

Dr. Roger Green, Reformation to the Present,

Lecture 27, Modern Theologies

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This is Dr. Roger Green in his church history course, Reformation to the Present. This is session 27 on Modern Theologies.

Well, it's December 9th. We weren't together for December 8th. December 8th 1854, there was a very important pronouncement made by the Roman Catholic Church on December 8th of 1854.

And what would that have been? 1854. That was the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, which was proclaimed on December 8th of 1854. So yesterday was the anniversary of that day.

But here we are on December 9th. It doesn't seem possible. Okay, let's pray, and then we'll get started.

Our gracious Heavenly Father, we do stop and look back at this course with thanksgiving. We thank you for the opportunities where we've been able to teach one another and learn from one another. We thank you for helping us to see the broad view of the development of Christian thought from the Reformation to now.

We give you thanks for aiding us and assisting us in this and helping us to shape our own thinking and our own theology as to what we understand to be true in the context of the community to which we belong, in the context of the church. And so, we're grateful for that. We thank you to the students, and we pray for your intervention in their lives.

In a few days to be taking final exams and wrapping up papers, maybe they've got discussion groups or presentations that have to be made. We pray that you will give them the extra strength of heart and mind and body and spirit to do the work that has to be done for the completion of the course and may it be completed in a good way, in a way that brings honor to you as well as to ourselves. So with Thanksgiving in our hearts for this day and for the week that lies ahead and for all the work that has to be done, we pray that we might do it as unto you, and we pray these things gladly in the name of Christ our Lord. Amen.

Oh, and by the way, for the first time, Gordon College is going to do course evaluations electronically, so there will be no written course evaluation, so you're going to see notices of that. I don't know how they're going to come right. The notices are going to come right to you folks, and then how to fill it out and all that

kind of thing. Okay, I'm on page 15 of the syllabus, and so here it's true confession time.

I quickly went from E to F without doing E3, the nature of Christian theology today, and I moved right on the last time we meant to for lectures. I moved right on to F; Christianity looks at itself in other religions. So I'm going to finish F, and then I'm going to go back, and maybe that's a good way to kind of finish the course anyways, the nature of Christian theology today, where are we today? However, Christianity looks at itself in other religions. I want to do just two things quickly here.

Number one, the dialogue of Protestantism and Roman Catholicism and we mentioned already historic attitudes of Roman Catholics and Protestants as they look at each other as they begin talking to each other, and in that, we mentioned the problems that Protestants have had with Roman Catholics, you probably have that in your notes right? Then, we also mentioned the problem that Roman Catholics have with Protestants, and you probably have that in your notes because I think that's where we stopped the other day when we stopped. So, I think that's where we were. But just to kind of reiterate because we haven't been at this for a while because we've been in our discussion groups and everything, but there have been kind of, as Roman Catholics and Protestants have looked at each other, there have been questions that have raised like what's the authority of the scripture compared and contrasted to the authority of the tradition and scripture for the Roman Catholic Church? What's the place of Mary in Protestantism compared to the place of Mary in the Roman Catholic Church? What's the place of the Pope in Protestantism compared to the place of the Pope, or what's the Pope's thinking in Protestantism compared to the Pope's thinking in the Roman Catholic Church? And so you could go on and on with what about the canon? I mean, how do Protestants look at the canon? How do Roman Catholics look at the canon? You could go on and on and on.

So, there have been these kinds of differences of opinion between Protestants and Roman Catholics that they've had to kind of come to grips with. We've called that kind of historic attitude that has developed through the years. Now, we move down to historic changes and what historic changes have taken place.

I'm going to mention four major changes that have taken place in terms of shaping the Roman Catholic and Protestant dialogue. So the first one you already know is Vatican II. Vatican II from 1962 to 1965, Vatican II radically changed the Roman Catholic Church.

And we've already lectured on Vatican II with Pope John XXIII. Ruth and I were at a wonderful lecture by Jim Rudin on Thursday night. And Jim Rudin was talking about Judaism on campus.

But he spoke about Vatican II that night. A question came up about Vatican II. And he spoke about Vatican II.

