

Dr. Roger Green, Reformation to the Present,

Lecture 15, The Rise of Liberalism

© 2024 Roger Green and Ted Hildebrandt

This is Dr. Roger Green in his church history course, Reformation to the Present. This is session 15, The Rise of Liberalism.

This is an important date in church history, and I'll just mention this to the class and for you folks; we talked earlier about what was happening in America in the 17th century, especially the group called the Quakers who came over to the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

But on this date, October 14th of 1656, there was an actual law enacted against the Quakers to make sure that the Quakers didn't come to the Massachusetts Bay Colony. So this is an important date in church history: October 14th. So that's many years ago that that happened, and then things, of course, changed.

So, I just wanted to mention that as well. Okay, and also the students who are visiting, we're glad to have you, and I've already told them that they can leave at any time. So they can come and go as they wish, when they wish, no problem.

You guys, of course, can't, so that's just, that's the difference. So, there you are. So, you could, but I know who you are.

See, I know this is a small class. This is not a big class, so I know who's here and who's not. So, anyway, welcome to our friends today.

Hope it's been a good day. Okay, let me just explain for, let me just take a couple of minutes for our folks who are here, friends who are here, just to explain where we are in this course, and then we'll move on. We're going to finish up this lecture and then begin the next because we're scheduled to begin lecture seven today on October 14th.

So, we want to stay on schedule. But this is a course in the Reformation to the present. So, we start at the Reformation, and we look at the Reformation through the eyes of John Calvin, and we try to understand how Calvin responded to the church and how he helped to shape Protestantism.

And then we kind of march through what's happening in the church through the 16th century, 17th century, 18th century, and so forth. What we see in the church is a pendulum swinging. And sometimes in the church, you'll get, the lecture before the lecture we're on, we talked about pretty severe criticism that came to the church and

to Christianity and really tried to, some people tried to almost dismantle the church and historic Christianity.

But then there was a wonderful thing. What we call in this lecture is an evangelical resurgence of the church. There was a whole evangelical coming alive of the church. So that's what we're studying now.

Then, today's lecture is on what we call liberal theology and how liberal theology was a bit of an answer to both of those things. It was an answer to the kind of severe skepticism that arose in the 17th and 18th centuries, but it was also an answer to the evangelical resurgence because not everybody was kind of in line with that. So you're seeing the pendulum go back and forth and back and forth in the course.

Also, in the course, there are certain places, because this is Reformation to the present, certain places in Western Europe or in America, that seem to be the activity. So, in the lecture that we'll start today, the art of activity in Germany would affect other places. Okay.

However, we have not finished the present lecture, evangelical resurgence in the church. We're talking about a man by the name of John Wesley, and John Wesley was very important in bringing renewal of the church in Britain. And we are now talking a lot about his theology, but we're now talking about a theology called perfect love or full salvation from all sin.

John Wesley preached a doctrine of perfect love. And so that's where we are now. We'll just kind of finish up for that.

Right as we were closing the other day, we mentioned that there were two; John Wesley preached the doctrine of perfect love because he felt that the Bible taught that doctrine. Be perfect as God is perfect. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, and soul.

Love your neighbor as yourself. He believed that the Bible taught the doctrine of perfect love, which was a kind of Christian perfection. It was a perfection in Christ, but it wasn't a human perfection.

Doesn't mean that we'll be humanly perfect, but perfect in Christ. And probably just to kind of get us all on the same line here, what we, one of the reasons that he taught it because it was biblical, but one of the reasons he was really compelled to teach it was in the 18th century, this is what he found in the church. He found people who were baptized in the church as infants.

And then they'd be in the church, and they'd be in the church for 30, 40, 50 years. And those 30, 40, 50 years out, they didn't know anything more about the Bible,

about life in Christ, about Christian witness, about prayer. They didn't know anything more about Christianity.

They'd been in the church all their lives. And where are they? It's a flat line. And Wesley said, boy, that's not how it's intended to be.

Is that what God intends for believers to live in this kind of flat line? No, what God intends for believers is kind of an upward motion here. So that's why he preached these biblical doctrines, including the doctrine of perfect love. Okay.

So, what we said just before we had to go, we said there were two results of this, of this Christian perfection. So I need to give those to, but the first result is Wesley and his movement really did create a society, which he believed was a good example to the world of what Christianity was supposed to be like. So he wanted his people, his society, and his Methodists to be a good example and to live a pure life, cleanse themselves from all filthiness of flesh, spirit, perfecting, and holiness in the fear of God.

So, he wanted to create kind of a holy people. He wanted to create a people who were different from the world, who were distinct from the world, and who could be recognized as a holy people. And that's what he was about, about creating.

