

Dr. Roger Green, Reformation to the Present, Lecture 20, 20th Century Protestantism Focusing on Karl Barth

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This is Dr. Roger Green in his church history course, Reformation to the Present. This is session 20, Protestantism in the 20th Century, Karl Barth.

I like to, you know, it's Friday. So, Friday is a little, I don't know, a little devotional or just a little reading to get us, get our minds into what we're talking about. And because we're lecturing on Carl Barth, and I mentioned that Barth, and here I have it up here, Barth was the shaper, writer, former of what was called the Barman Declaration in 1934. And the Barman Declaration was a declaration of the Confessing Church to declare its faith in light of the situation of Nazi Germany.

And what is the heart of the Christian faith as far as we are concerned? It was kind of drawing a line in the sand and saying, what side are you going to be on? Are you going to be on the side of the gospel? Or are you going to be on the side of a Nazi-fied church? Where are you going to stand? So, I said, well, you know, I kind of thought, well, I'll do this. I'll read just a couple of sections from the Barman Declaration for our little devotional here this morning. So, okay, section five is, and we'll come back to section five, too.

So, one reason I'm reading it is to have a little background of what we'll be talking about later. Section five is, Fear God, Honor the Emperor, 1 Peter 2.17. Scripture tells us that in the as-yet unredeemed world in which the church also exists, the state has, by divine appointment, the task of providing for justice and peace. It fulfills this task by means of the threat and exercise of force according to the measure of human judgment and human ability.

The church acknowledges the benefit of this divine appointment in gratitude and reverence before him. It calls to mind the kingdom of God, God's commandment and righteousness, and thereby the responsibility both of rulers and of the ruled. It trusts and obeys the power of the word by which God upholds all things.

We reject the false doctrine as though the state, over and beyond its special commission, should and could become the single and totalitarian order of human life, thus fulfilling the church's vocation as well. We reject the false doctrine as though the church, over and beyond its special commission, should and could appropriate the characteristics, the tasks, and the dignity of the state, thus itself becoming an organ of the state. Now, that's very important.

We'll come back to that later. But let me just read the sixth paragraph in terms of this confession. Number six is, Lo, I am with you always to the close of the age, Matthew 28.20, and the word of God is not fettered 2 Timothy 2:9. The church's commission upon which its freedom is founded consists in delivering the message of the free grace of God to all people in Christ's stead, and therefore in the ministry of its own word and work through sermon and sacrament.

We reject the false doctrine as though the church, in human arrogance, could place the word and work of the Lord in the service of any arbitrarily chosen desires, purposes, and plans. The confessional synod of the German Evangelical Church declares that it sees in the acknowledgement of these truths and in the rejection of these errors, the indispensable theological basis of the German Evangelical Church as a federation of confessional churches. It invites all who are able to accept its declaration and be mindful of these theological principles in their decisions in church politics.

It entreats all whom it concerns to return to the unity of faith, love, and hope. So, that was what the Barman Declaration intended to be, and it became pretty explosive in a sense. I mean, it really was the line in the sand intended to do that and to say who is going to be on the side of the gospel and who is not.

Let's be clear about this. So, there is pretty strong stuff here for the Barman Declaration. Okay.

So, what we've done here is lecture 10, page 14, a biographical sketch of Karl Barth, and now we're ready to move into number B, theology. Are there any questions about his life, though, the biographical sketch that we gave the other day? Is there anything about the life of Karl Barth that you are still wondering about questioning? We just gave an overview. We do that with maybe four or five people in the course that are quintessential folks.

Okay. Today, let's go to the theology and just background to the theology, and then we'll go into certain theological eras of Karl Barth. What Barth believed was that Protestant liberalism was fundamentally flawed.

He believed that Protestant liberalism was fundamentally erroneous. Now, we mentioned the other day when we talked about his biography that he had been reared in that. That was his training.

