

Dr. Roger Green, American Christianity,

Session 21, Neo-Orthodoxy and Social Crisis

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This is Dr. Roger Green in his teaching on American Christianity. This is session 21 on Neo-Orthodoxy and Social Crisis.

We are in lecture number 16, Neo-Orthodoxy and the Social Crisis.

The first thing we're doing is providing background on Neo-Orthodoxy. And just to remind you, just to kind of remind you about what we said in the background, was that Christians came along in the 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s. They found America very divided between fundamentalism on the right and liberalism on the left, which had kind of become bankrupt.

And so, they felt that Americans needed a very healthy Protestantism. And so, a movement arose called Neo-Orthodoxy. Remember, we said Neo-Orthodoxy. The reason it's called Neo-Orthodoxy is because it was an orthodoxy centered on the scripture and interpreted largely through the reformers and especially through Calvin, not exclusively but especially through Calvin.

So, it's a new orthodoxy. It's kind of the reformation of scriptural orthodoxy that came to life in the 20th century. But these people and it was a very, very strong intellectual movement, which we'll also emphasize.

But these people intellectually could allow for the scientific world to do its thing. There wasn't a battle between science and religion. They could allow for biblical criticism up to a certain extent.

They knew that there were limits to biblical criticism, but biblical criticism didn't necessarily mean the demise of the Bible. So, they could allow for that. They could allow for urban life and for the growth and development of urban life.

They didn't see urban life as the enemy of the church or anything like that. So, they could allow for that. They could also allow for a critique of the economic and social structures in America.

Just because you're critiquing economic structures or social structures doesn't mean that you're not a biblical Christian. So, they could allow that and did allow it. So, I think that's about where we got to so far, if I'm not mistaken.

So, we're still on a background to neo-orthodoxy. So, there's where we are. What many of the neo-orthodox people got involved in was political realities.

They were very astute in understanding biblical theology and interrelating biblical theology to the political realities of the world in which they found themselves. So, they allowed for the biblical understanding to help with the understanding of the political world in which we live. So here are some of the political realities that they faced.

Maybe other people didn't want to face these political realities. Here are some that they faced, neo-orthodoxy faced. Number one, neo-orthodoxy was very big on the sinfulness of this world.

If we think that the 20th century was a Christian century, then we're not taking sin very seriously. Because World War I and the Holocaust and World War II and so forth. So, the reality of the sinfulness, the evil of the world in which we live and the sinfulness of human beings is too stark.

One of the people we're going to talk about is Reinhold Niebuhr. You don't need to worry about the name yet. He's in the middle picture here.

Reinhold Niebuhr said this: Original sin is the most empirical of all doctrines. Original sin is the most empirical of all doctrines. Now if we say something that's empirical, what do we mean? What do we mean if something is empirical? Most empirical of all doctrines? What does that mean? It means something is empirical if you can see it with your eyes if you can sense it.

So, original sin is the most empirical of all doctrines. You don't have to argue whether or not there's such a thing as sin in the world. All you've got to do is look at World War I or World War II. Look at the Holocaust.

You don't have to argue for sin as though it's not a reality. So, by being the most empirical of all doctrines, the most visible and tangible of all doctrines is original sin. So that's first, a sense of sinfulness.

Let's talk about sin, the New Orthodox people said. The liberals didn't want to talk about sin. The liberals just all they saw was a Christian century, and everything's going to be good, and we're going to join hands and sing Kumbaya for the whole time or something.

That's all they wanted to talk about. No, New Orthodoxy comes along and talks about sin. Number two is the limitations of all nations.

All nations have limitations, and certainly, all nations have limitations in their virtue. Nations sometimes act in ways that are contradictory to their own physical existence, let alone to the physical existence of their neighbors. So, all nations act in

ways that are ways of contradictory to themselves and their neighbors, and let's recognize that.

Now, under this second point, which got a little bit dicey here, the New Orthodox theologians said all nations have limited virtue. All nations sometimes want to lord it over other nations, including America. So, the New Orthodox theologians who were here in America got after America and had limitations.