And certainly, Christians ought to be different in some ways from the world in which we live. I think Wesley was right here. So that's one kind of ramification of the doctrine of Christian perfection, creating a community of people who were models of how the Christian life was supposed to be lived out in this world.

The second kind of result of this Christian perfection was a life of service to the poor, to the outcasts, to the sick, and a life of caring for your neighbor. When the commandment says, love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, and soul, and love your neighbor as yourself. When they asked John Wesley, who's my neighbor? Wesley said, the poorest among you, that's your neighbor.

The ones who are helpless, homeless, and in need of assistance are your neighbors. Those are the ones you want to help. And so, what Wesley did was he really took the side of the poor and ministered to the poor.

Now, an example of that is actually the last picture we showed of John Wesley, which was Wesley on his deathbed. But an example of that was the slave trade in England. Wesley was an anti-slavery proponent because he believed that was a way in which Christians should be active in caring for the poor.

And who were the poor in Britain's day? They were the slaves. He died before slavery was abolished in England, but he was an anti-slavery activist though. So that's a way to care for the poor.

So, first, you should set up a kind of community of people who are models, and second, make sure that that community is loving your neighbor and the poor. And then we just have some concluding remarks, and we'll make those, and then we'll be able to move on to the next lecture. Just by way of concluding remarks, you know that you are looking at a great theologian when that theologian is aware of the dangers of his own theology.

And that was true of John Wesley. John Wesley was very aware that what he preached and taught, if it was misunderstood, could lead to bad theology. And so he was always aware of that, conscious of that.

And he wanted, especially with his Doctrine of Sanctification, to make sure that people understood what the dangers were here. Now, that's the difference between the great theologian and the person who thinks that God spoke to you this morning, and I'm speaking to you tonight, you know. And John Wesley was aware of dangers, especially in the Doctrine of Perfect Love.

So let me mention three things that he mentioned that he wanted people to consider very carefully when they were considering all of his doctrines, but especially this Doctrine of Sanctification. So, number one was always for Wesley. It was always the danger of pride. Pride in what, in some religious experience that you have.

In John Wesley's case, he talked about perfect love for people. But the danger of pride in your religious experience leads you to believe that you're better than other Christians, you know. Wesley was very nervous about that.

Do not be prideful. If any religious experience leads you to a place of pride, you know that that's not from God. So that's from yourself.

And so that's number one. Number two, a second thing that he was always cognizant of for all of his theology, but especially this particular doctrine, is falling into the trap of kind of working toward Christian perfection, working toward trying to be a child of God that he wants, almost a salvation by works. You've got to be careful of that because, as Wesley reminded people, this is God's work.

This is not your work. This is by God's grace that you're a child of God. You're not a child of God by virtue of your own hard work that you do, you know, gritting your teeth and clenching your fists.

You're a child of God by God's grace. And even any good faith that you bring to it, even any good work that you bring to this wonderful relationship that you have with God, that all comes by God's grace anyway. So, everything is by God's grace from beginning to end.

So be careful of falling into a Christianity where you're gritting your teeth, clenching your fists, and trying to work up to some kind of religious experience, you know. Wesley was very nervous about that. It was God's work, not our work.

This is by God's grace, not our grace, not our work, rather. So, he was careful about that. And the third thing is that he is kind of a concluding remark, but be careful when you're accentuating one doctrine.

He accentuated perfect love. But be careful of denying the importance of other doctrines. So always put your understanding of doctrine in context with other doctrines, other biblical doctrines.

So, in his case, he believed, for instance, in perfect love, but he didn't deny the doctrine of justification by faith, which was so important to the Reformers. He talks a lot about justification by faith. So be careful of being so myopic that you just concentrate on one doctrine, and then all the other doctrines seem to disappear somewhere.

If you're accentuating a particular doctrine, do it in the context of all the doctrines of the church, all the teachings of the church. So, Wesley was very, very strong on that, and he wanted to make sure that his talking, for instance, about perfect love, was in context with other doctrines. Okay, so that's where we are there.

So let me, yeah, take a few questions, and then we'll move on. Yes, he was itinerant. He was itinerant.

And then, so 250,000 miles on horseback, never to waste a minute. That's why he had that on the saddle. John Wesley was in the 18th century, but on the saddle of the horse, he had a little pulpit made, not a little pulpit, but a little desk.

He could put it right on the saddle. The desk opened up and he had books and studied his Greek and wrote letters. So, he was a revivalist of the first order, really.

And then what he did was, because, of course, he couldn't cover all the ground, he commissioned what he called lay preachers. So as people became converted, or as people came into Methodism as good Anglicans who wanted to stay in the Anglican church, but we want to join your Methodist movement to bring Anglican alive, he commissioned a lot of lay preachers, and they did the same thing. They are spreading

out throughout England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, preaching, teaching, and so forth.