And now, partly as a result of World War I, and largely as a result of opening up the Bible, he feels there's a fundamental flaw here, and there's a fundamental problem with Christian theology, and he desires to kind of lead theology away from kind of Protestant liberalism. Now, as far as he's concerned, under this first point of

background, the word here is accommodation. As far as he is concerned, Protestant theology has accommodated itself to the broader culture.

He is going to challenge that accommodation to the broader culture. That's what he's going to kind of, that's what he's going to take on. So, two areas of that accommodation we're going to be mentioning, so let me mention them here in the background.

One area of the accommodation is kind of a positive attitude, in a sense, toward science, toward culture, toward art, a positive attitude toward kind of natural theology, a positive attitude toward that kind of cultural elements, without any judgment on science, without any judgment on the world of culture and the world of art. And he decries that kind of very, that kind of positive attitude, which we'll see when we get into his theology. So, he feels that is the wrong way to go theologically.

That's how Protestant theology has gone since Schleiermacher, and we have gone down the wrong road here. So, that's one area where he becomes pretty critical, and we'll see that when we talk about his theology. A second area where he becomes critical is this Protestant liberal emphasis upon feeling, this Protestant liberal emphasis upon what he often refers to as mysticism or religious feelings, stress on feelings, this kind of experiential religion that Schleiermacher has led us into.

And he really condemns that because that is not the religion of the Bible, as far as he's concerned. That's not what God calls us to. So, anything that has to do with feeling, emotion, or experience, when it comes to Protestantism and living out the Christian life, he's not happy with that.

So, he kind of condemns that. Therefore, what he wants to do is bring theology back to Reformation theology. He finds that the best interpreters of the Bible, the best, the strongest interpreters of the Bible that we've had, are people of the Reformation.

So, it's Luther, especially Calvin, and others. So, he looks at the Bible, and then he says, well, how are we going to interpret the Bible? Well, the best interpreters of the Bible were the Reformers. Let's go back to the Reformation.

Let's ground our theology in Reformation doctrine. Let's do that now. That's what we need to do as Protestants.

That's the battle he was engaged in. So, sometimes, the movement is called Neo-Orthodoxy. Did I put that? I didn't put that up here.

Sometimes, the movement that he helps to get going, in a sense, is referred to as Neo-Orthodoxy or the New Orthodoxy. Now, by the New Orthodoxy, he's talking

about Reformation Orthodoxy brought into the 20th century, but that's Neo-Orthodoxy. Some people see that as a good title.

Some people use the title derogatorily. I mean, we use labels for people just to kind of identify them in place and time. So, we said Schleiermacher is the father of liberal theology.

Well, one of the shapers of Neo-Orthodox theology is Karl Barth. So, that's just number one. That's the background.

That's why this is so important here. I guess I think Ted and I were talking about this the other day, but when someone says to me, oh, I never read Karl Barth. He was so liberal.

That sentence does not even make sense when someone says that. He's so liberal. I wouldn't read him.

That doesn't even make sense because the very thing he fought against was Protestant liberalism. The very thing he felt was jeopardizing the Christian faith was classical Protestant liberalism. So, he battled against that, and he withstood liberalism in a pretty remarkable way.

Okay. Anything about that background material? That just kind of gives us a sense of why he went where he went. Okay.

Let's do number two, then, the transcendence of God. All right. Now, Protestant liberalism has emphasized continuity between God and us.

There is a continuity. There is a connection between God and us. And the connector, in a sense, to that was Jesus.

And so, Jesus becomes the man who, for Schleiermacher, is so filled with the consciousness of God that we want to be like Jesus. Never mind, he wasn't God, but he was certainly filled with God's consciousness. So, we want to be like Jesus.

Jesus is the connector between God and us. So, what classical Protestant liberalism did was to emphasize this great kind of continuity. All right.

Now, Karl Barth comes along and says, well, of course, you've got that all wrong. The Bible is not a word of continuity. The Bible is a word of discontinuity between God and us.

God is wholly other. Now, you can make a play on words on that. God is wholly other, H-O-L-Y.

He is wholly other. Or you can say God is wholly, W-H-O-L-L-Y. He is wholly or entirely other.