Actually, he mentioned the same thing I mentioned in the lecture, that Pope John XXIII was made Pope to be kind of what they called the caretaker pope. And Jim Rudin mentioned this. We don't have a real pope, so we'll put this guy in office, and he won't do much.

And then he'll die, and then we'll get a real pope. And he called Vatican II, and the whole Roman Catholic Church exploded. So, Vatican II certainly was a historic change.

Part of what Vatican II did was move the Roman Catholic Church closer to Protestantism. So that was pretty remarkable. So that's one historic change.

The second historic change we just talked about a lot in the last couple of weeks, and that was the election of John F. Kennedy to the presidency. In terms of worldwide Roman Catholicism and how Protestants viewed Roman Catholicism, his election as the first Roman Catholic president of the United States changed things remarkably and opened up, in a sense, a better understanding of what Roman Catholicism is all about. The third change is what one person called ecumenism in the trenches.

Now, what is ecumenism in the trenches? Ecumenism in the trenches is finding common moral and ethical values. There's no doubt that one of the discoveries that Protestants have made with Roman Catholics is that we have a lot in common morally and ethically with Roman Catholics. And that ecumenism in the trenches is Roman Catholics and Protestants and Orthodox, in many cases, have been able to kind of stand together, give mutual support on moral and ethical issues.

So, issues like the value of marriage and family, for example, Roman Catholics, Protestants, and Orthodox share many of the values in terms of marriage and family values. It's kind of ecumenism in the trenches on that issue.

Marriage and family values are coming under great attack today, in a sense, from a lot of different places. However, Roman Catholics, Protestants, and Eastern Orthodox have similar beliefs and understandings. Abortion.

Roman Catholics and Protestants have similar views on abortion. Not always the same. They're not always on the exact same page.

But they have similar views on abortion. And that's ecumenism in the trenches. Repudiation of pornography, repudiation of the sex trade, traffic, and so forth.

Those kinds of issues, Roman Catholics, Protestants, and, of course, Orthodox, also have remarkably similar views and moral values on those kinds of issues. So, ecumenism in the trenches would be number three. They have historic changes.

Number four is kind of an interesting thing here. And it's a movement. I am still in a quandary about this.

I still haven't figured it all out. But number four is that a lot of evangelicals are moving into Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. Why are evangelicals who grew up in evangelical churches? What is causing this change in their lives and making this move? One of our own graduates and professors who teaches at Notre Dame, Christian Smith, just became Roman Catholic.

So, it's an interesting change in his life. I mean, he was not hired at Notre Dame. He was hired as a Protestant at Notre Dame, but he just became a Roman Catholic.

So, he's had an interesting pilgrimage. My feeling is that a lot of evangelicals are attracted to the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church or the Eastern Orthodox Church. They are attracted to the worship experience of the Roman Catholic Church or the Eastern Orthodox Church.

So the tradition of the church, the longstanding tradition, the feeling that the church is connected to those 2,000 years of church history that you don't always get in Protestant churches, and also the feeling of kind of the drama of worship that you get in a Roman Catholic Church or an Eastern Orthodox Church that you don't always get in Protestant churches, my feeling is that's what's attracting them into Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. But there is something major going on here, no question about that. So, about every three years, I teach a senior seminar in Protestant-Catholic Orthodoxy and comparative Christianity.

And we take some field trips. One of the field trips we take is to a Greek Orthodox church. And what a surprise! We went into the church and met a lot of former Gordon people, graduates of Gordon College, who had become Orthodox and went to that church.

And I didn't realize that. I didn't realize that there were many people connected with Gordon going to the Eastern Orthodox Church. And so, I'm always asking them, what's your story here? Why did you go from evangelicalism to Eastern Orthodoxy? But it's an interesting story.

So, certainly, in the Western world, there are people going into Eastern Orthodox Catholicism. And there are evangelicals doing that, too. Now in South America, it's a little bit of a different story.

Because in South America, it's the reverse. A lot of Roman Catholics are coming into evangelicalism by the hundreds of thousands, literally, and especially coming into Pentecostalism. So, in the southern hemisphere, it's working the exact opposite.

