

Theological Studies

Protestant Christian Traditions (RVS Notes)

Summary Outline	3
Detailed Outline	5
Notes	15
Introduction	15
Lutherans	26
Anabaptists	36
Reformed	44
Anglicans	58
Baptists	65
Wesley-Arminian Holiness	71
Dispensationalists	82

Pentecostals and Charismatics	91
Classical Liberalism	98
Neo-Orthodoxy	109
Liberation Theology	115
Concluding Observations	123
Bibliography	128

Summary Outline

I. Introduction

- A. Protestant traditions in a fragmentary age
- B. Historic Christian orthodoxy
- C. Sources of fragmentation
- D. Seeking coherence
- E. Notes sequence

II. Lutherans

- A. Historical background
- B. Distinctive beliefs
- C. Contemporary setting
- D. Observations and concluding thoughts

III. Anabaptists

- A. Historical background
- B. Distinctive beliefs
- C. Contemporary setting
- D. Observations and concluding thoughts

IV. Reformed

- A. Historical background
- B. Distinctive beliefs
- C. Contemporary setting
- D. Observations and concluding thoughts

V. Anglicans

- A. Historical background
- B. Distinctive beliefs
- C. Contemporary setting
- D. Observations and concluding thoughts

VI. Baptists

- A. Historical background
- B. Distinctive beliefs
- C. Contemporary setting
- D. Observations and concluding thoughts

VII. Wesleyan Arminian Holiness

- A. Historical background
- B. Distinctive beliefs
- C. Contemporary setting
- D. Observations and concluding thoughts

VIII. Dispensationalists

- A. Historical background
- B. Distinctive beliefs
- C. Contemporary setting
- D. Observations and concluding thoughts

IX. Pentecostals and Charismatics

- A. Historical background
- B. Distinctive beliefs
- C. Contemporary setting
- D. Observations and concluding thoughts

X. Classical Liberalism

- A. Historical background
- B. Distinctive beliefs
- C. Contemporary setting
- D. Observations and concluding thoughts

XI. Neo-Orthodoxy

- A. Historical background
- B. Distinctive beliefs
- C. Contemporary setting
- D. Observations and concluding thoughts

XII. Liberation Theology

- A. Historical background
- B. Distinctive beliefs
- C. Contemporary setting
- D. Observations and concluding thoughts

XIII. Concluding Observations and Thoughts

- A. Fragmentation and the quest for theological coherence
- B. Candidates for coherence
 - 1. Evangelical theology
 - 2. Process thought
 - 3. Liberation thought
 - 4. Pentecostalism and eschatological hope
- C. Cacophony or Choir?

Detailed Outline

I. Introduction

A. Protestant traditions in a fragmentary age

§1-101. In general

§1-102. Shared commitments

B. Historic Christian orthodoxy

§1-201. In general

§1-202. Purpose and use of Creeds

§1-203. Apostle's Creed: statement

§1-204. Apostle's Creed: summary of meaning and significance

§1-205. Nicene Creed: statement

§1-206. Nicene Creed: summary of meaning and significance

C. Sources of fragmentation

§1-301. In general

§1-302. Monergist-synergist debate reflected in the Calvinist-Arminian divide

§1-303. Scholastic rationalism and Pietism

§1-304. Puritans and Methodists seek to revive Anglicanism

§1-305. “Enlightened” natural religion becomes the precursor of classical liberalism

§1-306. Modernist-fundamentalist divide

§1-307. Contextual theologies in a postmodern environment

D. Seeking coherence

§1-401. In general

E. Notes sequence

§1-501. In general

II. Lutherans

A. Historical background

§2-101. In general

§2-102. Luther and Melancthon

§2-103. 16th century: Lutheran controversies and doctrinal definition

§2-104. Formula of Concord and other confessional standards

§2-105. 17th century: Rationalism and Pietism

§2-106. 18th and 19th centuries: Enlightenment and the challenge of liberalism

§2-107. Lutheranism in America

§2-108. 20th century controversies

B. Distinctive beliefs

§2-201. In general

§2-202. Lutheran orthodoxy; the solas

- §2-203. Justification by faith
- §2-204. Sanctification
- §2-205. Christocentric: Theology of the cross
- §2-206. Church in Lutheran understanding; priesthood of the believer
- §2-207. Sacraments as the means of grace
- §2-208. —Baptism
- §2-209. —The Lord's Supper
- §2-210. Two kingdoms doctrine
- §2-211. Other elements of Lutheran theology
- §2-212. Protestant beliefs regarding salvation

C. Contemporary setting

- §2-301. In general; helpful chart
- §2-302. Major branches of Lutheranism in America
- §2-303. Approaches to Lutheran confessionalism
- §2-304. Approaches to Bible and Biblical interpretation
- §2-305. Worship and liturgy

D. Observations and concluding thoughts

- §2-401. In general
- §2-402. Lutheran “homeland” as the heartland of liberalism
- §2-403. Baptismal regeneration and justification by faith
- §2-404. Eucharist and the “real presence” of Christ
- §2-405. Sanctification

III. Anabaptists

A. Historical background

- §3-101. In general
- §3-102. Branches of Anabaptism
- §3-103. Swiss branch
- §3-104. Mystical-humanist branch
- §3-105. Apocalyptic branch
- §3-106. Menno Simons as Anabaptist stabilizer
- §3-107. Practice of communal discipline
- §3-108. Divisions among Anabaptists
- §3-109. Quiet of the land
- §3-110. Anabaptists in America
- §3-111. Impact of modern developments

B. Distinctive beliefs

- §3-201. In general
- §3-202. A-systemic; characteristic beliefs
- §3-203. Bible as authority
- §3-204. Church
- §3-205. Separation from the world
- §3-206. Pacifists and nonresistance

§3-207. Sacraments as ordinances

C. Contemporary setting

§3-301. In general; helpful chart

§3-302. Four branches from the three Reformation streams

§3-303. Related groups

§3-304. Distinctive lifestyle

D. Observations and concluding thoughts

§3-401. In general

§3-402. Christocentric and counter-worldly challenge

§3-403. Separatist and ingrown

IV. Reformed

A. Historical background

§4-101. In general

§4-102. Zwingli and Calvin

§4-103. Major tenets of Calvin's thought

§4-104. Later 16th century growth

§4-105. 17th century scholasticism

§4-106. Theodore Beza

§4-107. Jacob Arminius and reaction

§4-108. Synod of Dordt and Five Point Calvinism (TULIP)

§4-109. Covenant theology

§4-110. Puritans

§4-111. Westminster Confession and Catechism

§4-112. Reformed faith in early America

§4-113. 20th century: Conflict with modernism

§4-114. Princeton school and Princeton theology

§4-115. Dutch Calvinism

§4-116. 20th century: Neo-Orthodoxy and beyond

B. Distinctive beliefs

§4-201. In general

§4-202. God

§4-203. Bible

§4-204. Election and predestination

§4-205. Protestant beliefs regarding salvation

§4-206. Church and sacraments

§4-207. Worship practices

§4-208. Covenant theology

C. Contemporary setting

§4-301. In general; helpful chart

§4-302. Continental Reformed Churches

- §4-303. Congregational Churches
- §4-304. Presbyterians
- §4-305. Evangelical Anglicans
- §4-306. Reformed Baptists

D. Observations and concluding thoughts

- §4-401. In general
- §4-402. Biblical commitment—Spirit and Word, but light on the Spirit
- §4-403. Realistic assessment of human nature
- §4-404. Reformed scholasticism
- §4-405. Reducing Calvinism to T-U-L-I-P
- §4-406. Covenant theology
- §4-407. Challenge of practical theology
- §4-408. New Calvinism in evangelicalism

V. Anglicans

A. Historical background

- §5-101. In general
- §5-102. Via media; Anglican history as following the royal lines
- §5-103. 17th century turmoil and resolution
- §5-104. 18th and 19th centuries: Anglicanism in America and beyond
- §5-105. 19th century in England: Oxford movement and Latitudinarianism
- §5-106. 20th century: Fragmentation and controversy

B. Distinctive beliefs

- §5-201. In general
- §5-202. Method or ethos rather than system
- §5-203. Liturgy as central
- §5-204. Scripture, tradition, and reason
- §5-205. Church
- §5-206. Sacraments

C. Contemporary setting

- §5-301. In general; helpful chart
- §5-302. Ecumenism
- §5-303. Theological diversity
- §5-304. Evangelical Anglicans
- §5-305. Descendants of the Latitudinarians
- §5-306. High Anglicanism
- §5-307. Anglo-Catholics

D. Observations and concluding thoughts

- §5-401. In general
- §5-402. Unity and catholicity
- §5-403. Studied ambiguity or doctrinal irrelevance
- §5-404. Centrality of liturgy

VI. Baptists

A. Historical background

- §6-101. In general; origins
- §6-102. Early development
- §6-103. 17th century: Roger Williams and the emergence of Baptist distinctive
- §6-104. 18th century revivalism; Focus on religious liberty
- §6-105. 19th century: Baptist tradition flourishes
- §6-106. 19th and 20th century controversies
- §6-107. —Slavery controversy and its aftermath
- §6-108. —Modernist controversy and its aftermath
- §6-109. Calvinist/Arminian divide
- §6-110. 20th century: fragmentation