It was a very difficult life for them. They would often come together in meetings and annual conventions. The first hymn that they would sing was a hymn that Charles Wesley wrote for their annual convention.

By the way, Charles Wesley wrote over 6,000 hymns. So that's a lot of hymns. He wrote a hymn a day in his adult life.

And he wrote a hymn. And the first line of the hymn was, are we yet alive and see each other's face? The fact of the matter is that a lot of these itinerant preachers died on their itinerancy. They died of disease.

They died of sometimes thieves and robbers. They died of just being worn out and everything. So they'd get together, and they'd sing, are we yet alive and see each other's face? And here we are; we're alive, and we see each other's faces.

We're getting ready for another hard year of itinerancy. So that's how they did it. Francis Asbury did the same thing in this country.

It was a tough life. Yeah. Something else, something else from my own folks about Wesley, and you folks have you.

Yeah. Yes. Right.

Right. He is saying you cannot be humanly perfect. Perfect love is not human perfection.

It's not making me I don't have the perfect knowledge. So, it's not human perfection. It is a perfection in Christ.

So, if Wesley taught that what's happened is for the believer, Christ is in you. And because Christ is in you, you bear the image of Christ, and you grow in God's grace day by day. And because of all of that, you are being perfected in Christ.

You are receiving perfect love. And then Wesley would say, do you get to a place? Is it possible for Christians to get to a place in their life where they love the Lord, their God, with all their heart, mind, and soul, and love their neighbor as their selves? Is it possible? And Wesley said, yes, we must say that that is possible. Otherwise, Jesus would have held out an ideal that was impossible to follow in this life.

So, I don't know. Does that help a little? So, perfect love is sanctification. So, in this life, right? He believed that Jesus meant that not for another life, that he meant it for

this life. And then, in the Sermon on the Mount, when Jesus says, be perfect as God is perfect, Wesley believed that Jesus meant that for this life, that he didn't mean it for an afterlife, but meant it for this life.

So, what he's doing is he's bringing the doctrine of sanctification into this life. Calvin and Luther tended to talk about sanctification in turn. It began here, but you're not going to see it completed until the afterlife, until you die and go to heaven, and so forth.

So, Wesley tries to bring it into this life. But part of the draw was that I don't want to belong to a church where 40 years later, those people in the church wouldn't even know how to turn to the Gospel of John or how to say a prayer or how to be a priest to their neighbor and everything. That's not the kind of church God, it seems as though there should be an upward motion.

So, at the very least, Wesley wanted to bring that church alive. Yeah. Does that help a little bit? Anything else here? Yes, please.

You shouldn't do it thinking it's your own ability that's making you do these good works toward your neighbor. The only reason you're able to love God and love your neighbor is by God's grace. So, by doing those good works, you're doing it out of God's grace in your life, allowing you to love your neighbor.

So, the danger would be, and they fought this at the Reformation too, we talked about this at the Reformation, the danger would be if you thought your good works were going to approve you before God somehow, and he's going to like you because you're doing these good works. That would be the danger. Wesley wants to stay away from that.

Good works are a result of obedience to Christ's command to love your neighbor. And the only way we can do that is by God's grace. It's only God's grace that allows us to do that.

Does that help? Something else here? Okay. So, is there anything else about this lecture for my folks who have gone through the lecture on Wesley? You know, my students, they're pretty good about this because I know a lot about Wesley. So I told them a lot of things about Wesley.

So that's a good thing, isn't it? Aren't we rejoicing in that? Okay. Bless your heart. All right.

Page 13 of the syllabus. We have a syllabus in the class that we use and we give an outline in that syllabus. So that's how we kind of march through the course.

Okay. So now, on page 13, I'm sorry, page 14 of the syllabus. And our next lecture is called The Emergence and Development of Liberal Theology.

Emergence and Development of Liberal Theology. And what we're going to do in this lecture is see the pendulum swing again a bit for my own people who are used to that imagery. And there are four things we'll be doing in the lecture.

So, I just mention this for the folks who are with us and don't have a syllabus. We're going to give some background material. Then, we're going to give some basic theological conclusions of what was called liberalism.

And then, we're going to give an evaluation of Protestant liberalism, its strengths, and then an evaluation of Protestant liberalism, the weaknesses of this tradition. So, in the emergence and development of liberal theology, we start with the background, which is fairly long.

So the first thing in terms of the background of all of this is what we call liberal theology emerged in Germany. So Germany becomes really the first place that shows signs of this thing that we call liberal theology. So it starts in Germany.

