized that maybe we were more interested in making Baptists than we are Christians. Maybe we're more interested in making Presbyterians than we are

Christians. Maybe we're more interested in making Congregationalists than we are Christians.

The missionary conscience helped drive the ecumenical movement, and we say our first priority is to bring people to Christ. How this all works out denominationally is another matter. So, what they did was they had a great conference in Edinburgh in 1910 called the World Missionary Conference.

So, the World Missionary Conference, the Edinburgh Conference, 1910, brought a lot of these people together, and the leader of that conference was a very important person in the missionary movement of the 20th century. His name was John Mott. Now, John Mott was especially interested in being the leader of this World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh because he was especially interesting because he was a layperson.

He was a Methodist layperson. He wasn't a preacher. He wasn't an ordained minister or anything.

And he had not been a missionary himself. He supported missions, but he hadn't been a missionary himself. John Mott was placed in charge of the first World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910.

We had a professor at Gordon College, now retired, a history professor, Professor Askew, who had done a lot of research on this World Missionary Conference and knew it really well. And so, John Mott brings these people together, and he presides over this conference, and these people realize that Protestantism is kind of in trouble, and we've got to fix it. And so out of this kind of missionary movement comes this Missionary Conference, and then it moves on from there.

Another thing in terms of growing recognition is that we need unity, and that is because of social problems in the world and increasing secularism in the world, which is saying to Protestants we need to unify together to face these problems. We will be able to face the social problems, and we will be able to face secularization better as a movement, as a group of people, and as the body of Christ than we will if we just try to face these problems individually within our own denominations or within our own groups. That brought them together, as well, facing the culture, the world, the social problems, and secularization. Let's do it with a single voice, if possible, and move forward from there.

And so that was very, very important. Okay, and then one final thing, kind of growing recognition of the need, and that was the impact of World War II, because the ecumenical movement really kind of comes into being institutionally after World War II. But what Christians around the world faced in World War II were tyrannies, and

Dietrich Bonhoeffer faced that, and we'll mention it later, especially Dietrich Bonhoeffer faced these tyrannies.

And the question is, the tyrannies of the Nazis, the tyranny of Hitler, do you want to face that alone, or is it best for Protestantism to give a united voice against the tyrannies of the world? So, World War II and its aftermath had a tremendous impact on the movement, which would be called the ecumenical movement, as it went forward. There is no doubt about that. Now, let me just mention the institutionalization of all of this. How did all this finally get institutionalized? Very important date in the course, and that's 1948.

Okay, in 1948, a group called the World Council of Churches was formed. 1948, World Council of Churches. It was Protestant to begin with.

It's not that they didn't welcome Catholics or welcome Orthodox people, but they wanted to get their own house in order first. So, the World Council of Churches was formed in Amsterdam in 1948 as a Protestant group. What happened was that to institutionalize this whole thing, in 1950, the National Council of Churches started to be formed.

And one of the first was formed here in America, the National Council of Churches. Formed in 1950. Now, we will say the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches were formed with very good theological intentions when they were shaped when they were formed and when they were born.

And they were biblical, they were central, they were biblical, and the formation was biblical and theological, I would say. I'm going to give a personal experience in just a minute, but the basic problem now with the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches is that they have forgotten their biblical loyalties. The World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches do not operate out of a very clear biblical authority now.

Sad to say. And that, in a sense, has caused the formation of other groups that are more biblically centered. But the ecumenical movement today is not what it was intended to be, is not what it was when it was founded.

Just a quick illustration from my own life. In 1960, I was still in high school. I didn't start college until 1961.

And I received a phone call one day, and it said, do you want to be a representative of your denomination to the North American Ecumenical Youth Assembly in Ann Arbor, Michigan? Well, first of all, I didn't know what the word ecumenical meant, so I had to go and find that out—the North American Ecumenical Youth Assembly in

Ann Arbor, Michigan. And so, I went and found out what ecumenical means and so forth.

I figured a trip to Ann Arbor, Michigan. I was a senior in high school. That would be kind of nice.

So, I said yes. So off I went. I packed my bags, and we were there for about a week in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Well, I have to say it was a very interesting experience because it was a... By that time, the ecumenical movement had broadened out to include Catholics, to include Orthodox, and so forth. But as a kid who grew up in my denomination, that's pretty much the only denomination I knew. That might not be true for you folks.

Maybe you grew up with a lot of different denominations, and maybe you have a broader outlook than I had at my time. But as a kid growing up in my own denomination, it was kind of interesting to meet... What did I know? There were Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, Roman Catholics, and Eastern Orthodox people. I'd never heard of most of these people.