B. Distinctive beliefs

- §6-201. In general
- §6-202. Staunchly biblical; not creedal
- §6-203. Characteristic beliefs
- §6-204. Church local and universal; local autonomy
- §6-205. Ordinances, not sacraments
- §6-206. Believer's baptism as foundational

C. Contemporary setting

- §6-301. In general; helpful chart
- §6-302. Plethora of Baptist groups
- §6-303. Wrestling with liberalism; fundamentalist legacy

D. Observations and concluding thoughts

- §6-401. In general
- §6-402. Personal over confessional or ritualistic
- §6-403. Giving them Bible
- §6-404. Priesthood of the believer
- §6-405. Resistance to ecclesiastical hierarchy: pros and cons

VII. Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness

A. Historical background

- §7-101. In general

1. Development of Arminianism

- §7-102. Hardening of Reformed theology
- §7-103. Jacob Arminius' thought
- §7-104. Remonstrants and the Synod of Dordt
- §7-105. Arminianism in England; influence on Wesley
- §7-106. Later developments

2. John Wesley and Wesleyanism

- §7-111. In general; before Aldersgate
- §7-112. 18th century Awakening and organization
- §7-113. 19th century Awakening and Methodist growth
- §7-114. 20th century; impact of liberalism and contextual theologies

3. Methodism and the Holiness Movement

- §7-121. Holiness movement; cradle of Pentecostalism
- §7-122. Move Away from Wesley's Teaching
- §7-123. Synthesis of Wesleyanism and Arminianism
- §7-124. Pentecostalism

B. Distinctive beliefs

- §7-201. In general
- §7-202. Quadrilateral--sources and norms for theology
- §7-203. Anthropology
- §7-204. Justification by faith
- §7-205. Election; predestination
- §7-206. Prevenient grace
- §7-207. Protestant beliefs regarding salvation
- §7-208. Entire sanctification; Christian perfection
- §7-209. Problem of assurance

C. Contemporary setting

- §7-301. In general; helpful chart
- §7-302. Worship and liturgy
- §7-303. Various Methodist churches and Methodist-like groupings
- §7-304. Ecumenical activity

D. Observations and concluding thoughts

- §7-401. In general
- §4-402. Optimism concerning human nature
- §7-403. Tendency to theological drift
- §7-404. Earnestness for holy living
- §7-405. Assurance of salvation
- §7-406. Forefront on issues of social engagement
- §7-407. Women in ministry

I. Dispensationalism

A. Historical background

- §8-101. In general
- §8-102. Formulative era
- §8-103. Crystallization or confessional era
- §8-104. Dispensational traditionalism
- §8-105. Progressive dispensationalism

B. Distinctive beliefs

- §8-201. In general
- §8-202. Bible exposition
- §8-203. Biblical interpretation
- §8-204. Characteristic beliefs, generally
- §8-205. Dispensations
- §8-206. Israel and the Church
- §8-207. Covenants
- §8-208. Covenant Theology and Dispensationalism Compared
- §8-209. End Times teaching
- §8-210.—Futurist premillennialism

C. Contemporary setting

- §8-301. In general
- §8-302. Active in the modernist-fundamentalist controversy
- §8-303. Biblical prophecy as double-edged reality

D. Observations and concluding thoughts

- §8-401. In general
- §8-402. Literal hermeneutic
- §8-403. Ignoring portions of Scripture
- §8-404. Apocalyptic view of history
- §8-405. Lack of focus on the local church
- §8-406. Dispensational influence in America

IX. Pentecostals and Charismatics

A. Historical background

- §9-101. In general
- §9-102. Pentecostal roots
- §9-103. Movement's birth in the 20th century
- §9-104. Divisions over the normative course of sanctification
- §9-105. Trinitarian divisions
- §9-106. Problem of theological reflection
- §9-107. Charismatic movement

B. Distinctive beliefs

- §9-201. In general; Fourfold gospel
- §9-202. Teaching principles and observations
- §9-203. Baptism
- §9-204. Healing
- §9-205. Spiritual gifts
- §9-206. Speaking in tongues
- §9-207. Oneness Pentecostals

C. Contemporary setting

- §9-301. In general; helpful chart
- §9-302. Reality of racial divides in Pentecostal origins and development

D. Observations and concluding thoughts

§9-401. In general

§9-402. Pentecostal theological development; making peace with the academy

§9-403. Controversies

§9-404. Ongoing issues

X. Classical Liberalism**A. Historical background**

§10-101. In general

§10-102. Coming to terms with modern science

1. As Rooted in the Enlightenment

§10-106. In general

§10-107. Immanuel Kant

§10-108. Georg Hegel

2. As Emerging From Germany

§10-111. Schleiermacher, father of Liberalism

§10-112. Ritschl and theological agnosticism

§10-113. Comparative religions/History of religions school

§10-114. Adolf von Harnack

3. As Experienced in America

§10-116. Social gospel

§10-117. Modernism

B. Distinctive beliefs

§10-201. In general; Liberalism's views charted

§10-202. Universal fatherhood of the immanent God

§10-203. Universal brotherhood of human beings and the infinite value of the human soul

§10-204. Jesus Christ, the supreme example

§10-205. Religious authority, salvation, and the kingdom

C. Contemporary setting

§10-301. In general

§10-302. Existentialism as a carrier of post-Liberal theologizing

§10-303. Process theology as a follow-on to Liberal theologizing

§10-304. —Representatives

D. Observations and concluding thoughts

§10-401. In general

§10-402. Divine immanence over transcendence

§10-403. Lack of a doctrine of sin

§10-404. Rise of Biblical criticism

§10-405. Loss of the uniqueness of Christ; quest for the historical Jesus

§10-406. Social activism

XI. Neo-Orthodoxy

A. Historical background

§11-101. In general

§11-102. Post-Kant milieu

§11-103. Marginalization of the Bible

§11-104. Theology at loggerheads: Liberalism vs. Fundamentalism

§11-105. Neo-Orthodox reaction against liberalism

§11-106. Karl Barth

§11-107. Emil Brunner

§11-108. Reinhold Niebuhr

§11-109. Dietrich Bonhoeffer

B. Distinctive beliefs

§11-201. In general; chart on Neo-Orthodox distinctives

§11-202. Dialectic method

§11-203. God: the Wholly Other

§11-204. Revelation and encounter

§11-205. Natural theology rejected

§11-206. Christology

§11-207. Biblical realism

§11-208. Revelation in history

C. Contemporary setting

§11-301. In general

§11-302. Relation to fundamentalism

D. Observations and concluding thoughts

§11-401. Contributions

§11-402. Critique

XII. Liberation Theology

A. Historical background

§12-101. Orthodoxy versus Orthopraxis

§12-102. Moltmann's theology of hope

§12-103. Dehumanizing structures in society

§12-104. —Latin American context

§12-105. —20th century activist response

§12-106. Black Theology; origins

§12-107.—Radicalization

§12-108. Feminist Theology

§12-109. Critiquing the status quo—Hermeneutics

§12-110. —Christology and anthropology

B. Distinctive beliefs

- §12-201. In general
- §12-202. Central themes
- §12-203. God
- §12-204. Christ
- §12-205. Holy Spirit
- §12-206. Revelation
- §12-207. Salvation
- §12-208. Church

C. Contemporary setting

- §12-301. In general
- §12-302. Critique

D. Observations and concluding thoughts

- §12-401. In general
- §12-402. Hermeneutics
- §12-403. The place Marxism plays in liberation thought
- §12-404. Practice precedes reflection in liberation thought
- §12-405. Structural social issues predominant
- §12-406. Black Theology; elevation of the black experience to being the final norm
- §12-407. Feminist Theology roots authority in feminist consciousness

XIII. Concluding Observations and Thoughts

A. Fragmentation and the quest for theological coherence

- §13-101. In general
- §13-102. Watersheds among Protestants
- §13-103. Contemporary theology struggles with diversity

B. Candidates for coherence

- §13-111. In general
- §13-112. Evangelical theology
- §13-113. Process thought
- §13-114. Liberation thought
- §13-115. Eschatological hope

C. Cacophony or Choir?

- §13-121. In general

Protestant Christian Traditions

I. Introduction

A. Protestant traditions in a fragmentary age

§1-101. In general.—In this course, we will seek to examine various Protestant Christian traditions as they emerged from the time of the Reformation and afterwards. The Reformers' vision was to restore the one, true, orthodox, catholic (universal) church to its roots in the beliefs of the apostles and Church Fathers as revealed in the Scriptures. Yet a century later, the Protestant project unraveled. The Reformers separated from Rome for good reasons. Then, their theological children and grandchildren followed them in reforming by dividing.

The emergence of various Protestant denominations and groups tracks the patterns of monastic reform within the Roman Catholic Church through the medieval and early modern period. The fervent drive for reform during that era is evident in the successive establishment of various religious orders such as the Benedictines, then the Cistercians, then the Carthusians, then the Franciscans and Dominicans, then the Jesuits. The significant difference is that the monastic orders, differing as they did, nonetheless stayed within the big tent of the Roman Church, whereas the Protestants divided into separate denominations and groups.