Now, under this second point, as far as they were concerned, you may not agree with this; you may see it otherwise, but I'm just trying to understand the New Orthodox theologians. As far as they were concerned, the only time that God has dealt precisely with a nation is with Israel. So, as far as they were concerned, that's the only time he's dealt with a nation of people.

Now, we do not live in the Israel world now. We live in the world of the church, the body of Christ, and the church is universal. The church is not connected with any one nation. The church is not controlled by any one nation, nor does the church control any one nation.

So, the church is the body of Christ everywhere in the world. So be careful, the New Orthodox theologians were saying, be careful of associating God with any single nation now. That happened with Israel, but it hasn't happened since.

Now you associate God with his body, with the body of Christ here on earth, capital C, the church, and that is universal. That's in all nations. That's transnational.

So, they were very good about that. Number three, the actualities of political power. When you see political power, you do no service to ignoring that political power.

You have to face that political power and see where it is going and see if it's fulfilling its promises. The perfect example of this is that some of us are in the Bonhoeffer seminar, so the perfect example of this, of course, is Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Dietrich Bonhoeffer faced a political power that he was convinced was no longer controlled by the providence of God.

That political power, Nazism, had overstepped its boundaries. It was no longer a legitimate political power. It was now an illegitimate political power.

It had overstepped the boundaries that God establishes when he establishes nations and when he establishes power. So, because it had overstepped the boundaries then, we talked about this in the Bonhoeffer seminar, but because it had, Dietrich Bonhoeffer got involved in a plot to assassinate Hitler. That was a tough road for Bonhoeffer to go because Bonhoeffer was a pastor.

He was somewhat of a pacifist. He was a Christian theologian. So, for a person like this to get involved in a plot to assassinate Hitler, he had to feel that that political power had overstepped the boundaries of its power and had to be brought down for the salvation of Germany, for the salvation of Western civilization.

So, neo-Orthodox theologians were actually, the actualities of political power have to be dealt with. The problems of political power had to be dealt with. So, they were against any Christian groups, churches, or denominations that put their blinders on, that didn't want to see what was happening in the 20th century, or that didn't want to see what was happening with Nazism.

The neo-Orthodox folks were against that. That's not the way to go. And then a fourth thing, and we've already kind of referred to this with these people, but a fourth thing is that this neo-Orthodoxy became a great intellectual tradition within American Protestantism.

So, the neo-Orthodox theologians said, you worship God when you worship him with your mind. You honor God when you use your minds to understand the world around you and to minister to the world around you. It became a very powerful intellectual tradition and intellectual movement in America and Europe as well.

So, worshipping God with our minds and using our minds to please God were very important for these neo-Orthodox theologians. Now, somewhat they are arguing against American Fundamentalism because there was some American Fundamentalism, not all, but there was some American Fundamentalism which was quite anti-intellectual, and the neo-Orthodox felt that's not the biblical way to go, that's not the Christian way to go. So, these are some of the things that kind of characterize neo-Orthodoxy and what it would bring about.

So, this is the background of neo-Orthodoxy. So, is there anything about the background, first of all? Anything about where these people are coming from, why they are doing what they are doing, and what the results of what they are doing are? We'll see more of that later. Anything at all about the neo-Orthodox, neo-Orthodoxy as a movement? So, we've seen a lot of movements in the course, and now we're seeing another one come on the scene here.

Alright, you can't talk about neo-Orthodoxy without talking about the importance of Karl Barth. So, that's B on your outline on page 16, the importance of Karl Barth. If we don't understand Barth, we're not going to understand what the neo-Orthodox theologians are putting forth here.

Okay, the importance of Karl Barth, by the way, it's Barth and not Barth. Okay, bless your hearts. Thank you very much. So, if you have anything you want to ask me

about Karl Barth, say, I'd like to ask you a question about Karl Barth, but not Barth, as I often hear.

So, it's Barth, that's clear. And by the way, this has nothing to do with anything, so don't try to make any connection whatsoever. We had a professor here at Gordon College, Dr. William Beeler, and he was the last American student to get his doctorate under Karl Barth in Basel, Switzerland.

