

**Church History, Lesson 13:
The Modern Church, Part 3:
The Age of Change (1914 – present)**

37. Neo-orthodoxy

a. Overview:

- i. Neo-orthodoxy was a response to theological liberalism that had taken hold in the late 19th century.
- ii. Neo-orthodoxy was an attempt to reconcile modernism with orthodox Christianity. One neo-orthodox theologian says: “The fundamentalist has something to say to this world, but he has lost the ability to say it. The modernist knows how to speak to his age, but he has nothing to say.”⁷⁶

b. Karl Barth (1886 – 1968)

i. Famous works

1. *Commentary on Romans* (1919): Barth’s first work, born out of theological struggle he experienced between liberalism and orthodoxy, in which he “rediscovered” the Scripture’s place in theology and God’s transcendence.
2. *Church Dogmatics* (1932 – 1967): a massive 13 volume work that encapsulates Barth’s thought.

ii. Theology

1. God: God is wholly other, “transcendent,” and not “immanent.”
2. Man: man is finite and sinful.
3. Bible: the Bible is a record of revelation and a witness to revelation, but not objective, historical, propositional revelation itself; it is an event. The Bible becomes revelation when in a moment of crisis the Holy Spirit uses the words to speak to the individual. Donald Grey Barnhouse, an American Evangelical,

⁷⁶ William Hordern, *The Case for a New Reformation Theology* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1959), 161; cited in: Mark Sidwell, *The Dividing Line: Understanding and Applying Biblical Separation* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1998), 103.

once had a conversation with Karl Barth, which I think will illuminate Barth's view of the Bible:

[Barnhouse] "You say that the Bible is the only source of revelation, but do you believe that all of the Bible is God's revelation?"

[Barth] Dr. Barth had a book in his hand. He divided a page with a gesture of his hand and said, "If this part of the Bible speaks to me, it is God's Word to me." And then indicating the other part of the page, "If this part does not speak to me, it is not God's Word to me."

[Barnhouse] That is enough to make some people's hair stand on end but I was convinced that there was something more than appeared upon the surface of his speech, so I said, "But Doctor, suppose the part that hasn't spoken to you really speaks to me. Is it then God's Word?"

[Barth] "Certainly," he replied. "It is then God's Word for you."

[Barnhouse] "And do you believe that the part which is God's Word to me may someday become God's Word to you?"

[Barth] "Of course. Anything in the Bible may become God's Word to me."⁷⁷

iii. Evaluation:

1. Pros: a good reassertion of man's sinfulness and God's transcendence.
2. Cons: inadequate view of Scriptures.

38. Fundamentalism

a. Overview:

- i. Fundamentalism was a response to increasing modernism creeping into the Church.
- ii. The major battles took place in the 1920s sometimes called the Modernist-Fundamentalist Controversy.

⁷⁷ Donald Grey Barnhouse, "An Interview with Karl Barth," *Eternity* (April 1984), 20; cited in: Sidwell, *The Dividing Line*, 105.

- iii. “Modernism,” as here defined, is synonymous with the rationalist approach to Christianity that denied many of the supernatural events (e.g., virgin conception), promoted higher criticism, and evolutionary models of origins.

b. Historical development:

i. *The Fundamentals* (1910 – 1915)

1. Fundamentalism can be traced to the publication of twelve small books (afterward published as four volumes) from 1910 – 1915 containing 90 essays and written by 64 different authors representing most of the major Protestant denominations.
2. The volumes argued for five basic fundamental doctrines:
 - a. Inerrancy of Scripture
 - b. Deity of Christ
 - c. Substitutionary atonement
 - d. Bodily resurrection and imminent bodily second coming of the Lord
 - e. Virgin birth

- ii. Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878 – 1969): theologically liberal Baptist pastor whose famous 1922 sermon, “Shall the Fundamentalists Win,” questioned inerrancy of Scripture and the Virgin Birth.

iii. J. Gresham Machen (1881 – 1937)

1. Wrote *Christianity and Liberalism* (1923) in which he defended classical Protestant orthodoxy and said that theological liberalism was a separate religion from biblical Christianity.
2. Left Princeton Seminary, which had embraced liberal theology, to start Westminster Theological Seminary (1929).
3. Though Machen is considered a Fundamentalist, as Fundamentalism existed in the 1920s and 1930s, he did not like the term. He was concerned with the direction that Fundamentalism was moving: anti-intellectual, errant historical

perspective, and pietistic tendencies. Machen would not be considered a Fundamentalist in terms of Fundamentalism today (more on this later).

iv. The Scopes Trial (1925)

1. Trial

- a. John Scopes was arrested for teaching evolution in public school against state law.
- b. William Jennings Bryan, fundamentalist, prosecuting attorney, saw the trial as an opportunity to uphold the Word of God.
- c. Clarence Darrow, defense attorney, saw the trial as an opportunity to retain intellectual freedom.