What do we make of the various Protestant traditions in our modern day? What can we learn from the emphases that various traditions focused on? How are these various traditions faring in our highly fragmentary age? How can Protestants truly be the church in an age that desperately needs the church to be the church? How can we, in these various traditions, take seriously the Lord's high priestly prayer for unity in His followers in John 17? We will touch on these and other questions as we study.

§1-102. Shared commitments.—Before we begin examining Protestant distinctives, let us consider the substantial number of shared theological commitments among the various Protestant traditions:

- Theistic God as trinitarian reality—God is the one Creator and Lord over all, immanent in his creation and yet transcendent over it, existing eternally as a Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).
- Humans created in the image of God as well as sinners in need of salvation. That image is damaged but not destroyed in the Fall of humanity into sin.
- Humanity and deity of Jesus Christ, manifested in human history—Jesus is the eternal Son incarnate, fully God and fully human, conceived and born of the Virgin Mary.
- Saving work of Christ; Jesus died on the cross for human sin, rose bodily from the grave, ascended into heaven, and will return in glory and power to judge us all.
- Accompanying work of the Holy Spirit.
- Importance of the existence and work of the church.
- Certainty of God's ultimate victorious reign in and through Jesus Christ.

These shared areas are the fruit of two basic commitments: the authority of the Bible and the necessary

application of Biblical truth. All the Protestant traditions, in principle, place the Bible as the supreme source of truth regarding God and His kingdom program. They also view the ultimate purpose of theological endeavor as the transformation of Christian people and the empowerment of the church.

The task of theology and the beliefs held are closely connected to the reality of the Christian community. God's corporate community looms large here, whether you're thinking on the significance of confessions in Lutheranism, or the Baptist concern for the purity and autonomy of the local church, or the Anabaptist emphasis on community, or the orthodox insistence on the historicity of the faith in the midst of modern denials.

B. Historic Christian orthodoxy

§1-201. In general.—Let's pursue this idea of shared commitments a little more. Creeds of the faith attempted to state the essence of Christianity with accuracy and concision. In the early church, these statements were designed to aid in preaching and instructing catechumens. The two most extensively used formulations were Apostle's Creed and the Nicene Creed. The Apostle's Creed was in use by the 3rd century and perhaps in its present form by 7th century. The formulation and subsequent revision of the Nicene Creed were completed by the conclusion of the 4th century. As a rule of thumb, in the age of the Church Fathers, the Latin West favored Apostle's Creed while the Greek East preferred the Nicene Creed.

§1-202. Purpose and use of Creeds.—Creeds matter—

- They help Christians distinguish between essential and nonessential beliefs. Not everyone who disagrees with us is a heretic! There are any number of beliefs that we can agree to disagree. However, there are essential beliefs that must not be compromised. Creeds help to focus on what is essential and what is not essential.
- They help Christians to focus their faith and practice on issues that matter most. These can provide a unifying focus on contemporary Christian worship and teaching and a demeanor in that endeavor. In essentials unity; in nonessentials charity.
- They help Christians articulate clearly how their beliefs differ from other teaching.

§1-203. Apostle's Creed: statement.—I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and buried; He descended into hell; on the third day he arose from the dead; He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father from thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit; the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and life everlasting.

§1-204. Apostle's Creed: summary of meaning and significance.—

<i>Creed's statement</i>	<i>Summary of meaning/significance</i>
--------------------------	--

I believe in	Credo=I believe. The apostles did not write this statement. What the statement seeks to do is to preserve their teaching for the ages.
God, the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth,	God is all-powerful but also described as a personal and loving father. God created the universe and is its rightful ruler. This powerful and personal being is the creator who is distinct from His creation. We will see how important this distinction is as we navigate the vicissitudes of faith through the ages.
And in Jesus Christ, His only Son,	Believing in God also entails believing in Jesus, the Father's unique Son. Jesus is not just another human being. The God-man is unique and that reality goes to the essence of the Christian faith.
Our Lord;	Only Jesus is Lord, not another king or ruler. The early Christians got into hot water for holding to this belief. As Lord, He deserves our worship and praise, our allegiance and devotion.
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary.	Jesus' miraculous birth by the Spirit did not compromise His humanity. This belief is attacked by moderns and seen as something a rational person cannot accept. However, Jesus, the God-man is the heart of the historic Christian faith.
Suffered under Pontius Pilate	Pilate is mentioned not to blame the Romans for Jesus' death, but to date a historical event. The early Christians vigorously proclaimed the historicity of the events of Jesus's life. They would have looked askance at distinctions between the "Christ of faith" and the "historical Jesus."
Was crucified, died, and buried	The Creed then moves immediately to His sacrificial death on our behalf as the centerpiece of His earthly ministry. These events really happened. There is no evidence that they were staged or fabricated by the apostles, who later died for their beliefs. Jesus' death was a horrific necessity for our sins.
He descended into hell;	A reference to an event cited by 1 Pt. 3:18-19? The meaning of this phrase is debated.
On the third day He arose from the dead;	Jesus' Resurrection is a foundational belief. It points to the fulfillment of God's gracious activity for humanity and a hope for all believers to be raised. The Christian faith is rooted in space and time. To dismiss its historical rootedness is not a matter of discarding the husk and keeping the essential part of the faith, but of losing the essential part of faith altogether. Jesus did rise. He conquered death, the first fruits of his brethren. We will rise again and are destined for the glory we will share with Him.
He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father	The right hand is a position of authority and a locale of advocacy for His own. We have an advocate who can and does sympathize with our weaknesses and the vicissitudes of our human condition.
From thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.	The cross precedes the crown in God's saving purpose. The First Coming is as a suffering servant; the Second Coming is as creation's rightful ruler and judge.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,	The promised Spirit is God's come-along-side presence in our midst. He comes as comforter, guide, teacher, equipper, and advocate. The ministry of the Holy Spirit has been a subject of debate among God's earthly pilgrims.
The holy, catholic church	The Church is the called-out people of God. It is a set apart people from the entire world (catholic = universal) and throughout time. There is an against-the-world, for-the-world aspect to this called out people that will be a subject of debate through the ages.
The communion of saints	There is a oneness to this group: the same Spirit; the same Lord; the same faith; the same initiation into this one group. The multifaceted manifestation of this communion in our modern world has been a continuing matter of concern.
The forgiveness of sins	Jesus has reconciled us to God, freeing us from the penalty of sin and death. “What language can I borrow to thank Thee dearest Friend; For this Thy dying sorrow, Thy mercy without end. Oh, make me Thine forever, and should I fainting be; Let me never, oh no, never, outlive my love for Thee.”
The resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.	A new life, a new body, a new creation, a new forever reality. Our faith informs us that the grave is not our destination, albeit part of the journey for most of us. Our destination is glory!

§1-205. Nicene Creed: statement.—“I believe in one God the Father Almighty; Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

“And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried; and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and he shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

“And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified; who spoke by the Prophets, and one holy catholic and apostolic church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.”

§1-206. Nicene Creed: summary of meaning and significance.—

<i>Creed statement</i>	<i>Meaning/significance</i>
I believe in one God the Father Almighty; Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.	God is one, unique, personal, all-powerful, and the creator who is distinct from His creation.
And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten	Note the affirmations of Jesus' person:

Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made;	* Lord of all; * unique Sonship; * same divine essence as the Father; * one in substance, but distinct in person; * creator of all things.
who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried; and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and he shall come again, with glory, to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.	* Both Jesus' divinity and humanity are emphasized; * The historicity of key events (miraculous birth; crucifixion, death and burial, resurrection, and ascension) are underlined; * The right hand emphasizes his authority and places him in a position to intercede; * The Second coming will be in power to judge and rule, whereas the first was in humility to redemptively suffer; * His eternal kingdom is the believer's glorious hope and destination.
And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father [and the Son], who with the Father [and the Son together] is worshiped and glorified; who spake by the prophets,	* The Trinity is affirmed; * The Holy Spirit is fully divine, a distinct person within the Godhead; * The Spirit's person and procession is emphasized; His ministry role specified; * In the 6th century, the Western church added “and the Son” (in brackets in the text to the left). This contributed to the rift between the western and eastern churches that culminated in the divide between Rome and Orthodoxy in 1054.
and one holy catholic and apostolic church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.	* The unity of all believers in a universal body based on the apostolic tradition is emphasized; * Believer's hope ends the creed—remission of sins, resurrection from the dead, and everlasting life.

C. Sources of fragmentation

§1-301. In general.—Through the course of the 16th century, Lutheran, Reformed, and Anglican theologians stood pretty much together theologically despite bickering over sacraments and church polity. However, the 17th century and beyond opened serious cracks between and within Protestant faiths:

- Monergists versus synergists as illustrated in the Calvinist-Arminian divide. This divide introduced a form of Protestant synergism and free will into the orbit of Protestant orthodoxy.
- Scholastic rationalists-Pietists divide first within Lutheranism and then spreading to other Protestant groups. This reflected the head-heart divisions so evident in the emergence of Catholic mysticism in the Late Middle Ages.
- Anglicans-Puritans; Anglicans-Methodists divide. This divide encompassed both monergist

versus synergist and head versus heart within the Anglican tradition. This divide had particular importance in the early phases of American Christianity.