And here he taught at first at Barrington, he came up before the merger, came up here in 1981. But he had that claim to fame in his life, the last American; he wasn't the last student to get a doctorate degree under Barth, but he was the last American student to get his doctorate degree under Karl Barth. So, it was really a noteworthy accomplishment on his part, no doubt about that.

So, okay, so Karl Barth. What we're going to do is look a little bit at his life, not much, just some indicators about his life, and then the more important thing, we're going to look at his theology. And his theology is going to come to bear here in American neo-orthodoxy.

So, okay, here are just a few things about his life. The first thing we want to notice is that he was born in Switzerland, so he is a Swiss citizen. That is a very important fact because it will save his life later on for reasons we'll see in just a couple of minutes.

But he was born in Switzerland. So, Karl Barth was reared in a liberal Protestant tradition. He went to university, and in the university, Protestant liberalism had kind of taken over the German universities.

So, he was reared in that tradition. He believed that stuff. Schleiermacher was very important to him in terms of his own study and so forth.

So that's the tradition in which he was reared. Now, he has become a pastor after he left university. He became a pastor in Switzerland, and he was a pastor during World War I. So, he observed World War I and saw World War I. As a pastor, he couldn't match the Protestant liberalism in which he had been trained with the realities of the First World War.

He couldn't match those two things at all in his own life. What he discovered was what we call classical Protestant liberalism, and he discovered that that was bankrupt. That was not biblical.

It wasn't going to hold water for the 20th century. So where is he going to go when he makes that great discovery as a pastor during World War I? Where is he going to go? What is he going to turn to, in a sense, to try to counteract the liberal theology that he grew up with? That's kind of the next step in his life. He turns to the Bible.

He goes to the Bible, and he finds in the Bible what he calls a strange new world. It was a world that he was not familiar with, with his classical liberal Protestant kind of training and with the emphasis on biblical criticism, which pretty much put the Bible aside. Karl Barth goes to the Bible, and he sees this strange new world. He sees that the Bible talks about the otherness of God and the sinfulness of humanity.

And those two doctrines become, we'll see it when we get to his theology, but the otherness, the transcendence of God, the sinfulness of humanity. The Bible does not talk about, does not hint at a kind of unity of God with humanity, which was one of the doctrines of classical Protestant liberalism. God is unified with humanity.

Jesus becomes a good example of that unity with God and so forth. No, that's not what the Bible says. That's what people have gotten from the Bible, maybe, but it's not what the Bible says.

The Bible talks about God as a holy other, and it talks about us as sinners in need of redemption. So now he finds this kind of strange new world of the Bible. Now, the question is, how is he going to interpret the Bible? He's going to interpret the Bible, of course, through his people that he would hear about in Protestant liberalism, but maybe he'd hear about them, but maybe they were put out in the margins, but he's going to interpret the Bible through people like Luther and Calvin.

So, it's going to be Luther, especially Calvin, who he's going to go to help him understand this great biblical message, this strange new world of the Bible. He's going to go to the reformers. Now, he also went to Kierkegaard.

So that's 19th-century Danish Kierkegaard, Christian existentialism. He also found a lot of help by reading and studying Kierkegaard. So, he finds that he's primarily influenced by the Reformation sources.

Okay, here are a couple more things about Karl Barth. In 1918, he wrote a commentary. When he discovers this strange new world of the Bible, one of the books that really took him, took his breath away is the book of Romans.

And in 1918, he decided that he was going to write a commentary on the book of Romans. It was first published in 18 and then republished again in 1921. But he wrote a commentary in the book of Romans.

Let me just say something about that commentary. The reason for that commentary was to share with other German pastors what he knew about Romans. And, you know, the commentary was meant to be a point of discussion with other, other, other Swiss pastors.

Did I say German pastors? With other Swiss pastors. That's all it was meant to be. What he found was, to his amazement, other people were getting a hold of this, and it was finally translated into English.

And he found, to his amazement, that his commentary in the book of Romans became a blockbuster. It became just, it became incredible. People were reading this and studying it, writing to him, coming to visit him where he was teaching, and so forth.

