

## 18. Leaders and Movements of the 20th Century

Matthew 5:13-20, 1 Peter 3:14-16

*American Presbyterian History - Peter Bringe*

In the 20th century, much focus has been given to the doctrine of Scripture, to the work of apologetics and evangelism, and the responsibilities of Christians in culture and society.

### ***Karl Barth (1886-1968) and “Neo-Orthodoxy”***

Karl Barth was a Swiss theologian and an important founder of Neo-orthodoxy, “the new modernism.” Neo-orthodoxy taught that the Bible is not divine revelation, but is a merely human record of, or witness to, divine revelation. Barth wrote, “The Bible witnesses to a revelation from God .... The prophets and apostles are actually guilty of error in their spoken and written word” (*Church Dogmatics* pp. 507, 528, 529). Neo-orthodoxy taught that Jesus is the Word of God, and the Scripture is the witness to Jesus. It taught that God uses the Bible to create an encounter between the reader and Christ, so that in that case the Bible becomes the Word of God to you.

### ***Westminster Seminary: Cornelius Van Til (1895-1987), John Murray (1898-1975), E.J. Young (1907-1968)***

- Van Til was a Dutch-American professor of apologetics who pioneered the development of “presuppositional apologetics.”
- John Murray came from Scotland and taught systematic theology and wrote books like *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, *Principles of Conduct*, *Christian Baptism*, and his commentary on Romans (see also his 4-vol *Collected Writings*).
- E.J. Young was from California, taught Old Testament, defended an orthodox approach to Scripture and the OT, and had a speaking or reading knowledge of at least 26 languages.

### ***Meredith Kline (1922-2007)***

Kline was an OT professor at Westminster Seminary, Gordon–Conwell Seminary, and Westminster Seminary (West). He had distinctive positions on creation days (Framework Hypothesis), sabbath and law (e.g. the Lord’s Day is not the Christian Sabbath and/or part of the moral law), culture and eschatology (“Radical 2 Kingdoms”), and covenant theology (the Mosaic covenant being a “republication” of the covenant of works on some level).

I would disagree with these distinctive positions. The Mosaic covenant was an administration of the covenant of grace (Exod. 20:2, 24:6, 8, Heb. 3:19). The theocratic culture of Israel, while unique in some ways, was also to be a model to the nations (Deut. 4:6, Is. 2:3). The sabbath is a creation ordinance, part of the moral law (Gen. 2:3), and thus the Lord’s Day is the Christian sabbath. The creation week is not simply a literary device to teach Israel, but is the first historical week in which God finished his work of creation and rested.

### ***R.J. Rushdoony (1916-2001), Greg Bahnsen (1948-1995), and Christian Reconstruction***

R.J. Rushdoony was born to recently arrived Armenian refugees, fleeing genocide in their homeland.

- Began in 1944 as a missionary on the remote Shoshone reservation in northern Nevada and then as the pastor of a church in Santa Cruz, CA.
- An early champion of Van Til, he led the member of his PCUSA church into the OPC in 1958.

- He stepped down from the pulpit to devote himself to writing, and founded the Chalcedon Foundation in 1965 (later he served as the pastor of an independent church, Chalcedon Chapel) and wrote and spoke to advance what he called “Christian Reconstruction.”

Greg Bahnsen was raised in the OPC, influenced by Rushdoony, studied under Van Til at Westminster, and served as an OPC minister and scholar, mostly in southern California, until his untimely death at the age of 47. He became known for his work in presuppositional apologetics, Reformed theology, Christian worldview, theonomic ethics, and Postmillennial eschatology.

#### ***Francis Schaeffer (1912-1984) and L’Abri***

- Schaeffer was born in Germantown, PA and left the OPC with the Bible Presbyterians and served as the pastor of the First Bible Presbyterian Church of St. Louis in the 1940s.
- The Independent Board sent him to Europe. In 1955 he and his family founded L’Abri (The Shelter), where hospitality, apologetics, culture, and evangelism merged.
- By the late 1960s, Schaeffer began to publish recordings and books that flowed from this ministry, like *Escape From Reason* (1968), *The God Who Is There* (1968), *He Is There and He Is Not Silent* (1972).
- In *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* (1979) and *A Christian Manifesto* (1981) he called for Christians to bring their Christian worldview into cultural engagement, taking a stand for life (including the unborn) and against a growing totalitarianism.