2. Outcome: though Bryan won the *legal* case, much of the American public sided with Darrow, causing a major blow to Fundamentalism and orthodox Christianity in America.

39. Neo Evangelicalism

a. Overview:

- i. After World War II, voices in conservative evangelicalism offered a new way distinct from Fundamentalism.
- ii. New Evangelicals embraced historic orthodox Christianity. What made it different from Fundamentalism was the way and extent to which it engaged the culture, and to what extent it would cooperate with liberal, neo-orthodox, and Roman Catholic groups.

b. Historical development:

- i. National Association of Evangelicals (1942): a group of 147 conservative Christians met to form unity around core Christian beliefs.
- ii. Cary F. H. Henry (1913 – 2003) wrote *Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (1947) in which he expressed distaste over the failure of Fundamentalism to offer solutions to the issues facing modern man, focusing too much on external and secondary issues.

iii. Harold J. Ockenga (1905 – 1985)

1. Founded Fuller Theological Seminary in 1947.
2. He coined the term “neo-evangelical.”

iv. Billy Graham (1918 -)

1. 1949: a series of meetings in Los Angeles threw the 31 year old Graham into the national spotlight.
2. 1956: led a group of Evangelicals to start the magazine called *Christianity Today*. The magazine hoped to present historic Christianity to the present generation.
3. 1957: Graham was willing to cooperate with anyone who supported the message of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Some Fundamentalist thought that Graham crossed the lines of biblical separation.

c. Outcome:

- i. Fundamentalism and New Evangelicalism separated ways and continued on separate paths that exist to this day.
- ii. Over time, neo-evangelicals became known as evangelicals.

40. Pentecostalism

a. Overview: Pentecostalism began as a movement emphasizing the gifts of the Holy Spirit such as tongues speaking.

b. Historical development:

i. Significant players:

1. Charles Fox Parham (1873 – 1929):

- a. Emphasized the role of the Holy Spirit in the Christian life with outward signs of perfect sanctification and speaking in tongues.
- b. “Tongues” appeared on January 1, 1901 in Topeka when a student of Parham spoke in tongues.

2. William J. Seymour (1870 – 1922): founder of the Apostolic Faith Gospel Mission on Azusa Street where the work of the Holy Spirit became a rapid sensation.

ii. Significant movements:

1. 1906: The movement started in 1906 at the Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles. A three year long revival sparked the spread of Pentecostalism worldwide. As Pentecostalism spread, testimonies of Holy Spirit baptism of a “second blessing” were common. One said:

The warmth of God’s presence in that service deeply moved me, until there was a complete melting of the reserve that had held me back from a full surrender to God. . . . Spontaneously I rose to my feet, lifting my hands with a glad note of praise, “Thank God for the baptism of the Holy Spirit; praise, O praise the Lord!” . . . As this praise came from my lips, for the first time in my life I felt the physical manifestation of God’s power all through my being, and I sank to the floor. God’s day of Pentecost had come to a hungry teenager. . . . In a few moments my jaws began to tremble, and the praise that was literally flooding my soul came forth in languages I had never known.⁷⁸

2. 1960s charismatic movement among mainline denominations. Major leader in this movement is Oral Roberts.
3. 1980s “Third Wave” movement, which stresses signs and wonders and gifts of healing, prophecy, and casting out demons. Major leaders are John Wimber and his Vineyard Christian Fellowship.

- iii. Though the terms Pentecostal and Charismatic are sometimes used synonymously, historically, Pentecostal precedes Charismatic. See Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of Church History*, chart 117, for a distinction between the two movements.

c. Outcome:

- i. Pentecostal denominations exist (e.g., Assemblies of God, Church of God). Charismaticism is a movement broader than any one denomination. Charismaticism has infiltrated all major Protestant and even Roman Catholic churches.