The question is, what's attracting them to evangelicalism and Pentecostalism? Evidently, some of them in South America are seeing a kind of aliveness of the spirit, a moving of God in these Pentecostal churches or other Protestant churches that they didn't see in their own traditional churches. But no doubt that boy, there's movement both ways between evangelicalism and Roman Catholicism and somewhat also somewhat Eastern Orthodoxies. So now, nature is changing historically.

I just want to mention the nature of the dialogues and then continued agreements or disagreements, but the nature of the dialogue. It's interesting that Roman Catholics have opened up dialogues with all kinds of groups. You'd be surprised by the nature of the dialogues of Roman Catholics.

OK, so, for example, you're not surprised that Catholics and Anglicans are in dialogue with each other because Anglicans have a lot in common with Roman Catholicism. And there are some Anglicans who are almost Roman Catholic. We talked about the Oxford Movement, so you know about that.

And there's an Oxford Movement today, of course. So, you're not surprised by that. But what may surprise you is that Roman Catholics and Lutherans are in dialogue with each other, which is a very interesting historical phenomenon because Martin Luther was excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church.

He had some things to say about the Roman Catholic Church, which were not always complimentary. But Roman Catholics and Lutherans are in dialogue, which is interesting. In fact, one of the questions to Jim Rudin the other night was about the Jewish community in conversation with Lutherans, which is interesting because Luther also had some pretty harsh things to say about the Jewish community.

So, I thought that was an interesting thing. And you could mention all kinds of groups. One more thing I'm going to mention, though, that you might find surprising is that Roman Catholics and Seventh-day Adventists have had a long discussion with each other.

And you wouldn't think that they'd have too much in common. The Seventh-day Adventists are a pretty strong and growing Protestant denomination. There are about 25 million now worldwide.

So, they're a fairly strong denomination now. But you wouldn't think they'd have a lot in common. But even Seventh-day Adventists and Roman Catholics are dialoguing.

So, the nature of the dialogues is interesting in terms of the breadth of the dialogues between Protestants and Roman Catholics. Everything from Anglicans, which you think, yeah, that sounds right. But then you get to Lutherans.

And then you get even to Seventh-day Adventists that are dialoguing. OK, continued agreements and disagreements number D. And let me mention them. I've got four or five here that are continued.

These are continued conversations, I guess you could say. This is kind of like the other night on Thursday night. This is kind of like Jim Rudin as a Jew and Marv Wilson as an evangelical talking together.

They can agree on certain things. But there are some things where, as Marv said, there are some things we are at an impasse. And the discussion keeps going.

Well, this is true of Protestants and Catholics as well. So, let me mention five. Number one, of course, is Mary.

I've said in the course. I still say Catholics have made too much of Mary. Protestants have made too little of Mary.

We backed off from preaching about Mary and teaching about Mary in fear of the Roman Catholic view of Mary, I think. But we made too little of Mary in the Protestant church. She is the mother of our Lord.

And there are great scriptural passages about Mary and so forth. That's number one. Number two is the issue of authority.

And that issue of authority is, for Protestants, the Bible is the authoritative word. For Catholics, it's the Bible and tradition. That's not going to change.

It may be discussed a lot, but it's not going to change. So, number three is the structure of the church. The Roman Catholic Church claims that the church is structured this way because this was the structure of the early church, and Peter was the first pope.

Protestants don't buy that. Protestants say you can't prove any particular church structure from the New Testament. And of course, Protestants don't accept the papacy in the way that the Roman Catholic Church does.

So, number three. Number four would be what I would call basic practices. Basic practices of the Roman Catholic Church and or the Protestant Church.

So, the basic practice in the Roman Catholic Church is the celibacy of the priesthood. Now, we've seen in the course how they're allowing Anglican priests to become Roman Catholic priests. They've got their wife and family and so forth.

So, there is some disagreement there. But certainly, celibacy of the clergy would be a basic practice with which there would be kind of a disagreement. Certainly, the whole issue of the ordination of women would be an issue.

We talked in our discussion group on Friday about feminism coming out of Donald Dayton's book. But the whole issue of the ordination of women would be an interesting discussion because some Protestant denominations ordain women. Some do not.

Roman Catholic Church does not ordain women to the ministry. So that would be a basic practice. That would be kind of there'd be discussion about that.