It became an amazing blockbuster. So, he knew he had discovered something. He had something here trying to get at the book of Romans.

And why did it? Why was it a blockbuster? Because Protestant liberalism had pretty much ignored the Bible, including the book of Romans. It was a blockbuster because it was a new way of approaching the Bible, a new way of seeing the message of God for the 20th century, an explosive, it was an explosive book. So Barth comes on the scene.

He didn't really intend to come on the scene, but he came on the scene really in a remarkable way. What happened then was that Barth began to teach in great universities, and he went over to Germany. Now he's a Swiss citizen, but he goes over to Germany to begin his teaching career and teaches at a number of different German universities.

And while there, he decides that he's going to start to write dogmatics. He decides he's going to write a systematic theology. Now he decides that the original thing he called the dogmatics was he called it Christian dogmatics.

That's what he thought was a good title for his book, Christian Dogmatics. Then he said, no, it's not a Christian dogmatics. It's a dogmatics for the church.

So, he changed the title from Christian dogmatics to church dogmatics. He was in their early 30s, and now he's starting his teaching career and teaching ministry; in his early 30s, he started to write church dogmatics. When he died in 1968, he was still writing church dogmatics.

So, church dogmatics is a multi-volume dogmatics. Just to give you a little hint here, the doctrine on reconciliation is two volumes, and it's about, I want to say, about 1600, 1700 pages on just one doctrine. So, it does take a while to work your way through the writings of Karl Barth.

There's no question about that. A while would be like a lifetime to work your way through the writings of Karl Barth. I had to take a course in reconciliation for my PhD

program, and the two volumes of Barth is what we studied, those 1800 pages or so, just on that one doctrine of reconciliation.

So, it takes a while to read and study Karl Barth, but it's a wonderful thing. So, church dogmatics. So, okay.

So, he's writing. Now, Hitler has come to power. He's in Germany.

Hitler comes to power. When Hitler came to power, he, along with others and his brightest student, was a man by the name of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. When Hitler came to power, he and others saw it took him a little bit of time, but eventually, they saw that this was not; he was an un-leader, not a leader.

He was not a Führer. He was a non-Führer. This was not a government.

It was a non-government. And he starts to criticize Hitler. He is the author of something called the Barman Declaration.

I don't have that up here on the list, but B-A-R-M-E-N, the Barman Declaration. You want to jot that down. He's the author of the Barman Declaration.

The Barman Declaration basically is a declaration of faith to be confessed against the Nazi church because the church in Germany had become Nazified. The church in Germany was saluting Hitler. Well, there's only one Lord in life, and that's the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so, the Barman Declaration makes that very, very clear. Okay, now, if he had not been a Swiss citizen or a German citizen, he probably would have eventually ended up like Bonhoeffer did. Bonhoeffer ended up in prison and then Bonhoeffer was executed.

In fact, yesterday, April 5th, that's the day Bonhoeffer was taken to prison. And then, on April 5th of 43, he died. He was hanged on April 9th of 45.

If Barth had been a German citizen, he might have ended up the same way Bonhoeffer did. But because he was a Swiss citizen, he was let out of the country. He was able to go back to Switzerland.

And when he went back to Switzerland the last thing we'll just say about him before we get into his theology is that when he went back to Switzerland, he spent the rest of his life teaching at Basel. And that's B-A-S-E-L. He spent the rest of his life at Basel, at the University of Basel.

That's where our friend got his degree under Karl Barth. And by the way, it's Basel, not Basel. So please don't say Karl Barth from Basel.

You know, it's Basel. So, he went back and taught at Basel for the rest of his life. So he was in a safe, neutral country when the war got going, and so forth.

But that is Barth. And that's who, that's the kind of person he was. You couldn't, and he's called the second Augustine.

And he's called the second Augustine for a reason, for the impact that he made on his world with his theology, just as Augustine did in his world and so forth. So, a pretty remarkable guy. Okay, so that's Karl Barth.

That's just a little bit about his life, just so we get a sense of who he was before we look at his theology. Now, for some reason, this isn't coming there. Did that come through? Okay, there it is, 1886, 1968.