⁷⁸ Mark Noll, *A History of Christianity in the United States and Canada* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 387.

- ii. Pentecostal/Charismatic churches predominate in the Global South/Third World.

41. Roman Catholicism: Second Vatican Council (1962 – 1965)

- a. The purpose the Second Vatican Council was to update the Church and bring it into the modern age.
- b. It was the first council called that did not have as its purpose to establish new doctrine or combat heresy.
- c. What reforms took place?
 - i. Mass was required to be in the vernacular with laity participating.
 - ii. Veneration of Mary was encouraged, “Mother of the Church.”
 - iii. The Index (the list of banned books) was eliminated.
 - iv. Great Schism of 1054 was revoked.
 - v. Religious freedom for all was upheld.
 - vi. Protestants were referred to as “separated brethren.”
 - vii. Personal reading of the Bible was encouraged.

42. Ecumenism

- a. Overview:
 - i. Ecumenical means worldwide or universal.
 - ii. Ecumenism is an attempt to bring about unity one of two ways:
 1. Spiritual unity apart from any one denomination.
 2. Organization unity of churches making up a federation of churches (e.g., World Council of Churches).
- b. Historical development:
 - i. Protestant ecumenism

1. Evangelical Alliance (1846), London.
2. Edinburgh Missionary Conference (1910): over twelve-hundred delegates around the world convened to discuss missions in the modern world. This is considered by many as the start of the modern ecumenical movement.
3. World Council of Churches (1948):
 - a. “The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”⁷⁹
 - b. The World Council of Churches has met roughly every ten years in locations all around the world.
 - c. Note: conservative Christians did not join the World Council of Churches.
 - d. Forms of Protestant ecumenism:
 - i. Denominational mergers (intraconfessional): during the 20th century, many denominations that had been split over issue like slavery re-united (e.g., United Methodist Church).
 - ii. Nondenominational cooperation: American Bible Society (1816), American Tract Society (1824), and hundreds of other “para-church” ministries.
 - iii. National confederation (interconfessional) (e.g., National Council of Churches of Christ (1951)).
 - iv. International confederation (intraconfessional) (e.g., Lutheran World Federation (1947)).
 - v. International confederation (interconfessional) (e.g., World Council of Churches (1948)).

⁷⁹ <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/about-us>.

e. Difference between Evangelical and Liberal ecumenism:⁸⁰

Evangelical	Liberal
Organism in organization	Organization/mechanical
Spirit	Structure
Organization as means to an end	Organization as end in itself
Creedal (Bible-based)	Minimal or no creed
Individual salvation	Social salvation
Individual salvation primary	Politicization to save society

ii. Roman Catholic and Protestant ecumenism

1. Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT) (1994): a document promoting *spiritual* unity between Evangelical and Catholics in order to combat the social evils of the third millennium.
2. The Manhattan Declaration (2009): a document attempting to bring unity on the issues of the sanctity of life, marriage, and religious liberty.

iii. Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox ecumenism: attempts to unite the Church of the West and East have occurred, even since the split in 1054. For more on this, see Church History, Lesson 5.

c. Evaluation: is ecumenism a good thing?

- i. In one sense, ecumenism is a good thing. It stems from the desire for the Christian Church to be truly united as one.
- ii. But how is unity achieved? Can the Christian faith be reduced to a set of non-negotiable doctrines that all Protestants (and even Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox) can agree on?
- iii. In another sense, ecumenism is not necessarily a good thing. Listen to these insightful words from the 19th century church historian Philip Schaff:

The great problem of Christian union cannot be solved by returning to a uniformity of belief and outward organization. Diversity in unity and unity in diversity is the law of God in history as well as in nature. Every aspect of truth must be allowed room for free development. Every possibility of Christian life

⁸⁰ Adapted from Cairns, *Christianity Through The Centuries*, 475.

must be realized. The past cannot be undone; history moves zig-zag, like a sailing vessel, but never backwards. The work of church history, whether Greek, Roman, Protestant, cannot be in vain. Every denomination and sect has to furnish some stones for the building of the temple of God. And out of the greatest human discord God will bring the richest concord.⁸¹

⁸¹ Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 7, 50.