- In the late 17th and into the 18th centuries, Enlightenment's version of faith (Deism or natural religion) gave rise to a whole new religious thought that was the forerunner of classical liberalism of the 19th century.
- Modernist-fundamentalist divide—This was a divide over transcendence versus immanence of God, His perfection of being versus His becoming as an evolutionary process, the divinity of Jesus Christ, and the historicity of the events foundational to Christianity. This divide also went to the authority of the Bible and the place and function of reason.
- Human situations as the source and end of religious reflection and the denial of the possibility of an encompassing revelation of God. These “contextual” theologies appeared in the latter part of the 20th century.

We will consider these briefly in the sections that follow and elaborate on them throughout these Notes.

§1-302. Monergist-synergist debate reflected in the Calvinist-Arminian divide.—Monergism is the view which holds that God works to bring about an individual's salvation through spiritual regeneration, regardless of the individual's cooperation. For salvation to be completely of grace, monergists argue that the gift of salvation must not be freely or contingently received. If a person receiving the grace unto salvation could do otherwise, then in accepting that grace the person would be doing something as part of salvation coming to him or her and salvation would not be entirely of God's grace. It is most often associated with the Reformed tradition and its doctrine of irresistible grace, and particularly with historical doctrinal differences between Calvinism and Arminianism. Monergism contrasts with Arminian synergism, the belief that God and individuals cooperate to bring individuals salvation.

The immediate successors to the founding reformers fell back into the kind of scholastic thinking that emphasized philosophy and logic and sought to fill out Reformation teaching and construct highly coherent systems of doctrine. This was an era described as Protestant scholasticism. Theodore Beza and other Calvinists formulated a hyper-Calvinistic system known as supralapsarianism and devised and promoted the idea of the limited atonement. Speculation about the divine ordering of the decrees overshadowed biblical exegesis in this type of thinking.

Arminius and his followers reacted to the “hardening of the categories” that characterized Reformed scholastics. They wanted to correct Reformed thinking by moving off the monergistic track to the track of evangelical synergism. Arminius saw himself as a faithful Reformed Protestant who disagreed with conclusions of scholastic Calvinism. Calvinists of that day equated the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith with monergism and equated synergism with Roman Catholic doctrine. Monergists assume that any form of synergism (God and human cooperation) constitutes a denial of the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Arminius affirmed that he did hold to justification by grace alone and by faith alone. He went further. He asserted that scholastic Calvinism was contrary to the gospel of God in that it treated people as saved or not saved completely apart from their being sinners or believers. In the high Calvinist set of decrees, people are saved or damned in the first decree, even before the decree to create or to allow the Fall. Arminius thought this injurious to God's glory and justice. It was repugnant to God's loving nature and to human freedom. He also thought the typical

Calvinist order of God's decrees made God the author of sin.

The Synod of Dordt (1618-1619) condemned Arminianism. The Synod affirmed the doctrinal consensus of the day often characterized by the acrostic T-U-L-I-P (total depravity; unconditional election; limited atonement; irresistible grace; perseverance of the saints). Arminius' followers affirmed total depravity but thought that God's prevenient grace (the grace that goes before) enabled all humanity to respond to the gospel. They thought election was conditional and dependent on God's foreknowledge of what people would do with the gospel offer. Thus, the atonement was unlimited, even though redemption was limited to those who chose freely to believe. Grace was resistible and people could renounce the faith and fail to persevere.

Arminianism was suppressed and marginalized in the country of its birth (Holland) but made its greatest impact in England where many Anglican leaders first sympathized with it and then openly espoused it. It became a permanent option within the Anglican tradition. In the 18th century, an era of rationalism and revival in England, Arminianism divided into two types—Arminianism of the head (which went in the direction of deism) and Arminianism of the heart (which went in the direction of Pietism and revival). The early Methodists and many Baptists represent the latter version of Arminianism. The deists of the 18th century and the classical liberals of the 19th century represent the former version of Arminianism.

§1-303. Scholastic rationalism and Pietism.—Pietism is a historical movement that arose in the 17th and 18th centuries that sought to renew confessional Lutheranism and complete the Reformation begun by Martin Luther. The reformation of doctrine must lead to a reformation of life. What confessional Lutheranism neglected was the experiential side of Christian salvation and a focus on a distinctive Christian lifestyle.

Just as Arminianism was a reaction to the aridity of Reformed scholasticism, Pietism was a reaction to confessional Lutheran orthodoxy. After Luther, Lutheran orthodoxy took a scholastic and rationalistic turn. In addition, there was a rise in the polemical approach to teaching and preaching. Pietism arose to counter this dead and argumentative orthodoxy. Pietism also reacted to the tendency of 17th century scholastics to equate authentic Christianity with assent to correct doctrine. They emphasized what they regarded as the neglected component of Protestant thinking on salvation—what they called “conversional piety,” a focus on the experience of regeneration and sanctification. The movement had four hallmarks:

- First was a focus on inward, experiential Christianity or “conversional piety.” Christian piety (devotion, discipline, sanctification) began with a conversion experience that was not identical with baptism.
- Second hallmark was tolerant, peaceable Christianity. The early Pietists were critical with harsh polemics and theological heresy hunting. Their rallying call was “in necessary things, truth, in things not necessary, unity, in all things, love”.
- The third hallmark was visible Christianity. Faith must be apparent in a converted person's lifestyle. Regeneration should instill in the convert a “complete existential reorientation” of life exhibiting a new pattern for living. Small accountability groups characterized the “heart Christianity” of Pietism. In addition, Pietists called for daily quiet times of prayer, Bible reading, and meditation.

- Fourth was a focus on active Christianity. Pietists believed that authentic Christianity should make a difference in society. Lives changed, a church renewed, a nation [Germany] reformed, and a world evangelized was the goal. Early Pietists abounded in charitable activities in education, health care, relief for the poor, and evangelism and missions.

Lutheran confessionalists opposed Pietism as fanatical and even heretical. Pietism seemed subjective, individualistic, and other-worldly. But slowly Pietism penetrated major Protestant denominations. Its greatest impact was in North American Protestantism where it became a major influence in Protestantism, overshadowing sacramentalism, confessionalism, and liturgical traditionalism. Its concrete legacy was in the development of devotional literature and gospel music.

§1-304. Puritans and Methodists seek to revive Anglicanism.—Puritanism and Methodism arose in the Church of England as two post-Reformation renewal and reform movements attempting to alter the Anglican character. The Puritans pursued their vision of covenant theology, the pure church, and a Christianized society. The Methodists charted a course of renewal that emphasized the experience of conversion and the ideal of Christian perfection. Puritanism was a form of Calvinism with an emphasis on what the Pietists called “conversional piety,” while Methodism carried that same evangelical flavor from the Arminian side of the theological ledger. Both started as reform movements within Anglicanism, and both eventually separated from it.

Besides Calvinism, three things characterized the Puritans:

- The ideal of the pure church, which meant ridding Anglicanism of the visages of Roman Catholicism in liturgy and practice and cleansing the main church of membership of unbelievers;
- Second characteristic was the covenant relationship between God and the elect. There was a tension in the covenant of grace—God had established a conditional covenant with humanity that requires free and voluntary assent and participation, but only those whom He has eternally chosen and irresistibly called can fulfill it. For the Puritans to perceive a fellow sojourner to “be in the covenant” they had to demonstrate their sincere conversion and growth in sanctification (by displaying “signs of grace”);
- Third was the ideal of a Christianized society. New England Puritans implemented a “kingdom now theology.” There was a purist and judgmental side to this earnest effort to create God's kingdom on New England soil. However, Puritan optimism and activism fueled later non-Puritan efforts at mission and social transformation and deeply imbued the American psyche with a belief in the country's higher calling.

Jonathan Edwards was perhaps the last and greatest of the Puritans. His thinking was a hybrid of Calvinism and Pietism. His emphases included:

- God's sovereignty, majesty, glory, and power;
- Human depravity and humanity bondage in sin;
- His idea of religious affections going to the core of the human personality out of which identity and action flows. Instead of mind, will, or heart, Edwards suggested that religious affections determined a person's beliefs and choices.

While Edwards placed God's glory at the center of his preaching and teaching, Wesley placed God's love there. Wesley made two significant contributions to the story of Protestant theology:

- While affirming *sola scriptura*, he also developed a view of authority for faith and practice known as the Wesleyan quadrilateral.
- While affirming *sola gratia* and *sola fide*, he also emphasized the real possibility of Christian perfection of entire sanctification. Wesley felt that the experiential side of Christian initiation and growth in salvation was lacking and needed practical implementation and emphasis.