Now, if you look at Germany in the 17th and 18th centuries, there are three characteristics that carry over to the 19th century. So I want to mention those three characteristics of life in Germany that pushed into the 19th century. Okay.

Number one was Lutheran scholasticism. Lutheran scholasticism took hold in the 17th and 18th centuries, and there still is a remnant of Lutheran scholasticism coming into the 19th century. All right.

Now, according to Lutheran scholasticism, what we mean is doctrine void of life. What we mean is people who knew the doctrines of the church, who knew the dogmas of the church, but there was no life to those dogmas or dogmas. There was no imagination or creativity to preach or teach those doctrines.

So that's what we've talked about in the course. So, Lutheran scholasticism is going to push its way into the 19th century. So that's one thing.

Okay. A second thing, and this comes from not the previous lecture, but the lecture before, but it's still going to be relevant in the 19th century and is a non-religious rationalism, a non-religious rationalism. That's going to push its way into the 19th century.

So that is a de-emphasis of the church, a de-emphasis of Christian doctrine, a de-emphasis of the Bible, a de-emphasis of Jesus, and so forth, and a high belief in people's ability to reason and to use their reason and rationality even in religious

areas. So, a non-religious kind of rationalism pushes its way into the 19th century. So that's number two.

Okay. Number three, the third thing that was going to push its way into the 19th century, was a movement we call pietism. Pietism is still going to be around in the 19th century.

Pietism was a movement to counteract scholasticism and irrationalism. Pietism was a movement which engaged the mind and the heart. So, pietism was a German movement that said to be a true believer, you should love God with your mind, but also you should love God with your heart as well.

That's what brings doctrine alive, loving God in your lives. So what we call pietism pushes into the 19th century as well. So those three movements are coming into 19th century Germany, and they're all kind of bumping up against each other.

And people who believe one or the other are talking to each other and agreeing with each other and disagreeing with each other and so forth. So there's a great kind of cauldron in 19th-century Germany going on here. So, okay, now what happens is, and we talk about this in the course for those who are with us just visiting today, but what happens is that you get the right person with the right ideas at the right time, and theology kind of explodes.

And that's what happened with liberal theology. We got the right person with the right idea at the right time. And so we're going to mention his name.

Now, here's another name I would love to have. My name is pretty common, but I'm going to ask, and I'm going to take a vote. I didn't, you know, not always lecturing on this on GE day, but I'll ask you folks, too.

But if any of my own folks have ever heard of this name, is this a name that you hear of? And it probably isn't, but he was very important in theology from the Reformation to the present. And his name is Friedrich Schleiermacher. Friedrich Schleiermacher.

Have some of you heard of the name? You've had him in another course, or maybe you did. Okay, Jesse, step up here. Friedrich Schleiermacher, 1768 to 1834.

And Friedrich Schleiermacher comes along. And just, if you want to spell his name, this is the correct, I hope it is, Friedrich Schleiermacher. It's a little hard name to spell.

Don't worry about the word after his name. I'm going to come back to that, so don't worry about that. But Friedrich Schleiermacher.

Okay, and let me just show you his picture. Here's his picture. I'm sorry.

Here's his picture. This is Friedrich in his younger days. He lived to 1834.

So, let's come back to his name here, Friedrich Schleiermacher. Did any, okay, Jesse's heard of his name. Anybody else of my folks, is this a name you've gotten in other courses, maybe? Friedrich Schleiermacher.

Okay, right, yeah. But it's not a name like you; everybody would have heard of Calvin, Luther, or Wesley. It's not kind of an everyday name, so.

But Friedrich Schleiermacher, he is called, he gets a label attached to him. He's called the father of liberal theology. That's the label that gets attached to Friedrich Schleiermacher.

Now, what happened? The reason he's so important is because he's the most original theologian developing this thing called liberal theology. He's the most original theologian since John Calvin. So he is a pretty important guy in the history of theology, Friedrich Schleiermacher.

Now, what I'd like to do is just give you an illustration of how important he is. There was the greatest 20th-century theologian was a man by the name of Karl Barth, B-A-R-T-H, and we're going to be lecturing on Karl Barth in this course. But he was the greatest 20th century theologian, no doubt.

He was called the second Augustine, Karl Barth. Karl Barth used to run, he taught in Germany and Switzerland. And he, when he had his theological seminars for like for PhD students and everything, he made those, there were two people he said, if you're going to understand modern theology, there are two people you have to read for this seminar.

And if you don't read these two people and understand these two people, you're not going to do well. You're not going to be able to understand modern theology. Okay? One of them was John Calvin.

He said we've got to read. We've got to study Calvin. And the second was Friedrich Schleiermacher. He said that if you don't read and study Friedrich Schleiermacher, you are not going to understand modern theology.