There it is. And here he is here. You know, I want to say something about this picture too.

If you look at this picture, Time Magazine, if you look at that picture very closely, Karl Barth, you'll notice something behind him. Now, this is Time Magazine. This is an American kind of product here.

But you'll notice something behind him right there, and it's an empty tomb. It's the resurrected Christ. Now, even Time Magazine recognized that part of the center of Karl Barth's theology was the resurrection of Jesus.

Even they had the sense to do that. But here's also what I want to say, and you'll notice, we're going to talk about Niebuhr also in a few minutes, but here's what I want to say about Karl Barth. Karl Barth was recognized as a public theologian.

He was recognized, put on the cover of Time Magazine, he was recognized as a public theologian. In other words, the 40s, 50s, 60s were still a time when the theologian had an impact on his or her culture. I don't think we're living quite in that time today in American life and culture, where you have public theologians.

Probably the nearest we've come to that is the recent visit of Pope Francis. Pope Francis's coming to America had a tremendous impact on American life as a theologian, as a pastor, as a minister, as the head of the Roman Catholic Church, and so forth. But that's the closest we've come to what we used to recognize as public theologians.

So, there he is, Karl Barth, a pretty remarkable person. Anything about Barth here, about his life? Maybe you've talked about Barth in other courses, so maybe this is something you've talked about already, but it's very impactful. Let's go to number two, his theology, because it's the theology of Barth that is going to influence the other people we talk about, and this movement is called Neo-Orthodoxy.

So, let's talk about his theology. I've got five things about his theology that are important to shaping Neo-Orthodoxy. The first thing is what we would call a seriousness or a commitment to the Bible as the Word of God.

So, the Bible is the Word of God. The Bible, as the Word of God, speaks to us primarily about Christ as the Word of God. So, the Bible is the Word of God and talks about Christ as the Word of God, no doubt about that.

Now, with this first, the new seriousness of the Word of God, the Word of God, what he does is, in a sense, he attacks, goes after, challenges any attempts to accommodate that Word, any attempts to control that Word of God, any attempts to tame the Word of God. So, he's a theologian. He's going to go after those people who've got it wrong.

So, under this first point, a new seriousness about the Word of God, there are three basic groups of people that he goes after because they do not understand the Word of God or they understand it in a way that detracts from it is the Word of God. So, he goes after three groups. Number one, he goes after scholars who treat the Word of God as just mysteries to be solved.

The Bible, let's open the Bible. I'm a scholar. There are mysteries in the Bible to be solved, and I'm going to discover and find out those mysteries.

That's my job to do that. He does not like that because that's like you're controlling the Bible. It's like you're controlling the Word of God.

So, he's not happy about that at all. The Word of God is not a series of mysteries to be discovered. So okay, that's number one.

Number two, he goes after liberal, classical liberal scholars, and classical liberal Protestants. He goes after Protestant liberalism because Protestant liberalism took the Word of God and made it kind of an ideology for the middle class. Jesus, for classical Protestant liberalism, Jesus kind of became a tame middle-class person without any kind of prophetic voice, without any kind of a priestly function, without any kind of a kingly role.

So, Jesus becomes, for these people, a very tame middle-class people. He is very unhappy with people who take the Bible and use it to develop their own middle-class kind of ideology. That's not what the Bible is all about.

That is a taming of the Bible. That's a kind of control of the Bible. That's bad news.

Okay, the third group he goes after. The third group he goes after, you won't be surprised about this, but the third group is the social gospelers. He goes after the social gospelers.

Now, he doesn't go after Rauschenbusch, but he goes after the second and third generation of social gospelers because what they've made the Bible only, they've made the Bible only kind of an ethical book on how to right the wrongs of this world, how to bring about kind of social reconstruction, how to reform the world. So, they've made it only an ethical text. They've forgotten everything else that the Bible has to say about God and human beings, the otherness of God and the sinfulness of human beings, and so forth.

No, it's an ethical book. Let's figure out how to make the world better if we read the Bible. He is very unhappy about that because that's not the Word of God.