No doubt about that. A final disagreement will be over the sacraments, over the number of the sacraments because most Protestants believe there are two sacraments. The Roman Catholic Church believes there are seven.

And also over the nature of the sacraments. We've already talked about the nature of the sacraments from way back in the Reformation. So, the number and nature of the sacraments will always be a point of contention, although it may always be discussed.

So, no doubt about that. OK, so the Roman Catholic Church and Protestantism and Discussions. Now, let me stop there for just a minute.

Then, we'll go to number two, which is three approaches to other world religions moving beyond Christianity. But are there any questions about this kind of dialogue between Protestants and Catholics? And why are evangelicals going into Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy in such great numbers? Yeah. Did you say for those five that they're all? I probably would use Marv's statement that he used on Thursday night when talking to Judaism.

There are some issues that are impasse. I think we will always have an impasse there. We might come closer together.

Certainly, when I talk to Roman Catholics, I have an advantage in that my PhD is from a Roman Catholic institution Boston College. So, there were a lot of Roman Catholics in Boston College. A lot of my teachers were Roman Catholic.

So, for example, in Mary, I can come a little closer to Roman Catholics with my statement that you people have made too much of Mary, but we have made too little of Mary. We really need to consider Mary much more seriously than we do. And it's probably been a long time than any of you have heard a sermon on Mary, except maybe this time of year.

But other issues like the papacy, I mean, yeah. So, there are some issues where you can come, I think, a little closer together. Other issues like the papacy, I don't see how you could.

We just don't agree that Peter was the first one. So, it depends, I guess, on the issue. But the conversation, like Marv with the Jews, the conversation should continue, I think, anyway, between Roman Catholics and Protestants.

It's been an issue for Gordon College. It's been an interesting issue among the faculty for years whether a Roman Catholic can teach at Gordon College as a full-time professor. Now, Roman Catholics can teach here as adjuncts, or they can come as visiting scholars or whatever.

Can they teach as full-time professors, however? And my response to that has always been, no, they couldn't teach as full-time professors. The reason for that is our doctrinal statement, which we all sign every year, and all faculty sign every year when we sign our contracts. So, full-time professors have to sign the contract.

And the first article of faith for us is the authority of the scripture. So, I always say the only Roman Catholic you'd want teaching at Gordon College would be a serious Roman Catholic. You wouldn't want a Roman Catholic coming here who doesn't believe very much.

You want a serious Roman Catholic. A serious Roman Catholic wouldn't be able to sign our doctrinal statement because a serious Roman Catholic would say, no, there are two sources of authority. There's scripture, and there's tradition.

So, I really can't sign this doctrinal statement because you're upholding scripture as the sole authority. So those, yeah. So, it's interesting.

Depends on the issue, I guess. OK, let's move to number two, three approaches to world religions. Just broaden this for just a minute to world religions.

This is not a course on world religions, but you do have to think about it because in today's world, when it comes to theology, we're talking about world religions. So, I'm just going to mention three things. Number one is exclusivism.

A kind of the idea of exclusivism that only those people who hear and respond to the gospel will be saved. So that would be an approach to world religions, religions outside of Christianity. That's one approach to world religions, a kind of exclusivism, that only those people who hear and respond to the gospel will be saved.

So that doesn't recognize that maybe God's spirit works in other ways and so forth. That's number two, inclusivism. Inclusivism is, although Christianity represents the normative, Christianity represents the normative revelation of God in Christ for the salvation of all people inclusivism realizes and believes that, at times, there are people who do not hear the gospel.

They do not hear the good news. And it's possible that if they believe in God and live according to the light that God has given them by his preeminent grace, they will come unto salvation. But that's more of an inclusivism, but that's a kind of a realization that maybe God is working through people who have never heard the gospel.

Maybe he, nevertheless, is still at work in some way through his spirit and through preeminent grace. So that's an inclusivism. That's kind of a stepping away a little bit from the exclusivism, that only if you've heard about Jesus and repented of your sin can you be saved.

However, inclusivism recognizes that not everybody has heard about Jesus. The third way, then, is a pluralism. The third way is pluralism.