You've got to know those two people. They are critical. And that's how important Friedrich Schleiermacher was to Karl Barth.

Modern theology would have taken a different direction if it hadn't been for Friedrich Schleiermacher. So, this father of liberal theology. So that's how critical he was.

So now what I'd like to say about Schleiermacher, and then we want to mention one of his books. But what I'd like to say about Schleiermacher was that there were kind of three influences that came in and shaped his life. And if you don't understand these three influences that shaped him, then you won't understand his life.

So let me mention the three things, three strands in a sense. First of all was pietism. Schleiermacher was reared in German pietism.

So, he knew about pietism. He knew all about pietism. He knew about the life of the mind and life of the heart that the pietists had espoused.

So, he was not ignorant of that. So that's one thing that shaped him. The second thing that shaped him was German rationalism.

And, of course, he was a great student, a great mind, and so forth, but he was definitely shaped by German rationalism. And the question is, does that come in conflict with his pietism? Ever, but we'll see. The third thing that shaped him was growing romanticism.

I mean, the next kind of great cultural movement in Western Europe is going to be romanticism, which is more of a movement, less of a movement of rationality, and more of a movement of the heart, emotion, and so forth. So, he's shaped by romanticism, and maybe he helped to shape romanticism. Maybe it's circular.

So those are the three things. They come together during his growing-up years, his developing years, and his university years. They shaped the theology of Friedrich Schleiermacher, the thinking, the life.

They shaped the life of Friedrich Schleiermacher and, therefore, his theology and his teaching and everything. Now, Friedrich Schleiermacher comes on the scene, and he becomes very, very, very important, mainly through the writing of one of his great books. All right.

The most important book by Friedrich Schleiermacher is *On Religion, Speeches to its Culture Despisers*. So, this was a book, Schleiermacher, in a sense, defending Christianity against the culture despisers of religion. That is the people of the upper classes who didn't want anything to do with the church or religion or Christianity or Jesus.

And Schleiermacher decides I'm going to try to address those people. I'm going to try to speak to those people about Christianity in a way that will make sense to them, in a way that will draw them into Christianity. Now, this is one of the most famous books in church history, *Speeches to its Culture Despisers of Religion*.

So this book is really, really famous and very, very important. It was kind of a blockbuster book in a sense, you know, kind of a, you know, everybody buys it at the Christian bookstore, which there weren't in those days, but it was kind of that blockbuster book. So, okay, now, whenever I'm sorry, but whenever I talk about Schleiermacher, I always feel a sermon coming on.

So today, I've got a little sermon coming on for my own students. So bless your hearts. You're here, too.

You're going to hear the sermon. So here's my sermon, which uses Schleiermacher as an example. Here's my sermon.

Some of you are going to be called, in your vocation, you're going to be called to minister to the poor, to the outcast, to the poor of this world, the needy of this world, and that's a beautiful ministry, and that's a vocation, that's a calling, no doubt. But you know what Schleiermacher tells us? It kind of reminds us that some Christians are called to minister to the up and out. Some Christians are called to minister to the wealthy, the influential, and the cultural despisers of religion, but the people of wealth, influence, and power.

And some Christians are called by their vocations to minister to those people as well. And that may be true of some of you. There may be some of you who are going to be called to minister to the wealthy, to the influential, to the people who impact cultural changes, and to minister to them and convince them of the truths of the Christian, of the Christian message.

That's a wonderful calling. So let me, I always do this, so I'm not just doing it because I've got GE students, but anyway, let me just use an example. I spoke with a GE student earlier in another classroom as I was finishing up the class, and he came in, but he was going to be a music major here at Gordon, and brass instrument and so forth.

And I mentioned one of my friends to him, because one of our family friends, we haven't seen him in years, so this is not someone we see every day, but one of our family friends is a fellow by the name of Phil Smith. Phil Smith is the principal trumpet for the New York Philharmonic. So, Phil Smith is, as he is called, the best trumpeter in the world.

Winston Marsalis, as some of you would know him, maybe see him on television and everything; well, he takes lessons from Phil Smith. So that tells you a little bit about how important Phil Smith is. Now, the wonderful thing, long story short on Phil, is that Phil is a wonderful Christian, a beautiful Christian, and all day long in his life, who's he rubbing shoulders with? He's rubbing shoulders with the great musicians of the world, with the great conductors of the world, with the great vocalists of the world, and so forth.

That's his life, that's what he does, that's who he's with every day. And he brings a wonderful Christian witness to those people every day in his life. He's ministering to the wealthy, to the influential.