You've tamed the Word of God when you've done that. You've controlled the Word of God when you've done that. So, the first thing for Karl Barth will also be true as we go down the line for other New Orthodox people, but the first thing for Karl Barth is going to be a new seriousness about the Word of God.

Let's get serious about the Word of God. Let's understand what it was. It's God speaking to us from his place, not from our place.

So that's number one. Let me do the second one, and then I've got to give you a break. So, the second one pretty easily follows from the first.

The second one is a new seriousness about who God is because God is the sovereign creator and Lord of the universe. That's who God is. So, new seriousness about who God is.

So, depending on the translations, this could be a play on words kind of. God is wholly other, and you can spell that in English, W-H-O-L-L-Y. God is wholly or totally other.

Or, you can say God is wholly other, H-O-L-Y. Wholly other. And both of them would be true for Barth.

He is wholly other, W-H-O-L-L-Y, wholly other. Totally other. And he is wholly other, H-O-L-Y, other.

He is holy in the way that we are not. He is different from us in his holiness. So, the sovereignty of God, the majesty of God, the glory of God, and what had liberal Protestantism done, it had tamed God even.

So, for liberal Protestantism, God had become our good buddy. God had become my friend. God had become, well you hear this all the time on radio, television, God had become the man upstairs, you know.

So that, Barth said, that's what you think of God. You're not talking about God. You're not talking about God in the Bible when you're talking about God in that way.

So, there is new seriousness about the sovereignty of God. So, okay, that's number two. Let me give you your five seconds here.

Enough of that. New seriousness, number three. The third thing from Karl Barth that we learned:

The third thing from his theology that influenced along here. Number three. A new seriousness about God's grace and how we see God's grace in Revelation.

So that's number three for Barth. A new seriousness. Take seriously the grace of God.

We should take seriously how we understand how that grace has been revealed or disclosed to us. Okay, so the word that Karl Barth doesn't like is religion, quote-unquote, religion. Christianity is not a religion.

Now, the reason he doesn't like that word is because he sees religion as mankind, human beings' way of working their way up to God. That's how he sees religion. That's how he sees world religions, too.

But we're working our way up to God, or we're working our way up to the gods by the things that we do, being pious, or whatever we're doing. We're trying to please God or the gods. That's religion for Barth.

Christianity is not a religion. Christianity is the body of Christ revealed to us by God's grace. So, Christianity is the community of believers that has broken into our lives by God's grace and been formed by God's grace.

Christianity is not a religion that we shape. It's not a religion that we form. It's not a religion that we're kind of putting together.

Christianity has been formed and shaped for us by the grace of God. The reason we know that is because God has disclosed himself to us. He has kind of shown himself to us in the greatest of revelation, and the greatest of revelation, of course, is in Jesus Christ.

So, God in the flesh, God in Christ, is how we understand that grace that's been revealed to us. So, look at the face of Jesus. That's how you're going to know God because that's how God has chosen to reveal himself to us.

So that becomes very important. Now, I mentioned this. If any of you had me for Christian theology you'll know this, but John 1.14. You want to write that verse down.

John 1.14. You want to jot that down for sure. Okay. The word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory.

Glory is the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. But the word became flesh. God became flesh.

So how has God revealed himself to us? How has he revealed his grace? He's revealed his grace by coming himself in the person of Jesus Christ. Okay. So, Karl Barth had a word for that verse.

Karl Barth called that verse theology in a nutshell. That's theology in a nutshell. Barth said John 1.14 is the Bible.

Everything else is a commentary on John 1:14. So, if you've got John 1:14 you've got the Bible. You've got the heart of the scriptures. You've got the incarnation.

Everything else in the Bible is pointing to John 1:14, that great incarnational event of God becoming flesh. Therefore, the whole business of Christology and who Christ is for us have become very important. Number four.

Number four, a new seriousness. We've already kind of mentioned this, but a new seriousness about human beings as sinners. We are, first and foremost, sinners.

We are, first and foremost, in rebellion against God. And if we don't acknowledge that, we're going to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. Because in contrast to a holy God, we are here in rebellion.