It was kind of a fascinating experience. And I have to say, the North American Ecumenical Youth Assembly, in spite of the fact that the ecumenical movement was kind of drifting by 1960. But I have to say that I was pretty inspired by hearing some great sermons, some biblical sermons, really wonderful sermons, and so forth.

We had Bible studies. It's just that we didn't have Bible studies, just with our own little group. But in the Bible study, there would be Baptists and Presbyterians and Congregationalists and so forth, which I found kind of fascinating myself.

So, when I had that one experience with the ecumenical movement, it was kind of an interesting and, I think, pretty enlightening experience. But that's not the way that the ecumenical movement generally has gone. However, in terms of something, a theological development, ecumenism is important to remember.

Okay, so first, there is existentialism and second, ecumenism. I got to give you guys about a five-second break just to take a break here. Bless your hearts.

Just break here. We only have one apostate today. We're rejoicing in that.

That's a good thing. We're going to lecture on Wednesday. I'm in Baltimore on Monday.

Next week off. And then when we come back the first day when we come back on the first and third day, we show a video of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. It's a very good video called Memories and Perspectives.

I'll give you a little study sheet so you know just what to jot down. And then, on Friday, it's our first review session for the final. So, on Wednesday we come back, I'll ask you four questions about the texts.

So, try to remember to do that. Those four questions will carry you from Friday. Then, the following Monday, we'll lecture.

Then, on Wednesday, we will have our final study time together from the texts. So if you give me four questions on that Wednesday, it will cover both the Friday and the Wednesday. So, there are five sessions left when we come back.

That's what you've got. So as soon as we finish lecturing on Friday, I am out of here and heading for Baltimore. So, I hope you have a great Thanksgiving.

But I'll mention that on Friday. Are you rested okay? And everything. All right.

Let's just mention here, not just mention, but we do need to talk about Dietrich Bonhoeffer. And I am just going to mention a couple of things about background. And the most important thing is about his theology.

Bonhoeffer was one of those persons who helped set the stage for theology along with Karl Barth, his mentor, and everything else. So, let's mention Bonhoeffer. Here are his dates, 1906, 1945.

And here's a couple of pictures of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Here's an earlier picture of Bonhoeffer. Here's the last picture taken of Bonhoeffer in Tegel prison.

I have that picture hanging over my desk in my office. So, let me just quickly say something about his background. And then we'll move on to his theology.

We're going to see the background, memories, and perspectives. So, we won't take much here. Just here to say that Dietrich Bonhoeffer, born in 1906 in Germany, Dietrich Bonhoeffer was born into, as you'll see in the tape and the video, born into a very wealthy, well-to-do, established German family.

And that's going to be very important for his life. He lived a privileged life, to say the least. His father was one of the best-known psychiatrists in Germany at the time and so forth.

So he lived a very, very privileged life. And then came the rise of Hitler. And Bonhoeffer, because he had university training, would be the leader of an underground church called the Confessing Church, or one of the leaders, I should say.

There were others. Bonhoeffer would be one of the leaders of the Confessing Church because Hitler had Nazified the Lutheran Church. The Lutheran Church had sworn allegiance to Hitler.

And so there were pastors in Germany who called themselves Confessing Pastors, and they refused to swear allegiance to Hitler or to any totalitarian. We've mentioned the Barmen Declaration already here. Well, Dietrich Bonhoeffer would become a leader in that movement.

We should also mention, because of his background, and you'll see this again on the Monday we return, we should also mention that he was a pastor, he was a theologian, and he was pretty convinced of pacifism. You'll see that in the tape. Pretty convinced pacifist.

Now, I wouldn't say he was a card-carrying pacifist, but he was pretty convinced that the way ahead for Christianity in the 20th century was pacifism. It's interesting that as a pastor, a theologian, and a pacifist, he did get involved in a plot to assassinate Hitler. And you wonder how a pastor, a theologian, and a pacifist could get involved in a plot to assassinate Hitler.

And, of course, the reason for that is because he finally got to a place in his life where he realized that the Nazi regime was not a government ordained by God. It had overstepped its boundaries of what a government should be doing. So it was no longer a legitimate government.

And he felt that we have to take down Hitler if we're going to preserve Western civilization. And so he did get involved in a plot to assassinate Hitler, for which he was arrested and imprisoned in two different places. And then this is the first place, Tegel Prison.

Or no, this is one of the second places, Tegel Prison. But anyway, he was arrested and taken to prison. And then, on April 9th of 1945, Bonhoeffer was hanged by the Gestapo.

So he lived a very, the ending was very difficult for Dietrich Bonhoeffer as he was hanged, obviously. In the middle of his life, he grew up Lutheran. And he was a good Lutheran in the sense that there were devotions at home and so forth.