Modern American evangelical Christianity is framed by the legacies of Puritanism and Methodism:

- First, evangelical theology and life are doctrinally conservative in that it seeks to preserve and maintain the classical Christian doctrines of the church fathers and reformers. There is a resistance both to impulses to extended doctrinal rationalism seen in Protestant scholasticism and to overt cultural accommodation in classical liberalism.
- Second, is the desire for “orthodoxy on fire.” Mere assent to correct doctrine does not make a real Christian. Both Edwards and Wesley rejected sacramentalism, confessionalism, and religious rationalism in favor of “conversional piety.”

§1-305. “Enlightened” natural religion becomes the precursor of classical liberalism.—The Deists or the proponents of natural religion emphasized the authority of reason in all matters. They dreamed of a universal, reasonable religion that would overcome sectarian strife, all superstition and irrational belief, and arbitrary authority which would usher in age of reason, enlightenment, and toleration. Deism or natural religion was the precursor of liberal Protestantism of the 19th and 20th centuries.

At its most basic level, Deism's impact on Protestant theology had to do with its view of religious authority. Protestant orthodoxy may have started with Word and Spirit but it increasingly emphasized the Word only and understood authority as residing in biblical truth claims and in their inner coherence. Deism challenged this. Its disillusionment grew out of the religious wars of the 16th and 17th century with each side dogmatically proclaiming its inherent “rightness”. It also grew out of an adherence to reason as the supreme authority, a legacy of the Enlightenment. This legacy focused on three central ideas:

- The power of reason to discover the truth about humanity and the world;
- Skepticism toward the institutions and traditions of the past;
- Emergence of a scientific way of thinking that claimed an all-encompassing way of acquiring knowledge quite different from what went before it.

Common ideas of deists and adherents to natural religion were:

- Authentic Christianity is completely consistent with reasonable, universally accessible natural religion and morality;
- True Christianity (and all true religion for that matter) is primarily about social and individual morality;
- Intelligent, enlightened people ought to be skeptical of all claims of supernatural revelations and miracles.

The original ideal of deists was the transformation of Christianity into a universal natural religion of pure reason. Its influence is evident in what is described as American civil religion, but particularly in the rise of classical liberalism of the 19th century.

§1-306. Modernist-fundamentalist divide.—At the dawn of the 20th century, liberal Protestant

theology was triumphantly proclaiming itself a new kind of Christian theology for the new century announcing itself in works like von Harnack's *What is Christianity*. The two basic tenets of liberal theology were:

- the necessity of reconstructing Christian thought considering modern culture, philosophy, and science; and
- the necessity of discovering Christianity's true essence apart from layers of traditional dogma that were either no longer relevant or believable considering modern thought.

Reactions to this came from fundamentalism and neo-orthodoxy. The fundamentalists were committed to an intense form of orthodox traditionalism that vehemently opposed modernism. They placed a strong emphasis on the inerrancy of the Bible, the historicity of the biblical record, and the falseness of sophisticated skepticism, evolutionary science, and modern philosophy.

Neo-orthodoxy also opposed classical liberalism. They were willing to adjust some aspects of Christianity to modern thought, but they believed that liberalism had accommodated modernity too radically. H. Richard Niebuhr famously characterized this liberal accommodation: “A God without wrath brought [people] without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of Christ without a cross.”

Each of the traditions we will examine had their version of the liberal-conservative divide over the impact of modernity on faith. The result was a fraying of Protestant traditions within the various traditions as well as between them.

§1-307. Contextual theologies in a postmodern environment.—In the final decades of the 20th century, new “special interest theologies” sprang up. Various contextual, liberation theologies populate the landscape of the late 20th century: black theology, feminist theology, Latin liberation theology among others.

In the 1970s, groups of people in North and South America, seeing themselves as socially, economically, or politically oppressed, began to develop these theologies of liberation. In North America, black theologians focused on the problem of racism and interpreted salvation as including (some would say as in being equivalent to) the liberation of African Americans from racial prejudice and exclusion. In addition, in the 1970s and 1980s, North American feminist theologians focused on the problem of sexism and patriarchy in both church and society. In Latin America, both Catholic and Protestant theologians began reflecting on extreme poverty and economic injustice. They increasingly interpreted salvation as abolishing structural poverty and unjust political orders.

All these liberation thinkers asserted that God is on the side of the oppressed and the downtrodden and that people seeking salvation cannot remain neutral in the situation of racial, sexual, or economic oppression. They also have several common traits:

- They agree that theology is not about universally applicable salvation nor can it be socially and political neutral. Theology must be contextualized in every socio-cultural situation and made concrete (here and now reforms) that show forth justice in specific situations. Theology is not so much concerned with orthodoxy (right doctrine) but orthopraxy (right action). They tend to think of theology in historical and social ways and not individually. In this, they have a strong kinship with yesteryear's social gospel movement.

- Secondly, they agree that God is on the side of the oppressed and that the oppressed have special insight into God's will (the epistemological privilege of the poor).
- Third, they agree that Christian mission includes participation by churches in political activism in liberation causes, whether from racism, sexism, or economic, social, and political oppression.

These “contextual theologies” have played out in each of the Protestant traditions we will be examining. These theologies have radically shifted the conceptual focus of theology away from a self-revelation of God to those created in His image and enabled by Him to understand that revelation. The shift is to an endeavor beginning and ending with the human situations of those engaging in “theological” reflection.

D. Seeking coherence

§1-401. In general.—At his inaugural in March 1861, Abraham Lincoln spoke these words: “We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battle-field, and patriot grave, to every living heart and hearthstone, all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.”

He spoke to a nation on the verge of a cataclysmic civil war, urging everyone to step back from the abyss. We speak in a different context and with a different purpose, but there are some telling similarities. The centripetal forces of our age seem all out of proportion to the centrifugal forces both in our national politics and in our faith commitments. These Notes are an attempt to examine our calling as the Church of Christ in a calmer and more generous intellectual environment. A prior perspective is necessary to properly contextualize our divisions and differences.

E. Notes sequence

§1-501. In general.—In these Notes, we will examine the various Protestant traditions in the order in which they historically emerged. We will examine the historical background of the emergence and growth of each tradition, its distinctive beliefs, its contemporary setting, and conclude with our observations and general comments.

II. Lutherans

A. Historical background

§2-101. In general.—Some years ago, the Roman Catholic Church entered into ecumenical dialogue with Lutherans. At one such dialogue event, a Catholic priest in St. Louis welcomed a group of Lutherans who were meeting in a Catholic cathedral made available to them: “We are pleased to provide this cathedral for your use. But please, please do not nail anything to the doors this time.” The reference was to Martin Luther’s posting the 95 Theses to the door of the Cathedral Church at Wittenberg, the most well-known event of the Protestant Reformation.

Observers speak of various events, all involving Luther, as starting points for Lutheranism:

- The posting of the 95 Theses on the door of Wittenberg Chapel on October 31, 1517;
- Luther’s “tower experience” sometime between 1514 and 1518;
- Luther’s “here I stand, I can do no other” stance at Worms and his subsequent excommunication in 1520-21;
- Ratification of the Augsburg Confession in 1530.

Whatever event, Luther (1483-1546) is the originating figure of the Lutheran tradition. The initial confrontations with the Church involved the selling of indulgences, but soon more fundamental differences emerged:

- His understanding of salvation (by faith alone) and the Christian life; and
- His understanding of the authority of Scripture.
- His understanding of the Church, its authority, and the priesthood of the believer.

Luther debated Johannes Eck (1486-1543) at Leipzig in 1519 and by the time the debates concluded, Luther’s differences with Rome were irreconcilable. The Pope ordered Luther to recant and in December 1520, Luther burned the papal disciplinary documents. The debates and controversies following Luther’s excommunication culminated in two catechisms he published in 1529 and the *Augsburg Confession* in 1530. Next to the Bible, Luther’s *Small Catechism*, and the *Augsburg Confession* are the most widely recognized and authoritative Lutheran sources.

§2-102. Luther and Melancthon.—Luther is the father of Lutheranism and the father of Protestantism. His early treatises (*Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, and *The Freedom of a Christian*), all written in 1520, framed his early challenge to the Church. He denied the doctrine of transubstantiation associated with the Eucharist, denied that the clergy had any special powers or status, and denied the Pope’s right to rule the church. Luther rejected the sacramental status of all but two sacraments: Baptism and the Eucharist. He argued for salvation by grace alone, the supreme authority of the Bible for church doctrine and practice, the priesthood of the believer, and the clarity or perspicuity of the biblical text (e.g. that its basic message can be understood by a regular person using the regular tools of study).

Philip Melancthon (1497-1560) was the second major figure of the Lutheran Reformation. Luther was the “reformer of Germany” and “Melancthon was “the teacher of Germany.” His fame as a teacher spread throughout Europe, although he was never ordained or ever pastored a church. Luther was

captivated by Melancthon's scholarship and once stated that he preferred the books of “Master Philippus” to his own. Luther was rough and combative, undergoing violent spiritual struggles. Melancthon was a mild-mannered man of studious temperament. He was raised in a pious atmosphere, revered the church, and sought to be a reconciling influence.