But for Karl Barth, this business of talking about God as my good buddy, my good friend, it's Jesus and me kind of stuff, that was out for him. God is wholly other. He is wholly other.

And there is a discontinuity between us and God. Not a continuity, as Protestant liberalism has been telling us, but a discontinuity between us and God. So, when it comes to the transcendence of God, his argument is that Protestant liberalism has taught people that they have to work their way up to God because there's this continuity.

So, you're going to be able to work your way up to God. You're going to be able to work your way into the presence of God, maybe by feelings, maybe by experience, maybe by some kind of knowledge. But Karl Barth said that that is impossible.

You don't work your way up to this transcendent God. As far as Barth was concerned, your attitude as you stand before the transcendent God is one of sinfulness, helplessness, and weakness. And it's only as you understand yourself in that way that God can break through to your life and help you.

So, what he's doing is, when he's talking about the transcendence of God, he's emphasizing, in a sense, all of the virtues that he believes the Bible talks about in terms of this helplessness and weakness and so forth, and trusting in God to break through in your lives. Not all of this kind of liberal talk is about how you can get to God by your own strength, by your own knowledge, by your own experience. Here's how you can get to God.

So, it's not continuity, it's discontinuity. It's not imminence; it's the transcendence of God. So, he's seeing God in this whole different way, in a sense.

Now, what he says is that God is not an object to be understood. God is not an object to be grasped by our knowledge, feelings, emotions, experiences, or whatever. He's not an object.

He felt a lot of liberal Christianity had that pretty wrong, as though you can grasp God. God is a subject, not an object. He's a subject.

God is the one who speaks. God is the one who addresses us. And then it's up to us to try to understand that word that he gives to us.

But he's not an object that we can know by rational knowledge or by experience or something like that. Also, when it comes to the transcendence of God, this is where, in a sense, Barth gets into the cultural issue. What about our relationship to the broader culture? What about the broader culture in which we live? What about science? What about the world of science or the world of art, the world of history, or the world of kind of intellectual knowledge, and so forth? What about that? Well, for liberal Christianity, God was kind of the patron saint of culture.

God was kind, the one who blesses cultures and so forth, not for Karl Barth. For Karl Barth, God is the judge of all cultures.

So, unless people think that God is only judging the Nazis and only judging Nazi Germany, they would be wrong because God judges all cultures. Because all stand, in some sense, stand in disobedience to God. And so, all cultures come under the judgment of God.

Now, Nazi Germany happened to be the extreme kind of example, of course, because of its viciousness and its inhumanity and so forth, that God would judge that. But God judges all cultures. There is no culture that is somehow blessed by God.

So, he's not a patron saint, but he is the judge. Okay, so you're not surprised that the theology of Karl Barth begins with this understanding of God's transcendence, begins with an understanding of the nature of God. If we can't get that straight, nothing else is going to be clear.

We've got to get our understanding of who God is clear for Karl Barth. So, the transcendence of God. I'm trying to explain Barth to you.

I'm not trying to sell Barth to you necessarily. You may agree or disagree. You may have points of... And that's true with all the people we've studied.

I'm not trying to sell you that because you need to shape your own theology and your own thinking. But are there any questions about the transcendence? You understand why he had to deal with this, why it was so important in the light of where Protestant theology had gone, and why he had to deal with it in this way because he felt that was the biblical revelation of God. He felt that's who you find in the Bible.

Okay, the transcendence of God. Number three is sin, the sin of man. Okay, now what sin... First of all, in a sense, he's like Reinhold Niebuhr.

We mentioned Reinhold Niebuhr in a previous lecture, but Niebuhr said that original sin is the most empirical of all doctrines. So, if you want to see a doctrine that you can see every day if you want to know a doctrine you can see every day, that you can

almost touch and feel, it's the doctrine of original sin. Well, Barth didn't use quite that phrase, but he certainly believed in that.

So, since the fall, humankind has been under the dominion of sin, as far as Barth is concerned. He felt he saw this in the Bible. So, since the fall, we have been under the dominion of sin.