He's ministering to the cultured people of this world in terms of music and so forth. So he has a wonderful ministry. But one of the reasons they respect him so much is that he's so great in what he does.

What he does is first-rate. He's the greatest trumpeter in the world. Anyway, we can learn from Friedrich.

Friedrich decided in his life, I'm going to minister to the up and out. I'm going to minister to the cultured despisers. So, he wrote the book *Culture Despises of Religion*.

So okay, now what I'm going to do is just say three things about this book because I know that you're not going to read it tonight. Or maybe you are, but bless your hearts, you know, pick it up and read the book tonight. But maybe you're not.

So, I'm going to mention three things to help you out in your life. So, before I do, do you have any questions about Friedrich Schleiermacher? Just before we talk about the book a little bit? Any questions about that? So, we doing okay? All right. Any of you folks now, don't, you know, come and go as you wish.

Feel free. Just, you know, okay. Okay.

Three things about the book. All right. Number one, he tries to make the case.

Right now, I'm just explaining Schleiermacher. I do not necessarily agree with him. I'm just trying to explain the case he's making, okay? Number one, he tries to make the case that what is important about religion is religious experience.

That is what's critical. You've got to understand religion through the lens of religious experience. So dogma, doctrines, and correct belief are not the important aspects of religious experience or of Christianity.

And Friedrich Schleiermacher would say there are a lot of people who know the exact right dogmas. There are a lot of people who have the exact right doctrines down. They could recite them to you.

That's not Christianity. He would say, Schleiermacher would say, Christianity is in the essence of religion is the religious life and the religious experience, okay? So, he challenges the notion of dogma, doctrine, and correct belief. He challenges that notion.

Now, in doing that, one of the persons he's challenging is John Calvin. We talked about John Calvin in the course and how important John Calvin was as an organizer of Christian theology and Christian doctrine. But he's challenging people like John Calvin.

So, okay. Number two, as far in the book, he talks about religion being in the realm of what he called feeling, all right? Now, here is a very important word for this course. And it's the word *gefühl*.

He uses the word *gefühl* when he talks about religious feeling, all right? And he said, *gefühl* is the essence of religion, but it's not only the essence of religion, it's the essence of Christianity. So if you want to get Christianity down to one word, let's understand *gefühl*. Now, in order to understand the word, I've got to give a definition for it.

So, here's the formal definition of *gefühl*, all right? *Gefühl* is the immediate apprehension of the infinite by the finite. Should I repeat that? Okay, *gefühl*. *Gefühl* is the immediate apprehension of the infinite by the finite, unquote.

That's his definition of *gefühl*. Okay, so now what I'm going to do is explain the definition. We've given the definition, let's explain the definition.

Let's put it in different words. For Schleiermacher, *gefühl* is the immediate apprehension of God by an individual person. It's the immediate apprehension of God by the believer, by the person.

And for Schleiermacher then, that is the essence of religion. That's what it's all about. And that's the essence of Christianity.

That's what it's all about. Every person in this world, Schleiermacher said, can have an immediate understanding of God, immediate apprehension of God, okay? Which for Schleiermacher does sometimes mean, what does that mean? That means you don't need an intermediary like the church or the Bible. You can understand God yourself.

It can be this immediate apprehension of God by the person. And sometimes, he's critical of the church, and sometimes he's critical of the Bible. So, you don't need any mediatorial thing.

You don't need the priest or the minister standing in your way to understand God. No, you can understand God just yourselves. So that's the second thing, this understanding of what Gefühl is.

Okay, and number three, the third thing about the book, and that is, of course, you know where we're going here, but of course, religious intuition is very important for Schleiermacher. Religious intuition, the intuitive spirit, intuitively you can know God. And so he places all his emphasis on this religious experience.

So that's the keyword, experience, okay? Not knowledge, but experience. So maybe Karl Barth was right. Maybe what Schleiermacher is doing with his book and other books is turning the whole Christian ship around from dogma, doctrine, church, and right belief, turning it all around to what? To experience, to intuition.

So that's the power of the book, and he had a lot of influence there. So, Friedrich Schleiermacher. Now, before we leave him, do you have any questions about Schleiermacher? Bye, folks. Have a good day.

Are there any questions about Friedrich Schleiermacher before we leave him by way of introduction? Okay, let me just mention one more thing: introduction. Then, I'll give you a little 10-second break. I give my students a little break for like five or 10 seconds, so they rejoice in that. So, okay, so why don't we do that? Okay, now, following Schleiermacher, this is all by way of background, so we're still on background.

Following Schleiermacher meant the rise of what we call classical Protestant liberalism. So classical Protestant liberalism followed Schleiermacher and people like him. I mean, he was the father of it all, but other people came along and developed this kind of thinking. But classical Protestant liberalism rose, and it rose, and so there are five kinds of characteristics of it.