But he wasn't particularly, and the family wasn't a church-going family. But kind of earlier in his life, in his teenage years, Bonhoeffer decided with his mother that they

would start attending church on a regular basis, which they did. Started to attend the local Lutheran church on a very regular basis.

And then he decided he wanted to study theology. And this was quite, quite a different road for him to take from what the family wanted him to do. Because everybody in the family went into medicine or law, but theology, you know, and he decided he wanted to study theology.

And so he became what he became as one of the great theologians of the 20th century, although he was so young when he died. One of his mentors, of course, was Karl Barth. So that's a little bit about Dietrich Bonhoeffer's background.

We're going to see that in Memories and Perspectives over a couple of days. The video takes almost two class periods to show. And I'll be making some references to his life as we see the video and giving you just a couple of notes to mark down.

But let's move on to number two, his theology. What about the theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer? So, well, I'm going to mention five things in terms of his theology. Number one, we'll start with his ecclesiology.

We'll start with his doctrine of the church. This was very important for Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the doctrine of the church. One of the earliest things he wrote was on the doctrine of the church.

Basically, he analyzed the church not only from a theological perspective but also from a sociological perspective. And one of the words that he uses here is that you have to see the importance of the church in the community. The church is a community.

So, it's almost a sociological analysis when he uses the word community. But the church, in a sense, is the community that stands over the individual. Because what did he see in the middle of the 20th century when he was analyzing all this? In Western Europe, he saw a very individualized kind of life.

He wanted people to understand the church not as just a group of individuals coming together but as a community of people caring for each other. Okay, and you know my line because I've said it in so many classes. Christianity is a very personal religion, but it's never a private religion.

And Dietrich Bonhoeffer reminds us of that. Christianity is very personal, but it's never private. It's not just Jesus and me in my own room with my Bible, thumbing through my Bible, trying to understand what God wants in my life.

It's all right to do that, but you have to bring all of that understanding to the body of Christ, to the church, to the community. So, the community was very important. Okay, the relationship of the church to the Word.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said in terms of ecclesiology, to be in the church is to be in the Word of God. And to be in the Word of God is to be in the church. Those two things are inseparable from each other.

You can't have one without the other. And so that becomes very important. Also, in terms of the world, the church, and the world, the church should never be a monastic community apart from the world.

The church is called to responsible action within the world, and in the sufferings of the world. Now, that's a lesson that we'll see in the tape. That's a lesson Dietrich Bonhoeffer learned when he came to study here in America.

When he came to study in America, one of his friends was a man by the name of Franklin Fisher. He was a black Christian from Harlem. He took Bonhoeffer to his black church in Harlem, the Abyssinian Baptist Church, and he learned a lot about the sufferings of the black community in America.

He started to ask himself if the church should be aware of those sufferings. How can the church stand apart from that suffering world? And then when he went back to Europe after that time, and the Nazis came to power, he said to himself, who are the suffering people in my world? They're the Jews. The Jews are the ones who are suffering.

How can the church stand apart from the Jewish community? The church should be suffering with the Jewish community. The church should be part of that. So the church in the world is very, very important.

Okay, and then as members of the church, ecclesiology, we're members of the church. How do we live as members of the church? You've got two choices. You can live lives of cheap grace, and cheap grace would be just going to church and making no sacrifices and seeing Jesus maybe as a good man, and, you know, the church doesn't mean much to you. That's cheap grace.

So, you can live a life of cheap grace if you want to but don't call yourself a Christian if you do that. Or you can live a life of costly grace, and costly grace is taking the word of God seriously and all the demands of Christ on your life seriously, discipleship. That's costly grace.

So, you've got your choice. Is it cheap grace or costly grace? Here's his book called *The Cost of Discipleship*. While I'm talking about that, really quickly, how many of

you have read *The Cost of Discipleship*? Let's get the hands of one, two, three, four. Okay, okay.

Summer reading list. Jot it down right now. *Cost of Discipleship*.

It's a must-read in terms of Christian literature. It's one of the greats, you know. Well, how does he start off *The Cost of Discipleship*? Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of our church.

We're fighting today for costly grace. So cheap grace is the deadly enemy of our church. We're fighting today for costly grace.

So, in the very first sentence of *Cost of Discipleship*, he lays down the battle cry, you know. What are we fighting for here? That's what he wants to know. So, ecclesiology is very, very important for Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the church as a community, and how we should act as a community.

We've got some other things for Bonhoeffer in terms of theology, and we've got another two days. So, I'm just right on target here, so we're doing okay. Okay, have a good day.

See you Friday. We'll lecture on Friday. We'll hold your feet to the fire on Friday, and then you'll have a whole week of Thanksgiving break.

This is Dr. Roger Green in his church history course, *Reformation to the Present*. This is session 25 on Existentialism.