No doubt about that. So, a new seriousness. A new seriousness about our sinfulness and how God stands over us and judges us.

God is a judge over our sinfulness. Probably for Barth, one of the first ways you know God is to know him as a judge of your sinfulness. But of course, he's provided a way of getting through that sinfulness by the coming of Christ and by John 1.14 and so forth.

So, under this fourth point, did I have anybody for the Christian theology class by any chance? I had a couple for Christian theology. In Christian theology, we used to quote a lot from John Calvin, whom Barth knew well. Not personally, but Barth knew well, John Calvin.

The opening line of Calvin's Institutes now I won't pick on anybody from the theology class at all, but the opening line of Calvin's Institutes was that all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, begins with the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But which one comes first is not easy to discern. But Calvin taught that knowing God and knowing ourselves are kind of intermeshed with each other.

But the first thing Calvin said, the first thing you know about yourself, is that you are a sinner in rebellion against God. Now Barth picks up on that and says the first thing you know about yourself is you are limited by your sin and you need to have redemption. You can't do it yourself, and God's going to do it in Christ.

But that's the first thing you know about yourself. Now, I'll just say this real quickly, but is that a counter-cultural message for the culture we live in? The answer to that is yes. If that were a true and false question, the answer would be yes, true.

That is a counter-cultural message because the world in which we live does not want to talk about human beings as sinners in rebellion against God and in need of salvation. I'm okay, and you're okay, thank you very much. So now I feel a long sermon coming on human beings as sinners right from Barth.

But there it is, number four. Okay, and then number five. Number five is that we have to have a new sense of seriousness in how we understand God.

We need to have a new seriousness in how we understand God. Because liberal Protestantism felt that they could understand God somehow with their minds and with their scholarship and with their teaching and so forth, so they felt if you've got the right concepts, if you've got the right ideas, if you've got the right ideas about God, the right philosophy, well you're going to know God.

You're certainly going to be able to. Barth said you can't do that. You cannot even grasp who God is starting from yourselves with those kinds of concepts and so forth.

So therefore, a new seriousness about our attempt to know God. How do we know God? We know God only because he addresses us. Only because he speaks to us.

Only because he's disclosed himself to us. Only because he's given himself to us. And then he demands what? He demands a response to that.

So that's kind of dialectical. God comes to us, and we respond to God. And the more we respond to God, the more he reveals himself to us, and so forth.

There's kind of a dialogue going on here. So, a new seriousness about people's attempt to grasp God. Those are five things that would distinguish this movement called Neo-Orthodoxy from Barth.

So, if you look at your list, are there any questions about those five things? Those five areas. Barth was part of a reformed denomination. He knew Calvin well and interpreted Calvin well, but he was part of a reformed denomination in Switzerland.

So, he was denominationally tied, denominationally connected. He does. He's kind of a world theologian by the time he dies.

He addresses Judaism, world religions, and Christianity as a religion. He doesn't like religion. If religion is a way for mankind to work our way up to God and get to know God and please God, that's what religion is.

Barth wants nothing to do with it. Christianity is formed not because we've done it. The church is not us forming the church.

Christianity is formed because of what God has disclosed in Christ. So now, Barth sometimes has long discussions about this among the Barth scholars, so we'll probably leave this to the Barth scholars. But at times, Barth was accused of being a universalist, which he takes; we were talking about this in the Bonhoeffer seminar yesterday; in Adam, all have sinned in Christ.

All are going to be made alive. So, things like that. So, Barth, they kept pressing Barth on this and he doesn't, he kind of doesn't, he pushes back sometimes.

One time, he said I'm a universalist with a small u. I don't know what that means exactly. Well, what it means is he realized that human beings still have the freedom to say no, still have the freedom to say no to God, and always have that freedom to say no to God. So, I'm not sure.

But that discussion came in in terms of world religions and Judaism and so forth. Is God going to redeem just all people whether they're Christians or not? On the Christian road or not? Yeah, Alexander? No, he was in a pastoral ministry for only about 11 years or so. And then he went into teaching full time.

Now, he preached all of his life. So and, one of his favorite preaching venues was in local prisons. He liked to go to the local prison and preach to the prisoners.