And what sin has done, I mean, is that even our natural capacities are still under the dominion of sin. Even our natural capacities, in other words, he's like Aquinas, like Augustine. In our fallenness, our natural capacities weren't totally eliminated.

If our natural capacities were eliminated, we wouldn't be able to reason; we wouldn't be able to think, and we wouldn't be able to add to and do it for. But our natural capacities are not eliminated, but they are severely hindered. They are severely perverted, as far as Barth was concerned. So, here we are in our sinfulness, in our rebellion against God.

And what has that done? What's the ultimate end to that? Well, that's driven a wedge between us and God. So, it's driven a stake between us and God. It's a line in the sand: God is on one side, and we are on the other side.

That's what sin has done. That's the outcome of sin. We're living this sinful, rebellious life in which we do not love God but hate him.

And so, he said, that's the result of that. So, now, that is why it's impossible, therefore, to, as liberal theology taught, that's why it's impossible to make your way up to God. You have no capacity to make your way up to God.

You have no capacity to kind of put yourself in God's favor by your feelings, by your emotions, by following the law, by being a good moral person, or by reason, by your ability to reason, to think. You can't put yourself in God's favor, you can't put yourself, you can't put God in as though he owed you something, because we are sinners, we are in rebellion against God. So, all attempts to find God are now impossible for him, for Barth.

Okay? And that includes our cultural achievements, but it also includes, sorry, it also includes, oops, no, I thought I had the word natural theology, maybe I didn't. Okay. It includes all of our cultural achievements, which we think are so grand, wonderful, and perfect.

And remember, Barth was a lover of Mozart. Remember, Barth loved music, loved Mozart. He was an expert on Mozart.

So, it's not as though some of our accomplishments don't have any meaning at all. You just can't say that our accomplishments are ways to approve yourself before God, that's all. And then he also picked, and I didn't write it down, I thought I did, but natural theology.

Remember, we've talked about natural theology before in the course. So, people who rely on natural theology, you look at the natural world, you look at the world around us, and you can make some deductions about God and about the nature of God. All right? And, of course, classical Protestant liberalism really relied on natural theology rather than some special revealed theology in Christ.

Barth said, no, natural theology, you can't rely on natural theology to make any deductions about God. How are you going to deduce God from natural theology? And how are you going to deduce the attributes of God from natural theology? A natural theology, where is that going to lead you for Barth? I mean, it's a beautiful day out there, for sure. And you can draw, maybe you're drawing some conclusions about God by looking at that beautiful day.

God is a God of order, peace, and harmony. Supposing there was a tsunami coming our way, and 100,000 people are going to be wiped out by the tsunami, then where is your natural theology? What are you going to think about God then? Is that what God does? He wipes people out by a tsunami, 100,000, 200,000 people by a tsunami, wipes out whole cities, and so forth. Then, if you're going to rely on natural theology, what are you going to deduce about God? Well, your deduction is, that you're going to kind of deduce that He's a capricious God, a vicious God.

So, natural theology is a way of understanding God, and that's out for Barth. Now, long story short, one of the groups that relied heavily on natural theology was Roman Catholicism, since St. Thomas Aquinas. Now, Barth is not, and I don't think he's just picking on the Protestants.

He's picking on the Catholics as well. He's no respecter of persons when he decides, and I've got to challenge theology as it rose up in the 19th and 20th centuries. Okay, so sinfulness.

Now, the question is with sinfulness, he didn't put it this way, but I put it this way, but the question is, is this a counter-cultural message? When we talk about the sinfulness of mankind, the sinfulness of humankind, we are in rebellion against God. None of our cultural achievements are going to approve us before God. We won't understand God through natural theology, but is this a counter-cultural message? Now, he didn't use that term, but the answer to that is absolutely: this is a counter-cultural message.

We are talking about sin here. We're talking about rebellion against God. In the general world in which we are living, are they talking about sin or rebellion against God? No, I'm okay, and you're okay.

