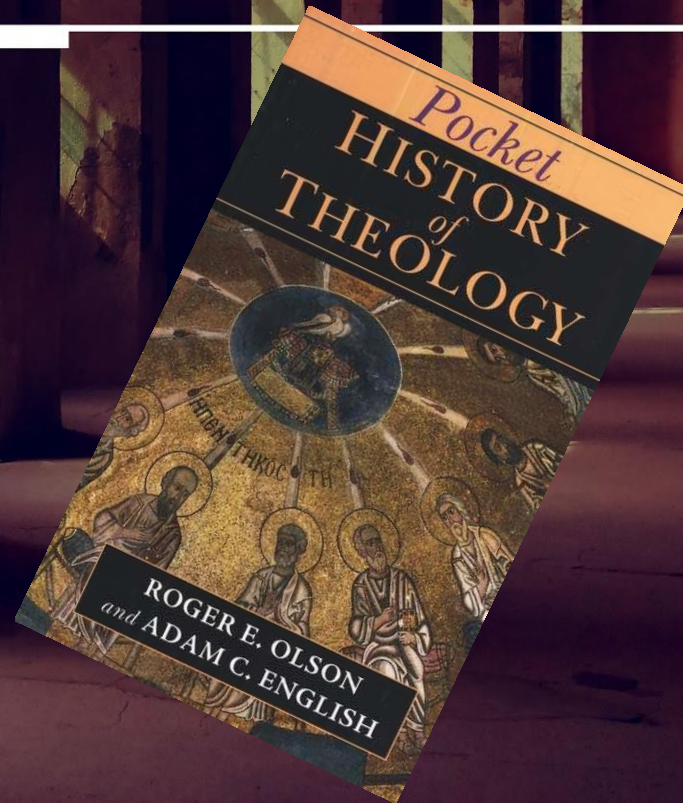


CHURCH HISTORY

13



Neo-orthodoxy

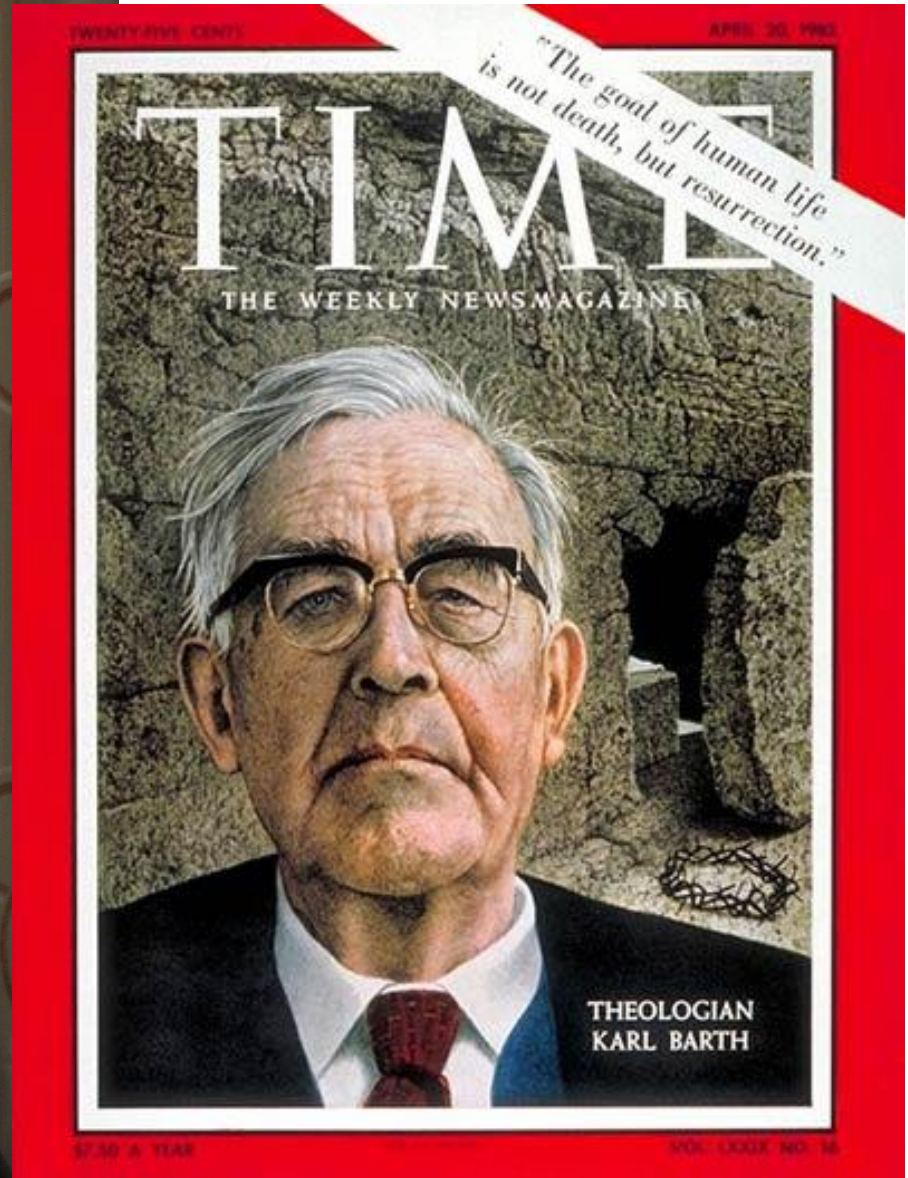
- **Karl Barth (1886-1968).**
- **Had a theological renewal studying *Romans*.**
- **Wrote his ground breaking commentary on *Romans* in 1919, which he continued to revise until 1933.**
- **Barth found liberal theology unable to speak meaningfully into the lives of average people.**
- **WWI and WWII burst the optimism of liberal theology.**