§2-103. 16th century: Lutheran controversies and doctrinal definition.—After 1530, the Lutheran movement was troubled by intramural controversies and, by the end of the 16th century, there were three groups vying to lead the movement:

- Gnesio (Genuine) Lutherans, who viewed themselves preserving the pure teachings of Luther;
- Philippists, the more conciliatory followers of Philip Melancthon; and
- A moderating group led by Martin Chemnitz (1522-1586).

The 16th century witnessed a series of Lutheran controversies:

- Antinomian controversy dealt with what role the Old Testament played in the lives of New Testament Christians. Luther and Melancthon affirmed that there was a place for law; John Agricola (1494-1566) disagreed.
- Adiaphorist controversy dealt with what was essential to salvation and what was not (adiaphora=not essential). Non-essential matters should entail significant measures of freedom. Melancthon thought that liturgical ceremonies and ecclesiastical structures were adiaphora while Flacius (1520-1575) and the Gnesio Lutherans did not.
- Osiandrian controversy was prompted by Osiander's (1498-1552) view of justification as “the indwelling of Christ's essential nature” in the believer rather than the Gnesio Lutheran view of justification from “the forensic application of Christ's righteousness” grasped through faith and obedience. The Osiandrian view of justification looked too much like that of Roman Catholicism and caused quite a stir among conservative Lutherans.
- Majoristic controversy which pitted George Major's (1502-1574) view that good works are necessary for salvation as a complement to faith against the Gnesio Lutherans, Armsdorf (1483-1565) and Flacius, who asserted that a focus on good works are harmful to a proper understanding of salvation.
- Crypto-Calvinist controversy where a Philippist was accused by a Gnesio Lutheran of denying the “real presence” of Christ in the Lord's Supper. It is difficult for moderns to understand why the manner of Christ's presence in the Eucharist caused such a divide between Lutheran and Reformed groups.
- Synergistic controversy raised the issue of the relationship of divine providence and human freedom when the Gnesio Lutherans accused the Philippists of giving too much credence to human ability in salvation. This controversy will have its parallel in the Reformed tradition in the Calvinist-Arminian divide of the next century.

§2-104. Formula of Concord and other confessional standards.—The Formula of Concord (1577), drafted under the leadership of Chemnitz, addressed the issues raised in these controversies and others as well. It helped preserve unity in the Lutheran movement and marked a passage to Lutheran orthodoxy. In 1580, the *Book of Concord* (also known as *Concordia*) was produced. It contains three ecumenical creeds (Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian creeds), Luther's Small and Large Catechism (1529), the Augsburg Confession (1530), The Formula of Concord (1577), and other works penned by Luther and Melancthon.

§2-105. 17th century: Rationalism and Pietism.—The 17th century was a period of Lutheran scholasticism. Chemnitz responded to the Roman Catholic Council of Trent, Garhard (1582-1637) produced a nine-volume theology, and, not to be outdone, Colov (1612-1686) produced a twelve-volume treatise. Correct Lutheran teaching was detailed and erroneous teaching by Roman Catholicism, Calvinism, and Arminianism was excoriated.

In the later part of the 17th century, Pietism emerged in reaction to this rationally-oriented expression of the Lutheran faith. Under Spener (1635-1705), Francke (1663-1727), and Zinzendorf (1700-1760), Pietism called on Lutherans to be less concerned with doctrinal details and more concerned about living the Christian life. Practical Bible study and the demonstration of Christian charity was more important than winning theological battles.

§2-106. 18th and 19th centuries: Enlightenment and the challenge of liberalism.—In the 18th and 19th centuries, many Lutherans embraced Enlightenment principles and followed such classical liberals as Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834). However, rank and file Lutherans stayed anchored in confessional Lutheranism or the warmer spirituality of Pietism. 19th century Lutheran thought began to reflect classical liberalism with its theories of historical development, practices of biblical and historical criticism, and its emphasis on personal subjective experience.

Rationalist philosophers from France and England had an enormous impact during the 18th century, as did German rationalists such as Gottfried Leibnitz and Immanuel Kant. Their work led to an increase in rationalist beliefs, at the expense of faith in God and agreement with the Bible. Dissenting Lutheran pastors were reprimanded by the government bureaucracy overseeing them. For example, whenever they tried to correct rationalist influences in the parish school, they were rebuffed. As a result of the impact of a local form of rationalism, by the latter half of the 18th century, earnest piety was found almost solely in small Pietist conventicles or small groups. However, dedicated laity preserved Lutheran orthodoxy from both Pietism and rationalism through reusing old catechisms, hymnbooks, and devotional writings.

A lay led movement of revival known as the *Erweckung*, or *Awakening* began in reaction to these developments. This coincided with the Second Great Awakening in America. In 1806, Napoleon's invasion of Germany promoted rationalism and angered German Lutherans. It stirred up a desire among the people to preserve Luther's theology from the rationalist threat. Those associated with this *Awakening* held that reason was insufficient and pointed out the importance of emotional religious experience. Small groups sprang up, often in universities, which devoted themselves to Bible study, reading devotional writings, and revival meetings. Around 1830, the emphasis of the *Awakening* shifted away from experience to restoring the traditional liturgy, doctrine, and confessions of the Lutheran church in the Neo-Lutheran movement. This *Awakening* swept through much of Scandinavia.

§2-107. Lutheranism in America.—Many Lutherans who migrated to America settled in Pennsylvania. Henry Ehrenberg (1711-1787) was the founding leader of Lutheranism in America, blending Lutheran orthodoxy and Pietism. Through the 18th century and the early part of the 19th century, Lutheranism in America grew along ethnic lines. In the late 19th century, there was a re-emphasis on confessionalism led by Walter (1811-1887), who was responsible for the formation the staunchly conservative Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

§2-108. 20th century controversies.—The 20th century witnessed controversies pitting Neo-Lutherans, who sought to adapt Lutheranism to the American context and old Lutherans who emphasized strict adherence to the Lutheran confessions of European origin.

B. Distinctive beliefs

§2-201. In general.—Lutheran churches are confessional churches. They define themselves by written confessions, rather than organizational structures or liturgical ceremonies. The guiding principles of the Lutheran reformation was the affirmation of Scripture as the supreme source and authority for theology and the affirmation of justification by grace through faith.

§2-202. Lutheran orthodoxy; the solas—These principles are embodied in the “solas” of Lutheran theology—*sola scriptura*, *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, *solus Christus*, and *solus deo gloria*. The *sola scriptura* principle means that in approaching the Scriptures the experience of the interpreter and the use of reason should not be used against the plain meaning or sense of the text. Tradition in the form of the Lutheran confessions play a significant role in doing theology. Scripture is authoritative because it is the Word of God. Confessions are authoritative because they expound the teaching of Scripture. The authority of the confessions is derivative—from Scripture. For Lutherans, theology is confessional theology. Confessions communicate the beliefs and principles that guide the church.

In addition to a commitment to a confessional interpretative framework, there are other principles of Lutheran biblical interpretation:

- **Literal sense**—The interpreter of Scripture is to discern the intended sense or meaning in the text itself, taking account of its historical setting. Texts are not to be interpreted figuratively or metaphorically unless there are compelling reasons to do so.
- **Rule of faith**—Scripture interprets Scripture. The clearer passages guide the interpretation of those less clear passages. Given the Lutheran focus on justification, Pauline texts play a definitive role in Lutheran application of the rule of faith. Paul's understanding of the grace of God is a central interpretative key for the meaning of the whole of Scripture.
- **Law-gospel distinction**—Lutherans divide the Scripture into two major topics: the law and God's gracious promises in the gospel. This is the hermeneutical key to proper biblical interpretation.

§2-203. Justification by faith.—Lutherans understand this as the doctrine by which the church stands or falls. In justification, God counts the sinner as righteous. He takes away the condemnation we deserve and attributes to us Christ's perfect merit. Christ's righteousness is imputed to us. This is both a judicial and re-creative act. It makes us righteous as it pronounces us righteous. This includes within it the three *solas* listed above: *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, and (implicitly) *solus Christus*. *Sola gratia* means that we are justified by grace alone (Rom. 3:24ff). This God does for Christ's sake. Grace is not something we merit but is bestowed by the divine will mediated through the person and work of Christ alone (*solus Christus*). We are justified by faith alone (*sola fide*) (Gal. 3:16, 22ff). Enabled by the Holy Spirit, we respond to God's gift of justification and reconciliation with complete receptivity. This faith is not a human work (Rom. 4:5; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:8-10).

§2-204. Sanctification.—The idea of “at once justified and a sinner” is central to Lutheran understanding of sanctification. Lutherans disavow any form of perfectionism. The moral life of an

individual is a life lived *coram deo* (before or in the presence of God). The dynamic of a relationship with God in the ambiguity of life on earth is always morally accountable but never perfect. While people are saved by faith alone, the faith that saves is never alone. Conversion effects a genuine change of heart and true justification naturally leads to a progressive sanctification. Salvation is always and only from God. The one who perseveres does so only by faith. Lutherans do think that it is possible to fall away from faith and to finally apostatize.