Now, pluralism says that all religions are equally valid. Pluralism is kind of giving up on Christianity, saying Christianity is fine. It's a road to God.

It's a path to God. But all other religions are also paths to God, and they're all equally valid. So you shouldn't try to maybe choose one religion over another religion.

You don't have to do that because every religion is going to get you to the goal of being with God. So that's interesting. Now, people like Paul Tillich.

We've already mentioned Paul Tillich in the course. Paul Tillich, as a Christian theologian, came to the conclusion at the end of his theology. His conclusion was all world religions are equally valid.

So, he didn't see Christianity as unique at all. So, there are three ways to approach world religions: exclusive, inclusive, and pluralism. There's one person we, and let me just see.

I've got some names here I just want to mention. Whoops, sorry about that. Yeah, see that last name there? Take note of that name, John Cobb.

He also wrote a book called Christ in a Pluralistic Age. So, under pluralism, I was going to mention it under another section, but that's fine. Let's put it under pluralism, John Cobb, Christ in a Pluralistic Age.

In one of my PhD courses, we had a seminar on who Jesus is, who Christ is, and so forth. We had to read John Cobb's book. Now, the thesis of the book is that the Christ spirit was in Jesus, but no more so in Jesus than the Christ spirit was in maybe in Gandhi, or no more than he was in Hindu gods and goddesses, or no more than the Christ spirit was in Confucius, say, or in the Islamic religion, in Muhammad.

Maybe I shouldn't have used Gandhi, because he was a human being. But Confucius, or Muhammad, or the gods and goddesses of Eastern religions. So now he's a Christian theologian making this proposition.

So, this was not an easy class to take. But anyway, I really did argue against this, that the Christ spirit was in Jesus, but no more than he was in other leaders of religious traditions. But that certainly is Cobb's position.

So, he titled the book Christ in a Pluralistic Age. In a Pluralistic Age, you need to allow pluralism to dictate who Christ is. So, I think of a strange view myself, and I am ready to criticize that view.

But anyway, there are three approaches to the world religions that we want to take note of. Okay, now, I mentioned I'm on page 15 of the syllabus if you're all on page 15 with me. And I always think it's good to confess your sins, so I'm confessing mine.

On E3, I skipped over E3, and I got right to F. So I didn't mean to do that, but I did. So we're going to go back to E3, and that'll be the kind of conclusion we'll reach. And then, we'll have a few concluding remarks I want to make.

E3, and E3 is the nature of Christian theology today. Where are we today in Christian theology? What is percolating in Christian theology today? So does that make sense? Now I've confessed my sins, you're absolving me from my sins, which is a good thing, and we're doing E3 now. I just don't want to confuse you, but it looks like I have.

I do have some notes down for that. For continued, for what, the nature of Christian theology today? Okay, let's make, okay, let's, okay, okay, let's see where we are here. Theological movements can so tell me what you've got.

Just tell me what you've got. Yep. Okay, right, okay, I meant that to be E2 then.

Enlightenment's kind of critique of Christian theology and so forth. I meant to subsume that under E2. I didn't mean to bring it under E3. Did I bring it under E3, did I? Well, bless my heart.

All right, all right, now I've got two sins to confess about. First, the sin of confusing you. And now the sin of, we didn't get to number three, the nature of Christian theology today.

So why don't you put down E4, the nature of Christian theology today? Why don't you do that? Because here I talk about the new conservatism, I talk about theologies of hope; I talk about theologies of liberation and pluralism, and so forth. And we haven't done that.

So why don't you do that? You do that, E4? Okay, why don't you do E4, which is a kind of theological movement or something like that? Bless your hearts, and we can do this. Okay, all right, all right, E4. Okay, number one on E4 is what I call. There's a new conservatism around today.

And it started, in a sense, in terms of the broader culture, in 1976. And Jim Rudin mentioned this in his lecture the other night, too. It started in 1976 with the election of, it was proclaimed the year of the evangelical, with the election of Jimmy Carter as the President of the United States.

Now, Ted and I would remember that when Jimmy Carter was nominated for the President of the United States and was elected in '76 when he was nominated, he called himself an evangelical. And it was really, in a way, comical to see some of these media people scratching their heads saying, an evangelical, what's an evangelical? Well, we don't know. We're going to go and find out what an evangelical is. And, of course, they got it, but they usually messed it up.