Neo-orthodoxy

- **During WWII Barth was part of the confessed church in Germany that resisted Hitler and the Nazi party.**
- **He was expelled from Germany and spent the rest of his life as a professor of theology at the University of Basel.**

Neo-orthodoxy

- Karl Barth was the most influential and prolific theologian of the 1900s.
- His unfinished *Church Dogmatics* alone runs 14 volumes, as he died before he was able to complete it.



Wikipedia

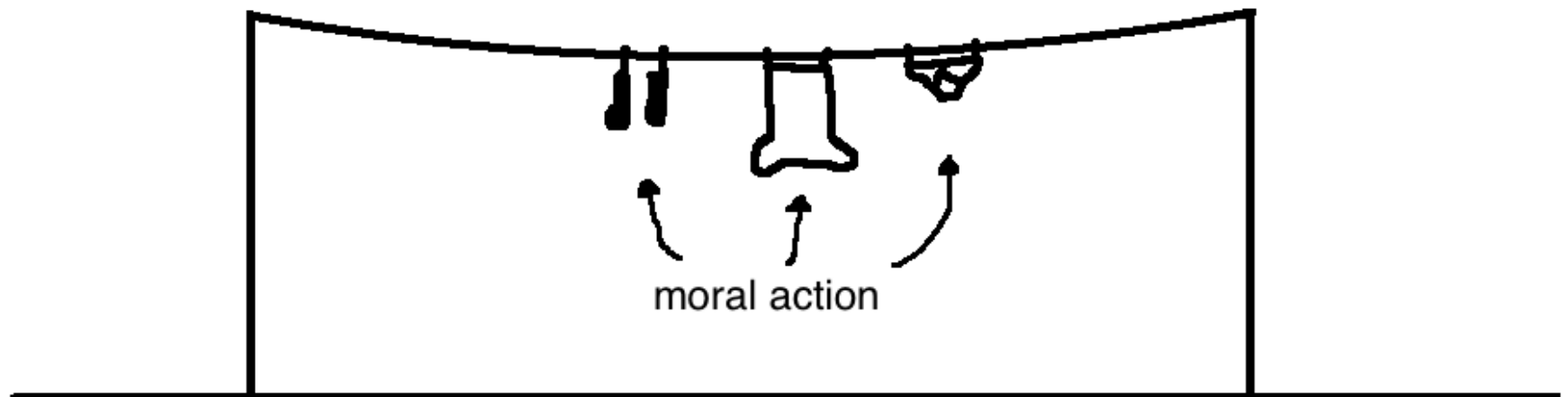
Neo-orthodoxy, in Europe also known as Theology of Crisis and Dialectical Theology, was a theological movement developed in the aftermath of the First World War. The movement was largely a reaction against doctrines of 19th-century liberal theology and a re-evaluation of the teachings of the Reformation. Karl Barth is the leading figure associated with the movement.