§2-205'. Christocentric: Theology of the cross.—Luther was extremely critical of the scholastic theology of late Medievalism. He described it as the “theology of glory” and saw it as trying to find God and observe Him as seen in His works, rather than in the humiliation and suffering of the cross. This theology was prideful because it claimed to see God as He actually is. Luther thought that true theology was content to find God as He has given Himself to us, in the suffering and revelation of the cross.

Luther posited two types of knowledge of God: legal and evangelical. Legal is that knowledge of God available from reason and general revelation (in creation). This treats God as an object of investigation, and likens it to those who would ascend to heaven without the heavenly ladder of the Word of God. Luther rejected moralism and rationalism as a means of knowing God. He scorned scholastic philosophy and its presumption that the mind is not fallen. Luther saw the mind as radically fallen and only able to serve its proper function when redeemed by God's grace. Luther also placed the medieval mystics under the rubric of the theology of glory, for they attempted to view God unveiled. True knowledge of God only comes through the paradox of God's hidden-ness.

§2-206. Church in Lutheran understanding; priesthood of the believer.—The Lutheran tradition understands the Church as spiritual Israel. The Church is the mixed congregation of believers and unbelievers to which the gospel of God's grace is preached and taught and the means of grace (the sacraments) are properly administered. Luther embraced the idea of the church as a community of believers called to offer spiritual sacrifices to God. Luther asserted that all legitimate vocations in the world are equally good insofar as they are pursued in obedience to God. In the community of believer-priests, all have a place and a vocation. Luther's idea of the “sanctity of common life” opened the modern Christian idea of vocation as a calling of God for all.

Lutherans have historically promoted the idea of the priesthood of the believer. All believers are priests before God and fellow ministers to one another. Luther taught that the clergy and laity were of equal spiritual status and that individuals stand before God alone without the need of a mediator other than Jesus Christ. He argued that Rome's sacramental system held Christians captive and rejected Rome's idea of the church as a sacred hierarchy. He did not think that the clergy were intrinsically holier or closer to God than the laity. The primary purpose of the clergy was not to mediate grace through the sacraments but to preach and teach God's Word. This focus on preaching leads to the historic Lutheran emphasis on a trained ministry to teach and preach the Word accurately.

As a tradition, Lutheranism has not committed to a particular form of church polity. Lutheran polity has been historically dependent on surrounding influences. In Europe, Lutheran polity is geographically predictable. In Scandinavia, it became the state churches. In Germany, it adopted the consistorial-Presbyterian type of synodical governance. During the period of the emigration to America, Lutherans took their existing ideas about polity with them across the ocean and in founding churches on their

own. They tended to adopt the blended consistorial and Presbyterian type synodical governance.

The first organized church body of Lutherans in America was the Pennsylvania ministerium, which used Reformed style synodical governance over the 18th and 19th centuries. Their contribution to the development of polity was that smaller synods could in turn form a larger body, but without losing their lower level of governance. As a result, the smaller synods gained unprecedented flexibility to join, leave, merge, or stay separate, all without the hand of the state as had been the case in Europe.

§2-207. Sacraments as the means of grace.—Grace comes to us through God ordained instruments, the Word properly preached and the sacraments properly administered. Luther eventually concluded that there are two sacraments—Baptism and the Eucharist. Baptism is how the grace of faith is initiated. The Eucharist or the Lord's Supper is how the grace of God is nourished and strengthened.

A sacrament is a visible demonstration of God's work in specifically ordained rites in which people participate by faith alone apart from any human merit. According to Luther's Larger Catechism of 1529, sacraments have three features:

- A “holy divine thing” and sign instituted by a word promising salvation apart from any human merit;
- Their purpose is to save people from sin and death and establish an eternal fellowship with the resurrected Christ;
- Their saving power is mediated by faith.

§2-208. —Baptism.—The Lutheran tradition understands baptism as a regenerating sacrament linked to faith. Baptism actually saves its recipient. In baptism, God grants forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation (John 3:5). It is the divinely appointed means of grace (Mt. 28:19; Tit. 3:5; 1 Pt. 3:21). Since baptism saves, it should not be withheld from infants. In baptizing infants, Lutherans stress that it is “God's action,” not “a human response to God.” God commands baptism and acts in baptism. Mode is not important. What is important is that through water joined with God's Word, God's saving grace is given.

Lutherans also link the sacrament to faith. The fact that infants cannot express faith the way adults do is not relevant. Initially, Luther held that the infant was saved by the faith of the parents, sponsor, or pastor. Later, he insisted that the infant was able to exercise faith and believe when the Word was pronounced over the water at baptism.

§2-209. —The Lord's Supper.—Roman Catholics taught that the Mass was an unbloody sacrifice in which the substance of the bread and wine changed into the body and blood of Christ (*transubstantiation*) in their essence while their physical appearance (*accidens*) remained unchanged. Luther agreed that Christ was truly present in the sacrament, but to delve into the mystery of his presence caused you to fall into the subtlety of scholastic rationalism. Lutheranism has insisted on the “real presence” of Christ in the sacrament in, under, with, and in the elements of the table. This view is known as *consubstantiation*. Lutherans take the words of institution very literally (Mt. 26:26-28; Mk. 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20). Likewise, they take the Pauline passages very literally (1 Cor. 10:16; 11:27-29). After the Marbury Colloquy in 1529, this became the defining doctrine differentiating Lutheranism from the Reformed tradition.

§2-210. Two kingdoms doctrine.—Luther understood the church and state as separate but mutually supportive entities. The church has spiritual authority and the state temporal authority. Negatively, the state was necessary to hold back the effects of human sin. Positively, the state was to exercise its power to promote justice and compassion. He believed that society should be governed by secular law, not religious ideology. The latter would either be too lenient and lead to chaos or too overbearing and intolerant of “less spiritual” individuals. The state must operate under the law and its main purpose is to set limits to human sin and its consequences. Without the state, society would disintegrate into chaos.

Believers belong to a kingdom under the gospel. They ought not to expect the state to be ruled by the gospel or to support orthodoxy by persecuting heretics. Civil rulers are to be governed by law. This meant that true faith ought not to seek to impose itself by means of the civil authority, but only by the power of the Word. Luther’s social and political views remained profoundly conservative even when the implications of his theology in undermining late medieval beliefs, practices, and institutions seemed to suggest radical alternatives.

However, in the complex political realities of the day, these principles were difficult to follow. Issues kept coming up—whether the Protestants ought to unite in a league for self-defense, what response should be made to the Peasants’ Revolt, etc. The Lutheran tradition has consistently been more conservative in their ideas about the interaction of the church with the civil authority than the Reformed tradition. Luther’s doctrine of the two kingdoms proved difficult to apply in concrete situations.

§2-211. Other elements of Lutheran theology.—

- **Election**—Lutheranism affirms the doctrine of election/predestination, but not double predestination. The tradition only affirms predestination unto salvation. Luther felt to delve into this mystery was to go “beyond the text” and engage in scholastic extrapolation. With reference to human freedom, Lutherans note that the language of justification is in the passive voice (people acted upon) with reference to humanity but is in the active voice (the subject doing the action) when referencing God.
- **Providence**—God works out His purpose in all things. He directs and guides all the creatures and activities of these creatures. His providential purpose finds its focus in the church.
- **Anthropology (doctrine of humanity)**—In his *Bondage of the Will*, Luther adopted a strong view of the spiritual helplessness of humanity. People are dead, unable to effect any spiritual goodness, and are damned, apart from the sovereign work of God in the Spirit.
- **Hamartiology (doctrine of sin)**—People from birth are dead in sin, inclined to evil, and subject to God’s judgment. Lutherans believe in total depravity. People are simply unable to reconcile themselves to God and conquer death and damnation by their own efforts. This is not a view that people are as bad as they possibly can be. Lutherans recognize two types of righteousness—*civil righteousness* as seen in good deeds by people, and *spiritual righteousness*, an internal work with external effects resulting in right relation with God and others.
- **Atonement**—Christ’s death was penal, substitutionary, and universal, made on behalf of all humanity. Christ, by His perfect obedience, bore the sins of humanity satisfying God’s justice in man’s stead, turning God’s displeasure into a gracious reception of those who come to Christ.
- **Soteriology (doctrine of salvation)**—The Lutheran focus is on justification by faith, a judicial declaration by God pronouncing sinful people not guilty, based on Christ’s atonement, when they exercise faith in Christ. Human beings are saved by grace alone (*sola gratia*) through faith

alone (*sole fide*). Faith comes by means of God's grace through His Word, which teaches people to repent of their sin. God imputes the righteousness of Christ to those who place their faith in His death for our sins. Good works are an inevitable result of genuine faith ("We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone"), but good works contribute nothing to the basis of our right relationship with and standing before God.

§2-212. Protestant beliefs regarding salvation

This table summarizes the views of three typical Protestant beliefs regarding salvation.