Let me give a couple, and then we'll take a little break, and then we'll finish up. Okay, number one, classical Protestant liberalism was a reaction to religious conservatism. And what classical Protestant liberalism did was continually react to religious conservatism.

Anywhere where it's suspected kind of conservatism, a conservatism kind of holding on tight to the church or holding on tight to the Bible or holding on tight to dogma, any kind of religious conservatism like that, liberalism was always a reaction to that. Liberalism was always challenging that kind of religious conservatism or in our case,

Christian conservatism. So that's number one in terms of kind of the rise of liberalism.

Okay, number two is the method of liberalism. What method did these people use? What did they go about trying to do? Okay, what they tried to do was to restate the Christian faith. We've got to rethink the Christian faith.

We've got to restate the Christian faith in ways that modern men and women will understand. And by modern, they meant, of course, 19th century, 20th century. So, in ways that modern women will understand, we have to restate the Christian faith.

We've got to reorder the Christian faith. We've got to restate it. We've got to rethink it.

And we've got to rethink it in ways that will make it sensible to the 19th-century person. And so what they did was they and one of the ways they did this was they had, they felt that they had to make Christianity intellectually acceptable because they felt if it's not intellectually acceptable, if it doesn't reach people at their minds, it's never going to have an impact on their lives. So classical Protestant liberalism became a pretty major intellectual movement, an intellectual movement affecting the culture, the general culture.

So, it was pretty important. So let me just mention one more, then I will give you a break, one more out of the five. However, a third thing is that you should never accept religion based on authority alone.

The authority of the church, the authority of the local priest, the authority of the local ministry, the authority of some dogma. You should never accept religious experience based only on that authority. You are capable, the Protestant liberals believed. You are capable of discerning what is true from what is false by the reason that God has given to you.

So, in a sense, the authority is your own ability to reason, to think for yourselves, to reason for yourselves what is true and what is false. The authority of the church, the authority of a priest, the authority of a minister, the authority of a dogma. No, don't just accept that.

Think it through for yourself: what is true and what is false? So, that's a third characteristic of what we call classical Protestant liberalism. So, let me stop there for just a minute.

I need to give my own people a little break here. So, we give them a little stretch time and break time. Maybe especially on Mondays, this is important because some of them have been clicking along quite a bit and writing.

Do you folks have any questions about what's going on here with the course and everything, Reformation to the Present? We're up to the 19th century now, so we're pressing on. We meet on Wednesdays. On Wednesdays, what we do in this course, usually it's on Fridays, but there are no Friday classes this week.

On that day, we just met with the textbooks and talked about them. We don't lecture. We really just work through the text and what we're reading on the text and everything.

So, I did mention, Guy, don't forget we're at the Lion's Den on Wednesday, and you can bring your questions. I don't need them beforehand. And just remember to bring the textbooks with you.

So yeah, everybody's here, so we're okay with that. Any questions anybody has while you guys are stretching or resting? Okay. I said there were five characteristics.

Let me give four and five to all this Protestantism, which is coming our way here. Okay, number four. Liberal Protestantism, what are we calling this? We're calling this kind of the rise of liberal Protestantism in the 19th century.

It has these characteristics. So, okay, number four. Protestant liberalism, classical Protestant liberalism, took a stand that all truth is God's truth.

So everything that is true is from God. Having said that, classical liberal Protestantism was open to scientific truth. If it's true scientifically, it must be from God.

Now, this caused a great debate in the 19th century because in 1859, Darwin published his Origin of Species. Then, the church began to take sides in evolution. Now, the classical Protestant view of Darwin and of evolution was that if this is true and it's proved to be true scientifically, I would accept it because all truth is from God.

So, they didn't see a distinction between religious truth versus scientific truth. And the same happened with biblical criticism. Biblical criticism rose in the last century, really the 18th century, but it's really developing in the 19th century as well.

Biblical criticism is a way of approaching the Bible. Who wrote? When did they write? Why did they write? What are the hermeneutics of all this and everything? But they tended to be very accepting of biblical criticism because they felt that if biblical criticism and historical criticism, if they are true, if these are true, then we should accept them. We shouldn't see them as contrary to Christianity.

So, there was a tendency to accept all truth as God's truth. That included scientific truth, and it included historic biblical critical truths. So, in a sense, many of them were the shapers of what we call biblical criticism.

So that was number four, accepting all truth as God's truth. That became kind of a hallmark of liberalism. Okay, number five, classical Protestant liberalism, had an influence in two directions.

So let me mention those two directions. And it had a powerful influence in two directions. On the one hand, it influenced the right wing of the church and the more conservative wing of the church.