Neo-orthodoxy/Dialectical theology

- The word *dialectic* refers to the logical discussion of ideas through opposing forces, such as using paradox to describe an abstract thought.
- God is unknowable to humans outside of His grace and direct revelation.
- All attempts to know God through human reason are frustrated by insurmountable contradictions; thus, reason must give way to faith.

Karl Barth's Dialectical Washing Line

The poles do not touch, but the washing stays up!



Impossibility of
possessing the
mind of God

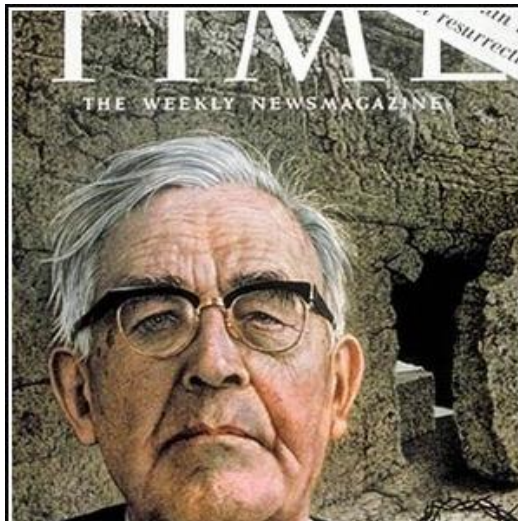
Necessity of
acting in
obedience to God

God's Revelation According to Neo-Orthodoxy

- God reveals *himself*, not merely information about himself or merely an experience of himself.
- God reveals himself specifically in Jesus Christ, not vaguely in human experience or nature.
- God's revelation in Jesus comes as an invasion into human history.
- God speaks *himself* in his Word/Jesus.

God's Revelation According to Neo-Orthodoxy

- God's revelation is not Jesus' teachings or example, but Jesus himself.
- To know Jesus is to know God.
- When Barth was once asked to sum up his theology in one sentence he answered:



Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so .

— Karl Barth —

God's Revelation According to Neo-Orthodoxy

- **The Bible is a secondary form of God's word and through it people encounter Jesus, God's true Word.**
- **The Bible is not God's word in the same sense that Jesus is God's Word, as Jesus shares in the very being of God.**
- **They reject the idea of Biblical inerrancy.**

God's Revelation According to Neo-Orthodoxy

- **The Bible is the best, but still human, testimony of Jesus.**
- **In spite of its humanness, however, it is unique because God uses it.**
- **Statements in the Bible can be wrong, but God has always used fallible and even sinful witnesses.**

God's Revelation According to Neo-Orthodoxy

- **They refuse to identify God's word with the words or propositions of scripture.**
- **They hold the Bible in high regard as a special witness to and instrument of God's Word/Jesus.**
- **This is not meant to demean the Bible, but to elevate Jesus above it.**
- **Jesus is Lord, not the Bible.**
- **"The Bible is the cradle in which Jesus lay." – Martin Luther.**

God's Revelation According to Neo-Orthodoxy

- **The proclamation/preaching of the church is the third form of God's revelation.**
- **This word/revelation is subordinate to the second word/revelation (the scripture), which is subordinate to the true Word/revelation (Jesus himself).**
- **In and through the preaching of the church, God speaks and draws people to Jesus.**

God's Revelation According to Neo-Orthodoxy

- Not all the time or in every sermon, just like not all the time in every Bible reading.
- But the church is the context for divine-human encounter in Jesus.
- Jesus in there in the preaching of the word.
- *The Second Helvetic Confession* (1561): “The preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God.”