That's what they're talking about. I'm okay, and you're okay. I'm all right, you're all right.

I do what I think is good to do, and you do what you think is good to do. See, Bart, he didn't buy that. So, we are sinners.

Okay, does anyone want to talk about sin here? Talk about sin? Are any sinners out there? Okay, all right. Now, number three, I mean, number four on your list is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ.

Okay, where are we with Jesus? Notice I put this as third, I put this kind of at the heart of his theology, Christology. Okay, now, if there's a discontinuity between God and us, if there is a huge gap between God and us, and if we are incapable of moving toward God and reaching up to God, then what God has decided to do, in his grace, God has decided to break through in our lives. The one true revelation of God is Jesus.

The one true disclosure of God is Jesus. The one true kind of communication of God is Jesus. Okay, this leads us to Bart's favorite chapter in the Bible.

So, let me give it to you. It's John 1, you will know this, it's John 1:1 through 18. So, the prologue to the Gospel of John, John 1:1 through 18.

Does anybody have the Gospel of John with Dr. Hunt? Do you have it now? Okay, so you're probably well past the prologue. Are you? You're in chapter 6. Okay, tell Steve we've already got three weeks left in the course, three full weeks, three Monday, Wednesday, and Friday weeks left in the course. Okay, well, just kind of remind him of that. So, you've already done the prologue.

Well, this prologue is pretty amazing. We're not going to take time to read it, but there is one verse that's very important. So, you need to get this down in your notes and read it pretty carefully.

It's John 1:14. Okay, John 1:14 is very, very important for Karl Barth. Okay, and what does John 1:14 say? The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

We have beheld his glory. Glory is of the only Son from the Father. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

Now, Barth had a phrase for this verse. He called it theology in a nutshell, theology in a nutshell. As far as Barth was concerned, this was the biblical message, John 1:14.

The rest of the Bible is a commentary on John 1:14. This is the center of the biblical text for Barth, John 1:14, theology in a nutshell. Therefore, now we're just trying to explain Barth here, but if this is the center of the biblical message, that means that the central doctrine of the Christian church is the doctrine of the incarnation.

So, the central doctrine of Christendom is incarnation. The Word became flesh, God becoming flesh. Everything else, as far as Barth was concerned, flows from the doctrine of the incarnation.

The doctrine of the incarnation is the beginning and the end. It's John 1, 14. It's theology in a nutshell, and it's really pretty amazing.

Okay. So, in Jesus, then, we see the grace of God in Christ. We see it fully.

We see it completely. We see it from beginning to end. We see the grace that saves us.

God breaks through our sinfulness and redeems us, and saves us. Okay. Now, we should just say real quick here, but this is breaking through to our sinfulness. Barth's way of talking about it is the triumph of grace.

This is the triumph of grace. So, for Karl Barth, what this meant was that God's grace is stronger than our sin. God's grace is more powerful than the sin of humanity.

So, God's grace breaks through our sinfulness, and God redeems us. Now, here's the way he said it. God's yes is stronger than our no.

God's Y-E-S is stronger than our N-O. In our sinfulness, we're saying no to God, but for Karl Barth, God's yes is going to overpower that no. You cannot ultimately say no to God.

Okay. And like Luther, he believed that we still live as sinners. There's still this justification of God in my life, but I am still a sinner in my life because I'm still carrying out acts of rebellion against God.

But I do that standing under God's justification, though. So, he's very much like Luther in that way. Okay.

So, what is our response here? What should be our response? What should be people's response? Our response should be utterly dependent on the grace of God.

We are utterly, totally, 100 dependent on God's grace, which, for Barth, means we're not dependent on works. We're not dependent on good deeds.

We're not dependent on experience. We're not dependent on good feelings. We are dependent only.

We throw ourselves only at the mercy of God, and we are totally dependent on his grace. The question is here, was Barth a universalist? The question is here, did Barth believe that all people are going to be saved by God's grace? Because God's grace is stronger than our... God's yes is stronger than our no. God's grace is stronger than our sinfulness.