And the message, of course, this is very kind of Barthian in a sense, but again we were talking about this in Bonhoeffer yesterday, but the message was God has already redeemed you. God has already come in the person of Christ to redeem you. I'm here to give you that good news.

So that's how he preached because that's what he felt was the emphasis of the gospel. So yeah, he did preach a lot, but he didn't have a pastoral ministry once he went into full-time teaching. Yeah.

Yes. First of all, to answer the second question, he ended up having a family. His son, Marcus Barth, became a very well-known New Testament scholar and actually taught here in America.

I think it was at Pittsburgh, but I'm not sure. But Marcus Barth became a New Testament scholar. And so that's the first, the family.

He was multilingual. My friend Bill Beeler, whom we both know, but my friend Bill Beeler went to the seminars, and often, the seminars were conducted in French, German, and English all together so that everybody there could understand what was going on. So, he was multilingual.

Yeah. He was a second Augustine for sure, no doubt. I will say, however, that some of you might know this already, but if you're reared in that European culture, you're going to be multilingual anyway.

You're going to know German, French, and English, maybe Italian, maybe a little Spanish. I mean, that's the world. Those fortunate people in Europe are reared in a multilingual world.

So, he was multilingual. Yeah. Something else about Barth, a fascinating person Barth is, no doubt about that, but yeah.

Right. No, his family were nominally Christians. He's kind of like Bonhoeffer.

Bonhoeffer was also reared in a nominally Christian Lutheran home. Barth was reared in a nominally Christian Reformed home. Therefore, when he went to university, he didn't think about theology having to do with the Bible and church history.

It was liberal theology. So, he was reared in a more kind of liberal tradition, like Bonhoeffer was as well. But Barth made that discovery when he was a pastor of the Bible.

Bonhoeffer made the same discovery when he was 13 or 14, started to discover the Bible, and said then to his family, I want to be a theologian. So, they're very similar paths. And then Bonhoeffer became a student of Barth.

So, Bonhoeffer is kind of the second generation of Barth, some of Barth's theology, although he died when he was only 39. Something else about Barth. I love to talk about Karl Barth.

He's a pretty fascinating person. That's a good question. Barth was very influential, extremely influential, and no more so than among evangelicals, American evangelicals.

Our friend who went over sold his pharmacy business in California and took his wife and six children over to Basel to study under Karl Barth—no easy task in life. But there were a lot of evangelicals who found their way over to study under Barth in Basel.

And why? Because evangelicals take the Bible seriously. And evangelicals are going to listen to any theologian who takes the Bible seriously. And even though they might have disagreed with some nuances of his theology, which they did, they found in him kind of the intellectual force that they were looking for and couldn't find in fundamentalism and couldn't find until evangelicalism started to get established.

So, a lot of the people we're going to be talking about in evangelicalism, some of them were students of Barth at Basel. Some of them, even when Barth came to America, are asked to be on a panel with Barth because they speak the same language in the sense that we are really serious about this Bible being the Word of God and revealing himself in Christ and the resurrection and so forth. So yeah, there are a lot of connections with Barth.

So, Barth is still influential, I would say. What were his views on women and women with disabilities? Right. He didn't, really. That is not really a subject that came up in his own culture, and so it is in his own dogmatics.

Now, in terms of men and women, the whole human family, in a sense, is the recipient of God's grace. So, he never made any distinction there. But because it wasn't a cultural matter for him, and I'm not sure even when he came to America that he was ever, I'm not sure. He might have been questioned on it, but I'm not sure.

But you don't find that in Barth, purely because it wasn't within his kind of frame of reference, like it was, for instance, with Finney or with Wesley in England. Something else about Barth. One last question on Barth.

We love to talk about Karl Barth. He's very important theologically for neo-Orthodoxy, for evangelicalism, for what's going to happen in American Christianity when we get to our friends here, the Niebuhr brothers. No? Okay.

Bless your hearts. Have a good day.

This is Dr. Roger Green in his teaching on American Christianity. This is session 21 on Neo-Orthodoxy and Social Crisis.