So, they usually didn't get it quite right. But since then, there has been a new conservatism, certainly part of the general culture. So, in terms of the church, the new conservatism was a marriage of two things that we talked about last Friday.

The new conservatism was a realization that the preaching of the gospel and social ministry were all part of the gospel. The new conservatism, in a sense, went back to Finney as its model, as its example in the 19th century, and said, we have been wrong in separating preaching from social ministry, from social justice issues. We are bringing those back together again.

Donald Dayton's book *Discovering Evangelical Heritage* is a call for that, isn't it? Remember, we mentioned the basic thesis. Because what does a Matthew 22 text say? Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, and soul, and love your

neighbor as yourself. And so, the new conservatism has really been a movement that has brought back together again those two things which were separated, in a sense.

So that's one theological movement that we want to mention, the new conservatism, okay? The second theological movement, and like I say, E4, you can call these theological movements or something like that. However, the second theological movement that was very important for me in my seminary training was the writings of Jürgen Moltmann and his book, *The Theology of Hope*, *The Theology of Hope*. So there have been theologies of hope, but we'll use Moltmann's book, *The Theology of Hope*, as our primary witness to this.

So now, what I'd like to do is read from your textbook because your textbook gives a great couple of sentences on this. So, I'm reading from *Protestant Christianity*, page 312. So, if you want to jot down the reference, *Protestant Christianity*, page 312.

And let me read it, and then I'll just come back to it quickly. But here's what your author said. This theology of hope was, quote, a rethinking of the whole of theology from the standpoint of eschatology, not as an end, but as hope, as the future of God, and thereby our future.

In that approach, theology is not oriented from the standpoint of a creation to be restored but in accord with some of the church fathers, toward a creation that, in spite of the fall, has a future beyond its alleged original paradisiacal character. Hence, the entire human drama, past and present, is included in the unfulfilled future of which we have the first roots. The horizon of theology is as wide as world history and its future.

Protestant Christianity, page 312. So, Jürgen Moltmann really did help to, in a sense, redirect Christian theology. And it's really a hopeful thing for the future.

So, in other words, Christian theology today is largely talking about not the redemption of Eden, not necessarily a new Eden, but a whole new heaven and a new earth. So where is theology moving, and where are the Christian people moving? They're moving toward this new heaven and this new earth, this kind of fulfilled kingdom. So, theologies of hope sprung up, Jürgen Moltmann would be the examples of that.

Okay, number three, theologies of liberation. And I'm just going to mention this quick because we mentioned all three of them on Friday because of the questions that came up. But let me give you three examples of theologies of liberation.

Number one would be James Cone. He wrote a book called *Black Theology and Black Power*. So, James Cone is trying to interpret theology through the lenses of liberation for the black community.

This also came up in Jim Rudin's lecture. Boy, I needed to be at this lecture, but this also came up with Jim Rudin's lecture. And some of us were able to have dinner with him on Thursday night, and we talked a lot about this over dinner.

However, for the black people, James Cone makes this point in his book. For black people, the exodus is a great experience in the Old Testament, and it has become their experience. So, the exodus from slavery to liberation. So, the exodus theme from the Old Testament, appropriated by black people in this world, has really provided that theology of hope.

Okay, so we mentioned James Cone on Friday anyway. We mentioned Gutierrez on Friday. Theology of liberation.

So liberation theology began in South America, care for the poor, and so forth, theology of liberation. And then we also mentioned on Friday, in fact, we pointed out Mary Daly and *Beyond God the Father*, which is feminist theology. Now, let me explain feminist theology for a minute because we did talk about that on Friday, but Mary Daly was a radical feminist theologian.

When she says in her book *Beyond God the Father*, she's really talking about biblical language and how we can appropriate biblical language for women as well as men. But that was mild compared to what she said beyond that. Because finally, Mary Daly moved way beyond Christian orthodoxy.

So, she saw the Christian church as totally to be done in, and she moved way beyond Christian orthodoxy into kind of a new age, kind of a new age feminist kind of theology and new age religion. I mean, it was really kind of bizarre. We mentioned and talked about her story.