#### ***D. James Kennedy (1930-2007) and Coral Ridge***

- Kennedy was converted through listening to a preacher on the radio in 1953. He was ordained in the PCUS in 1959 and served as the pastor of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale, FL from then until his death in 2007. He and the church joined the PCA in 1978.
- Evangelism Explosion (1960s)
- Coral Ridge Ministries and a weekly TV program, the Coral Ridge Hour (1970s), later adding a radio program, Truths That Transform. He is said to have been the most listened-to Presbyterian minister in the world.
- Kennedy founded a Christian school, Westminster Academy (1971) as well as Knox Seminary (1989).
- He along with others like James Dobson and Bill Bright organized Alliance Defending Freedom for the defense of religious freedom in 1994.
- In 1995, he founded the Center for Christian Statesmanship, an outreach ministry to those involved in government in DC.

#### ***R.C. Sproul (1939-2017) and Ligonier Ministries***

- R.C. Sproul III was born in Pittsburgh, PA and was converted in 1957 while attending Westminster College, a progressive Presbyterian college north of Pittsburgh.
- He attended Pittsburgh Seminary and studied under John Gerstner (1914-1996). Despite his initial resistance, he became convinced of Reformed theology through Gerstner’s instruction.
- After some further studies and academic teaching in the late 60s, he moved to Stahlstown, PA in 1971 to lead and teach at the newly established Ligonier Valley Study Center (modeled after L’Abri). This led to writing and speaking engagements. Rather than becoming a seminary professor, his calling would be to be a theologian to the people, introducing many people to Reformed theology.
- In 1975, he left the UPCUSA to join the PCA. In 1977 Ligonier launched the Tabletalk newsletter/magazine.

- In 1984, the ministry was renamed Ligonier Ministries and moved to Orlando, FL. The daily radio program, *Renewing Your Mind*, began in 1994. In 1997 he was called as the senior minister of preaching and teaching at Saint Andrew's Chapel.

### ***James Montgomery Boice (1938-2000)***

- Boice was another Pittsburgh native who also began in the UPCUSA and ended up in the PCA. After graduating from Princeton Seminary and the University of Basel, he served as the pastor of 10th Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, PA from 1968 to 2000.
- It has been said by Rick Phillips that the first part of Boice's ministry (c. 1960s-1980) focused on defending biblical inerrancy against liberalism and neo-orthodoxy, the second part (c. 1980-1993) on teaching Reformed theology in an evangelical context, and the third part on the sufficiency of Scripture for the church's evangelism, holiness, guidance, and cultural impact against the temptations of worldliness and compromise (1994-2000).
- His preaching was spread to a larger audience by the Bible Study Hour radio program. Boice founded the Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology in 1974, which has been held every year since then to the present. Boice co-founded the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals in 1994.

Boice was the chairman, and Sproul was its president, of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (1977-1988), which produced the Chicago Statement on Inerrancy in 1978. The idea for the organization had come about at a conference held by Jay Grimstead with Bahnsen, Gerstner, Geisler, and Sproul, and the council would include Schaeffer and J.I. Packer. The statement was drafted by Sproul, and worked on by a committee including Packer and Boice, and finished and approved by a group of 200 evangelical leaders.

### ***Tim Keller (1950-2023)***

- Tim Keller was born in Allentown, PA, raised in the Lutheran Church in America, and became active in InterVarsity Christian Fellowship at college. He went on to graduate from Gordon-Conwell Seminary (1975) and Westminster Seminary (1981).
- For nine years he served as the pastor of a rural PCA church in Hopewell, Va. From 1984-1989, he taught at Westminster Seminary and attended New Life Presbyterian Church (professors Ed Clowney and Harvie Conn and Pastor Jack Miller would be important influences). As New Life was moving out of the OPC to the PCA, Tim Keller moved to Manhattan in 1989 to found Redeemer Presbyterian Church (PCA).
- While many were skeptical that a confessional Presbyterian church could grow there, the church grew from 50 to 5,000 by 2008. 2008 is when he published his book, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*, to be followed by many other books. Along with D.A. Carson, he founded the Gospel Coalition in 2005.
- On the one hand, Keller was good at communicating the gospel and Calvinist theology in a understandable and winsome manner, especially to the Gen-X and Millennial generations. He also cast a positive vision for Christians to seek the good of their city, apply the faith to their vocations, and engage their culture. On the other hand, he had some weaknesses. Sometimes his emphasis on the danger of legalism and his priority of winsome evangelism led him to an imbalance or to take soft or problematic positions (e.g. on theistic evolution, "third-way" politics).

***Others who have recently passed to glory:*** G.I. Williamson (1925-2023), Leonard Coppes (1939-2024), Harry Reeder (1948-2023).