So, the question is, is God going to redeem everybody? Is that the end of the story? Is God's grace going to redeem everybody? Well, he doesn't really answer that question. That is really kind of an open question. I've heard the story, but it's probably apocryphal.

I've heard the story that someone asked Barth if he was a universalist, and he said he was a universalist with a small u. So, I don't know if that's true or not, but he certainly leaned in that direction because he's got such a strong view of God's grace overcoming the sinfulness of human beings. And sinfulness has no... Sin and sinfulness has no ultimate life. It's going to die, whereas God's grace is forever.

So, he certainly leaned in that direction, no doubt about that. Okay, another thing. We're still on Jesus here, so we haven't left Jesus.

I haven't left Jesus Christ for Barth. Another thing is, of course, Barth gets into to Christology. Okay, and what do you suppose... Take a guess on what is going to be his greatest passage when it comes to Christology.

Does anybody want to guess about that? Say that again. That's a good guess. I like that, but not quite.

His greatest passage, you need to jot this down. His greatest passage when it deals with Christology, as far as he's concerned, the passage above all passages is Philippians. Philippians chapter 1. You could take the whole 1 through... I'm sorry, Philippians chapter 2. You can take the whole 1 through 11 things, but he concentrated on starting at verse 5. So, as far as he's concerned, when it came to Christology... So, he's going to enter the Christological discussion.

He's not going to shy away from it. It's been going on since the beginning of the... Since the early church, Jesus Christ. As far as he's concerned, Jesus is fully God and fully human at the same time.

So, he's fully divine and fully human at the same time. Those two things are inseparable. You cannot separate the full humanity from the full divinity... Full humanity of Jesus from the full divinity of Christ.

And so, he has a lovely way of describing Philippians 2:5 through 11. So, we'll take 5 first. Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. So, Philippians 2:5 through 8 is the Lord becoming our servant. That's how he described Philippians 2:5 through 8. That's a demonstration of the Lord becoming our servant.

But that's not where the Bible ends. That's not where the story ends in Philippians. So, the Lord has become our servant.

But then, notice 9. Therefore, God has highly exalted him, bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Well, Philippians 2, 9 through 11 is the servant becoming our Lord. It's a beautiful way to deal with the Philippians passage, I think.

This was the greatest Christological passage that there is in the Bible, as far as he was concerned. It's a beautiful way to deal with it. The Lord is becoming our servant, and the servant is becoming our Lord, and it's kind of around in a circle for Barth.

The Lord became our servant, but the servant became our Lord, and you keep going around in a circle. You cannot separate those two things, the human and the divine nature. So, he's not afraid of the Christological argument.

He gets right in the middle of it, as you would expect. I don't know how long he spends on it, maybe 300 or 400 pages or so, but he spends a long time on it. Okay, so that's Jesus, and the two passages, the heart of it all is John 1, 14, and then Christology, Philippians 2:5 through 11.

Okay, let's stop there for just a minute. Anything about Jesus? Jesus, the sinless Savior for Karl Barth. Anything about Jesus? Okay, so we've got God, then we've got our sinfulness, and then we've got God breaking through our sinfulness in the person of Jesus Christ.

Okay, so we're all set there. We understand his kind of argument. All right, number five is Scripture, the Bible.

He talks about the Bible. In fact, the very first volume is entitled The Word of God, but by that mean, he means the Word of God, Christ, but also the Word of God that comes in the Bible. Okay, so what is he going to do with the Bible? Well, what he's going to... Boy, this gets kind of complicated, but anyway, what he's going to do with the Bible? He's going to argue about the Bible analogously.

He's going to use an analogy to Christology. Okay, so Jesus is fully human and fully divine at the same time. Those two things are inseparable.

As far as he is concerned, analogously, he argues the same thing about the written word. He says the written word is fully human and fully divine at the same time. So, it's a fully divine word for him.

This is a word from God for Karl Barth, but it is also a fully human word for Karl Barth. So that is what is important for Barth. Now, you may or may not agree with viewing the Bible that way.