She was let go from Boston College. Finally, she didn't gain tenure and was let go from Boston College. So that's theologies of liberation.

Now, there are three of them, for example, black theology, theology of liberation, and feminist theology, all right? Let me just mention that we've already said the next group I've got is pluralism and the relationship of Christianity to other religions, and that would be John Cobb's book. So we've already talked about that, but certainly, within Christian theology, there is pluralism. And what we said about pluralism in John Cobb's book would relate to that, to this section, okay? And the final section, and then I'm going to bring some criticisms here, but the final kind of section in terms of moving into the future is evangelicalism.

Evangelicalism has something to say about the future, and there is no doubt about that. So evangelicalism, and for this, I mentioned, did I mention? No, I have

mentioned Alastair McGrath's book *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity*. So, Alastair McGrath, a very interesting title, *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity*.

Because Alastair McGrath as an evangelical teacher at Oxford, Alastair McGrath sees evangelicalism as the great hope of the church and as the great hope of the future for the church in terms of coming to grips with this world in which we live and speaking the gospel to this world in which we live. So that would be the next grouping that I have in terms of where theology is moving to today. Okay, having said all of that, let me give some criticisms of all of these theologies.

So, and maybe somewhat including evangelical theology, but we've got the new conservatism, theologies of hope, theologies of liberation, pluralism, evangelicalism, what are some criticisms? Okay, well, I think my first criticism is that one of my professors at Princeton used to call this the theology of the month club, the theology of the month club. And maybe he was partially right, and maybe we're living in an age of the theology of the month club. Maybe we're just living in an age when theology is just moving from one cultural thing to another cultural thing.

And that's what we're getting, the theology of the month club, which means we're not getting a good steady-state theology from the early church of the 21st century. So I think that's something we have to watch for, make sure that some theology we're talking about is not just part of the theology of the month club, so. A second thing that I think is important as a criticism is that many of the theologies that we've talked about are biblically based.

They began with a very clear biblical base, a biblical reason. They really had a good biblical kind of vision for what they were doing. But many of them moved away from that vision.

And that would be true, in a sense, even of Moltmann, who began to move away in his theology of hope kind of stuff. He began to move away from seeing the Bible as a unique revelation of God. So that's a criticism I have.

I think we need to be careful of that. You need to begin and end biblically grounded. But a lot of these theologies may begin biblically grounded but then move away, so.

Okay, my third criticism is, would be that many of these theologies begin Christologically grounded as well. So many of these theologies began really trying to understand Christology and clearly understand it as a framework for theology but moved away from that. Now, when you look at the early writings compared to the later writings of John Cobb, you will see that that's what happened with John Cobb.

In his earlier writings, he is Christologically grounded. In his later writings, the Christ spirit can be found in Jesus, but no greater than it could be found in Confucius. So, there's a slippery slope here, kind of a moving away from being Christologically grounded.

Okay, my next criticism is that some of these movements are distinctly anti-Christian. And Mary Daly is a perfect example of that in how she ended up in her own life. She became not a kind of loyal discussant within Christianity, but her theology became totally anti-Christian.

Wanting to obliterate the church, really, and move out from the church, so. Okay, so those are some kind of criticisms I have of this, but that's the state we're in, the Theology of the Month Club state, and that's where we are. Okay, this is just the conclusion to the course, Lecture 14.

I want to make some concluding remarks. And before I do, is there anything about that theology stuff we just talked about? I'll be sure the next time I teach this course not to skip over that E section three like I did with you guys. And confuse you, I'll be sure not to do that again.

So, do you have any questions about that? Okay, what I'd like to, yeah, Alex? Yeah, Theology of the Month Club, my Princeton professor. It's almost like the Theology of the Month Club is almost like, there's the culture. And in order to keep up with the culture, we need to proclaim a new theology.

So we have to have a feminist theology because the culture is becoming kind of feminist. We've got to have a pluralistic theology because the culture's kind of becoming pluralistic. So we got to have a theology that's going to speak to that pluralism.

So the danger of that is, the culture's always going to be a moving target. And if theology is always going to be trying to chase that target, you're always going to be inventing a new theology to meet the culture. So that's what his criticism was of that, yeah.