God's Revelation According to Neo-Orthodoxy

- **God's revelation is Jesus, pointed to through the scriptures and the church preaching Christ in the scriptures.**
- **This is the sole way God reveals himself.**

“The possibility of knowledge of God lies in God's Word and nowhere else.”

God's Revelation According to Neo-Orthodoxy

- **Karl Barth denied that God revealed himself (or could be found) in “general revelation” (i.e. creation/nature, philosophical defenses, rational apologetics, personal experience or any anything else) outside of Christ.**
- **Although not all neo-orthodox theologians agreed with him in going this far.**
(i.e. Emil Brunner).

The reaction to Karl Barth and Neo-orthodoxy

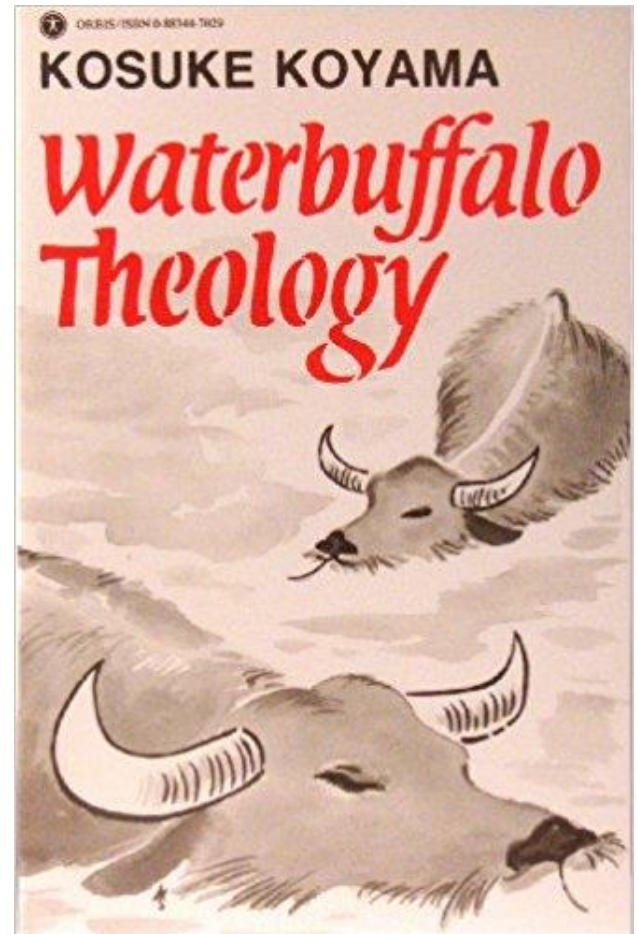
- **Barth (and neo-orthodoxy) was the bane of liberal theology's existence.**
- **But to conservatives and (especially fundamentalists) they were wolves in sheep's clothing.**
- **In much of their writing about Barth and neo-orthodoxy, both sides tend to distort the theology out of recognition.**

The reaction to Karl Barth and Neo-orthodoxy

- **Evangelicalism has been more ambivalent to Barth and neo-orthodoxy.**
- **Those closer to fundamentalism reject it.**
- **Those more progressive see them as friends and allies.**

Liberation Theology

- Started throughout the 1970s.
- It rejects universal theology and believes that all theology needs to be specific and contextualized.



Liberation Theology

- **Theology has been written by the oppressors, victors, rich, powerful and educated.**
- **Liberation theology is from the perspective of the weak and specific oppressed groups.**
- **God sides with the poor.**
- **A “theology of the cross”/“theology of suffering.”**
- **The poor and the oppressed have special insight into God’s revelation.**

Liberation Theology

- **Salvation is more than just individualistic, but includes salvation of people groups from bondage, slavery and inequality.**
- **The task of theology is to help liberate people from their struggles and to seek equality and justice.**
- **Therefore, under liberation theology many specific theologies have been written. (i.e. Black theology, Asian theology, Womanist/Feminist theology, Gay theology, etc).**