I'm just trying to explain how Barth viewed the Bible, but he didn't view the Bible beginning with the Bible and then arrive at some doctrine of Christ. He has a doctrine of Christ first, and then it's from that doctrine that he develops his view of the Bible. The basic job of the Bible, as far as he's concerned, is to bear witness to Christ.

That's the basic job. That's what we've got it for. It's to bear witness to Christ.

When the Spirit helps us understand that it bears witness to Christ, then we're doing the right thing. What Karl Barth is doing is consciously taking a middle ground. What's the middle ground? The middle ground is he's taking a stand from liberalism, which has belittled the word of God.

This is not really the word of God, and it's kind of a human book. You can deduce some things about God, maybe, and about Jesus in this book, but liberalism has kind of denied the authority of the word of God. He sees the Bible as much more important than that.

So, on the one hand, liberalism. But on the other hand, fundamentalism. Fundamentalism, as far as he's concerned, fundamentalism came up with a view of the Bible, which ironically was higher than their view of Jesus.

Because of their view of Jesus, if they were correct Christologically, their view of Jesus should be that he's fully God and fully man at the same time. That should be their view. If they fall into either his humanity or his divinity, then that's falling into heresy.

The church has already demonstrated that. However, their view of the Bible is that it is solely divine. There's no humanity at all.

It's solely divine. And so, as far as Barth's concerned, they've got a kind of a paper Pope here. They've got a view of the scripture higher than the view of Jesus.

And you can't have a view of the Bible higher than the view of Jesus. Otherwise, you're kind of off-center here. So, he doesn't like the liberal notion that the Bible is just a generally good book, and you read it.

It has some good things in it, but he doesn't like the fundamentalist view that places a doctrine of scripture above the doctrine of Jesus. So he's going to argue both cases, and he's going to stand in the middle as far as he's concerned. So, okay.

Now, there are two things that result from his view of scripture: the importance of preaching and the importance of proclamation. What's Barth's job in the church? What's the main job of the church? The main job of the church is to proclaim the gospel's good news from this book. That's the job.

So preaching is central for Barth. Barth was himself a preacher, but preaching is central. Proclamation of the gospel, that's what it's all about.

So, he's a good Protestant. He's a good reformer, isn't he? Because that's what the reformers brought preaching of the scriptures into the importance of... That's what the church does. You go through Europe, and you go into a lot of... If you go to Scandinavia, for example, you go into a lot of Lutheran churches because it's so predominant there.

And I love the statues in those churches, a lot of statues of Luther in those churches. You'll notice that when you see the statue of Luther, you've got Luther standing there, and often, he's pointing to the Bible. The statue is pointing to the Bible.

Well, that's very Reformation, very Protestant, isn't it? Well, Barth would agree with that because the Bible and preaching from the Bible is one of the ramifications of a high view of scripture. The second ramification of the high view of scripture is his view of revelation, his view of what gets revealed. Okay.

As far as Barth is concerned, the revelation of God in the Bible and the disclosure that comes through the scripture do not come when we study the Bible and when we reasonably use our minds to understand the Bible. That's not when the true revelation comes. That's not when the true revelation happens.

Okay. True revelation comes when we let the Bible study us. The true revealing of God comes when we study the Bible, not when we think we're going to really get to know God and ourselves by studying the Bible.

The true revelation comes when we allow the Bible to study us. And so, Barth said, really what happens is we're not researchers of the Bible. We are listeners of the Bible.

We don't come at the Bible, and we're not going to get the biblical message if we think that the only biblical message is by researching the Bible. We're only going to get the biblical message when we become listeners of the Bible. That's why preaching is so important.

Now, in a couple of weeks, some of us are going to be at a conference in Baltimore, Maryland, and it's going to be a lot of people there who are going to feel that by studying the Bible, they're going to really understand what the revelation of God is. But there are a lot of people who study the Bible professionally and a lot of people who teach the Bible professionally who are not listeners of the Bible. They're not listening to what the Bible has to say to them, you know, or to the church.