If theology's going to mean anything, it really has to be well embedded in the Bible, which is an eternal word for all times and all cultures. Does that make sense? That was his criticism of it. Okay, the conclusion to the course.

I've got some concluding remarks I would just like to make. And then, for folks who joined us, we said at the last ten minutes or so, if you want to participate in this, I just want to find out what your own denominational kind of life has been like. But you don't have to participate, and you can just say I pass.

So, okay, I want to make some concluding remarks. Number one, I'd like to just kind of encourage you if you're going to look at the development of theology seriously beyond this course. I think our method is helpful for people, ideas, and events. Those are the three questions you always should be asking yourself if you're going to really examine and study theology.

Who are the people, what are their ideas, and what are the great events that have shaped those ideas? That is really important. So, if you're interested in theology, I would keep those things in mind. That's number one.

Number two, I want to just mention some of the people we've talked about in this course; in general, the people we've talked about in this course are people who had great pastoral, great pastoral sense. They were people who wanted to do theology for the sake of the people in the pews. They didn't want to do theology just as an academic exercise.

That's not what Calvin was all about, or Luther, or Schleiermacher, or Barth, or Niebuhr. That's not what they were about. They were about a pastoral theology, Wesley, I think of, too, of course. They were about pastoral theology.

Now, I'm sorry to say that that has changed today. Today, a lot of people are doing theology just as an academic exercise. It doesn't mean anything much to them, and it doesn't mean anything to the people in the pew.

And Ted and I were just at the American Academy of Religion meetings in Baltimore, and here's where you see that, so evident. A lot of people are doing theology today only as an academic exercise. They have no interest in the person in the pew at all.

And that's a real danger, I think. So that's number two, so. Number three is that I'd like you always to kind of. What we try to do in the course is give you a grand view from the Reformation to the present.

I mean, it'd be nice to teach a course just in the Reformation, or teach a course just in the 18th century, or teach a course just in the 19th century. But we'd like you to get some grand sweep of theology, and that's what we've tried to do in the course, and I think that's important. Number four is that the center of theology is Christ.

You should always. However, you're developing your own theology, should always be developed Christologically. So that question from Bonhoeffer, who is Christ for us today? That's an important question. But if your theology, as you're developing your own theology, if you don't keep coming back to the Christological question and who Jesus is, you have a danger of your theology straying away.

It would be like our Earth moving away from the sun, you know? There'd be a danger to that, wouldn't there? So that's, always interpret your theology Christologically. The next, two more things, but the next to the last thing is this. Now, you've got some techniques, I hope, from the course by which you can formulate your own theology.

So, you need to think through, what is your own theology. What is it all about? But here's something I've said in the course a number of times, at least I think I have, if I haven't, I should have. But Christianity is a very personal religion, but it's never a private religion. You can only formulate your own theology in the context of the church, in the community of believers.

You can't, it's not you and your Bible alone formulating your theology. It's you and your Bible thinking through things but then bringing what you've thought through to the body of Christ, to the church, to the community of believers. So that's what you do.

I hope and pray you will formulate theology but in the context of a community. It's not a solo exercise. I said this; we said this when we were talking about Calvin, but people have the wrong view of Calvin.

People treat Calvin like he was kind of a lone ranger of theology and just did his own theology. That's not true. Calvin met every Tuesday with reformed pastors to discuss the theology that they'd be preaching on Sunday.

But Calvin wanted to make sure he and the others had a common view of the scriptures. So, I encourage you to do that. And then, finally, in terms of my final concluding remark, let's remember from Calvin or Barth or Schleiermacher that theology has to be reinterpreted in every generation.

You can't just inherit from the past and say, now we've got it clear. So, in every generation, theology has to be re-understood and reinterpreted, and you need to recommit yourself in every generation to that theology. So, it's important to do that.

And we're grateful for people who have done that like Calvin or Schleiermacher or Rauschenbusch or Barth or people that we've talked about. We're grateful for them because that's what they've done. They've tried to re-understand theology for their day.

This is Dr. Roger Green in his church history course, Reformation to the Present. This is session 27 on Modern Theologies.