It influenced the fundamentalist wing, the evangelical wing of the church. And how did it do that? The way it did that was with its emphasis on religious experience, with its emphasis on the experience of the heart, the experience of the believer, without the need for some intermediary. That's something that the right wing of Christianity picked up on.

So that is something that revivalism picked up on: the experience of the believer. So it's very interesting that classical Protestant liberalism actually had an influence on the more conservative evangelical fundamentalistic wings of the church through their talking about experience. And that is picked up by the more conservative elements of the church.

Now, the church wouldn't really see that connection. They wouldn't really connect those dots. But actually, the power of liberalism's emphasis on experience, the Christian experience, became very important in the right wing of the church.

So interesting. There is already an emphasis on it from the revivalists. That's a good point.

But why are they emphasizing this so much? Where are they getting this from? I mean, Protestant liberalism began before Schleiermacher, but he's the one who kind of brought it together. But are they getting some of that emphasis from the kind of hearing, the discussions, and the importance of religious experience? Are they getting some of that? Or, and that's a good question, Jesse, are they themselves, by their emphasis on religious experience, are they influencing liberalism's call for religious experience? Maybe it works both ways. Maybe the conversation is going both ways in a sense.

I think the ironic thing is people on the right would never have recognized that, boy, we might be influenced a little bit by Protestant liberalism, that that's a possibility. I think they were, but they may have influenced it, too. Okay, so that's one way that

they influenced it, okay? Okay, the second way that they influenced the church and the broader culture was by influencing the left wing of Christianity as well.

Not only did they not influence revivalism or conservative Christianity, but they also influenced the left wing. Okay, now sometimes, and especially, oops, especially the teachings of a man by the name of Walter Rauschenbusch, another good German, but he happened to live in the United States, so, but Walter Rauschenbusch. Now, Walter Rauschenbusch is a very interesting person and very important for the history of the church from the Reformation to the present.

He has a label too. Let me give you his label. I think sometimes we have to watch out for these labels, and we don't just put people in boxes; Walter Rauschenbusch had a label too.

He was called the father of the social gospel movement, and I've got a picture of Rauschenbusch here. Those are his dates, 1861, 1918, okay? Now, the social gospel movement emphasized not just the experience of the believer and the religious experience of the believer, but the social gospel movement took that understanding of the experience and related it to the community, that is, to the church. So the social gospel movement is the life of the church, but it's the life of the church caring for the poor.

It's the life of the church, loving God and loving your neighbor. So the social gospel movement was on the left side of things, the left wing of Christianity in a sense, but it's very, very important to take notice of this of Walter Rauschenbusch. Walter Rauschenbusch balanced the social gospel, that is, caring for the poor, with the need for the faith of the individual.

So, Walter Rauschenbusch balanced caring for the poor with the faith of the individual believer. So he wasn't anti-revival. He wasn't kind of anti-kind of individual Christian experience kind of person, and as a matter of fact, he was a friend of Charles Grandison Finney, the greatest revivalist in the 19th century.

So, we've got to be careful when we talk about Walter Rauschenbusch because we've got to be careful we don't just say, oh, well, he was way on the left side of liberalism with his social gospel movement, and he didn't know anything about the life of the believer or Christian conversion or anything. The greatest biography of Walter Rauschenbusch, the greatest biographer of Walter Rauschenbusch, labels him as an evangelical, in fact. So, there's Walter Rauschenbusch.

But in any case, liberalism did influence the left wing of Christianity in terms of social process, in terms of social involvement, in terms of cultural engagement with the world, in terms of the church not being just a bunch of individuals together but a community that cares for the poor. So, it really influenced that, and Walter

Rauschenbusch is the most important name here. Okay, let me know. Do you have any questions about Rauschenbusch? So, he's a need-to-know name.

All right, just so that you know where we're going here, and then I'll let you go. But from now on, then what we're going to do starting next Monday, it will be next Monday, because on Wednesday we meet, I'll try to remember to send an email about this, by the way, but on Wednesday we meet, Lion's Den, breakfast, Lion's Den. But next Monday we'll do, we'll start with the basic theological conclusions of liberalism.

Where did all this kind of end up? And then we want to take a good look at it. We want to say, well, did it have strengths? Did it have weaknesses? Yeah, I think both. So, we want to take a look at that.

But we're kind of where we should be in the lecture, so we're scheduled to start this today, so we're in good shape. Okay. Have a good day.

Thank you, folks, for joining us today. We're glad to have you, and you made it through the hour. So that's great.

This is Dr. Roger Green in his church history course, Reformation to the Present. This is session 15, The Rise of Liberalism.