They are just researching the Bible. That's what they do professionally. But, you know, Barth would really challenge that because while all the research is important, all the study is important unless you're listening to the Bible, you're not getting the revelation of God, you know.

So, I feel a long sermon coming on, so I'll stop there, but that was pretty critical for Barth, what revelation is all about. So, okay, so Scripture. Now we're down to Scripture.

Any questions about Scripture here? All right, you're doing okay? Let's come down to the government. Let's come to the government here. Just a couple of things about the government and about the understanding of the relationship to church and state, so.

Okay, you'll notice in the passage that we read that God establishes the church, of course, but God also establishes governments. So, God is the author of the church, but God is also the author of various forms of government. Okay, what you have to be careful of for Barth is that Christianity can never be mixed with any form of government.

There's no form of government for Barth that is more or less Christian. There are just forms of government that God places in, that God places, God puts into operation, and it has certain responsibilities. But Christianity should never connect itself with any form of government.

God has established a church. God has established the state. Okay, so therefore, we have to be careful, and he believed that all governments are, by nature, bound to human sin because they're run by human beings.

So, by nature, they're bound to human sin. So therefore, watch out, church, capital C, watch out that you don't connect yourself with any form of government because you're going to be connecting yourself with some form of sinful institution. The church is the body of Christ, and the bride of Christ cannot be connected to any form of government.

So now the question is, why did he get so involved in calling out the Nazi government? If he's going to be faithful to his principle that you can't connect yourself to any form of government, the church is set up by this God, and the government is set up by God; why did he criticize the Nazi government? Now, the other question is, why did Dietrich Bonhoeffer, whom we'll study later in the course, why did he get involved in an attempt to kill Hitler? He was much more involved than Barth was. He got involved in an attempt to kill Hitler. Why? What caused these people, if they were going to be true to their own theology, church, and state, what caused these people to begin to criticize and even for Bonhoeffer to get involved in a plot to kill Hitler? Well, long story short, what caused them to do that was that it was obvious that the government that was functioning in Germany was not ordained by God.

If it had been ordained by God, it would have exemplified the characteristics that God wants the government to show: compassion, care for the poor, and making sure that people are not violated in their own lives. That's what the government is set up by God to do. So, once it starts doing the kind of thing that Nazi Germany was doing, that is, slaughtering millions of people at one time, that is no longer the government.

It's not the government. It's in rebellion against God. So, you do not have a leader or a government here.

You've got an un-leader, and you've got a false government here. Therefore, the church can stand as an objective view of that government. The church can stand and look at that government and say that government isn't ordained by God.

So, it's not a true government. So, nobody owes any allegiance to that government. So, that's why Bonhoeffer could criticize the government, and that's why Barth could criticize the government, and that's why Bonhoeffer eventually decided to kill Hitler.

Fear God, honor the emperor. Scripture tells us in the as-yet unredeemed world in which the church also exists; the state has, by divine appointment, the task of providing for justice and peace. That's what the government is supposed to do.

The question is, were the Nazis providing for justice and peace? Shalom, absolutely not. We reject the false doctrine, and the state, over and beyond its special commission, should and could become the single and totalitarian order of human life, thus fulfilling the church's vocation as well. So, the state tried to become the single order of people's lives, and you can't do that because you are taking on the vocation of the church.

So, there are all kinds of reasons to be able to say no to the Nazis, no doubt about that. Then, the Barmen Declaration notices how the Barman Declaration ends. The Barmen Declaration says that Jesus Christ is the only word of God that we are to hear, trust, and obey.

So, the Barmen Declaration ends with the declaration of Jesus in the face of this world in which these people were living, which was pretty horrendous, but that's government. Okay, so background, transcendence of God, sin, Jesus, scripture, and government. Is there anything on any of this with Karl Barth? Do you understand why he was so important? Do you understand how he caused the pendulum to swing back to orthodoxy? Clear on that.

This is Dr. Roger Green in his church history course, Reformation to the Present. This is session 20, Protestantism in the 20th Century, Karl Barth.