Topic	Calvinism	Lutheranism	Arminianism
Human will	Total depravity. Humanity possesses free will, but it is in bondage to sin, until it is transformed.	Original sin. Humanity possesses free will regarding goods and possessions, but is sinful by nature and unable to contribute to its own salvation.	Humanity possesses freedom from the necessity to sin, but not freedom from sin unless enabled by prevenient grace.
Election	Unconditional election.	Unconditional election.	Conditional election in view of foreseen faith or unbelief.
Justification and atonement	Justification by faith alone. Various views regarding the extent of the atonement.	Justification for all people completed at Christ's death and effective through faith alone.	Justification made possible for all through Christ's death but only completed upon human beings choosing faith in Jesus.
Conversion	Monergistic (of God), through the means of irresistible grace.	Monergistic (of God), through the means of resistible grace.	Synergistic (of God and people) resistible due to the common grace of free will.
Perseverance and apostasy	Perseverance of the saints: the eternally elect in Christ will certainly persevere in faith.	Falling away is possible, but God gives gospel assurance.	Perseverance is conditioned upon continued faith in Christ, with the possibility of a final apostasy.

C. Contemporary setting

§2-301. In general.—Most Lutheran churches have a strongly liturgical bent. The liturgy is remarkably similar to the Episcopal Church. Modernism has deeply impacted mainline Lutheranism. The mainline denomination, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), recently opened the ministry to gay and lesbian pastors who are in committed relationships. They have also approved a full communion with the Episcopal Church. The Missouri Synod is the main doctrinally conservative Lutheran body and trends in a very different direction than the ELCA.

§2-302. Major branches of Lutheranism in America.—There are three major branches of

Lutheranism in America:

- ELCA—Evangelical Lutheran Church of America—pursues a “vision of inclusiveness,” including theology, culture, and gender.
- LCMS—Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod—holds to the old Lutheran confessional approach. During the late 20th century, significant controversies emerged regarding the authority of Scripture and the ordination of women.
- WELS—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod—similar to LCMS, but more conservative.

§2-303. Approaches to Lutheran confessionalism.—There are two different approaches to Lutheran confessional heritage. One approach sees the confessions as a precedent, not strictly binding but providing guidance. This group celebrates the “creative efforts of Lutheran theologians” that have contributed to “the positive correlation of Christianity with modern culture since the Enlightenment.” The other approach is constitutive. The confessions declare abiding truths and require allegiance. This more conservative approach understands a variety of forces in the modern era as having devastating effects on the classical Reformation Lutheran understanding of theology.

§2-304. Approaches to Bible and Biblical interpretation.—The major differences are rooted in the disagreement on the meaning of *sola scriptura*. The authority of the Scriptures has been challenged during the history of Lutheranism. Martin Luther taught that the Bible was the written Word of God, and the only dependable guide for faith and practice. He held that every passage of Scripture has one straightforward meaning, the literal sense as interpreted by other Scripture. These teachings were accepted and included in the orthodox Lutheranism of the 16th and 17th centuries.

During the 18th century, rationalism advocated reason rather than the authority of the Bible as the final source of knowledge. The majority the laity did not accept this rationalist position. In the 19th century, scholarly Lutherans accepted the “sure findings” of Biblical criticism even while a confessional revival re-emphasized the authority of the Bible and agreement with the Lutheran confessions.

Today, Lutherans disagree about the inspiration and authority of the Bible. Theological conservatives use the historical-grammatical method of Biblical interpretation, while theological liberals use the higher critical method. A recent survey by the Pew Research Center found that thirty percent of Lutherans surveyed believed that the Bible was the Word of God and should be understood literally. Forty percent held that the Bible was the Word of God, but was not literally true word for word or were unsure if it was literally true word for word. Twenty-three percent of those surveyed said the Bible was written by men and not the Word of God, while seven percent did not know, were not sure, or had other positions.

§2-305. Worship and liturgy.—Lutherans place great emphasis on a liturgical approach to worship services, although there are substantial non-liturgical minorities. Lutherans did not abolish the Mass, but kept and defended it. It is celebrated every Lord's Day and on other days when the Eucharist is available to those who wish to partake of it, after they have been examined and absolved. They also keep traditional liturgical forms, such as the order of readings, prayers, vestments, and other similar things. Besides the divine service, congregations also hold offices, which are worship services without communion. They may include services reminiscent of monastic practice such as matins, vespers, compline, Easter Vigil, and private or family offices in Luther's *Small Catechism*.

Martin Luther was a great fan of music, and music forms a large part of Lutheran services. Luther wanted singing in the church to move away from the Catholic sacred music of the late Renaissance and towards congregational singing in community. Lutheran hymnody is well known for its doctrinal, didactic, and musical richness. Most Lutheran churches are active musically with choirs, handbell choirs, children's choirs, and other musical groups.

D. Observations and concluding thoughts

§2-401. In general—Lutheranism is the seminal Protestant tradition and one that invites comparison with the Roman Catholic tradition from which it emerged and the other Protestant traditions from which it diverged, particularly the Reformed and Anabaptist traditions.

§2-402. Lutheran homeland as the heartland of liberalism—The Lutheran homeland of Germany was also the homeland of classical liberalism. Many influential liberals were born and raised in devout Lutheran homes. The divides between liberals, confessionalists, and pietists were intense in the German church.

§2-403. Baptismal regeneration and justification by faith.—Even Lutheran theologians have questioned the historic Lutheran position on infant baptism. The sacrament in and of itself affects salvation apart from faith. For how can an infant have saving faith? The baptismal practice seems to make the church or other individuals mediators of salvation in a way that is directly comparable to Roman Catholic practice.

§2-404. Eucharist and the “real presence” of Christ.—Lutheran insistence on the “real presence” of Christ's presence “under, with, and in” the elements closely resembles Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. Non-Lutheran Protestants look askance at this doctrine. Explanations that elaborate on the nature of the communion of attributes between the human and divine natures of Christ seem to engage in the scholastic distinctions that Luther himself so despised.

§2-405. Sanctification.—The Lutheran doctrine of sanctification is different than the gradual transformation taught in Reformed circles and perfectionism in the Wesleyan tradition. It takes continuing human sin seriously and focuses on our being before the face of God and not on legalistic ethics.

III. Anabaptists

A. Historical background

§3-101. In general.—Anabaptism comes from the Greek *ἀναβαπτισμός*, meaning re-baptism. Early historical interpretations identify Anabaptists with extreme and violent revolutionaries and “prophets”. Early perceptions focused on such 16th century events as the Peasants Revolt in 1525 and the Kingdom of Munster in 1535. More recently, studies have viewed Anabaptism as a logical extension of the 16th century Protestant Reformation, which emanated from Switzerland, emphasized brotherhood, rigorous discipleship, and peaceful nonresistance to persecution. From this standpoint, the Anabaptist tradition is radical not in the sense of being extreme, spectacular, or violent, but in accord with the Latin word *radix*, meaning “root”, from which we get our English word “radical”. This viewpoint sees Anabaptists as going back to the roots of earliest Christianity.

The Anabaptists see themselves as a separate branch of Christianity and have emphasized separation from the world. Early Anabaptists spoke much about bearing “the cross,” being faithful unto death, of being willing to shed their blood for their testimony to the truth.

§3-102. Branches of Anabaptism.—History reveals three sub-traditions in Anabaptism:

- Swiss Anabaptism that emerged from Zwingli and Zurich;
- Mystical-humanist Anabaptism that grew up in southern Germany and Austria; and
- An apocalyptic branch from the Netherlands and northern Germany.

§3-103. Swiss branch.—Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) was an ex-priest who became a reformer and took a post as a preacher under the auspices of the city council of Zurich, Switzerland. He worked for a deliberate and gradual reform by directing grassroots pressure upon the city council. Soon others, who welcomed Zwingli's Scriptural emphasis, began to pursue a more radical and immediate path to reform. They began by denying the Lenten fast rules, challenging the mandatory payment of tithes to the Roman Church, disrupting the celebration of Mass, and “purifying” Church sanctuaries. Conrad Grebel (1498-1526) and Felix Mantz (1498-1527) pressed further and challenged the practice of infant baptism and were themselves re-baptized (thus the name Anabaptist). They contended that infant baptism was not a genuine baptism, basing their arguments on passages like Mt. 28:18-20, Mk. 16:15-16, and Acts 2:38, 9:17-19, 16:17-34, 19:1-5. They believed that baptism should be administered to people who have heard, understood, and affirmed the gospel. Both men became martyrs for their beliefs.

In the village churches around Zurich, where the city council's control was more limited, reforms quickened in pace. Hubmaier (1480-1528) led these reforms, directing the removal of images and relics from churches, celebrating Mass in the vernacular, and himself being re-baptized. The movement spread north and encountered the increasing social and civil unrest among peasants. In 1525, when efforts at dialogue and evangelical moderation were unsuccessful, conflict occurred and was suppressed at the battle of Franckhausen and in cities such as Waldshut where Anabaptists lived. Around the same time, faced with increasing opposition from civil authorities, Anabaptists chose nonresistance and separation as their response.

Michael Sattler (1490-1527), an ex-Benedictine monk was representative of this approach. He authored

the Schleithem Confession in 1527, containing seven articles (on baptism, banning and shunning, the Lord's Supper, separation from worldly evil, election of pastoral shepherds, pacifism, and rejecting swearing of oaths). He and others were martyred in the years immediately following the Peasants' Revolt.

§3-104. Mystical-humanist branch.—This was the Southern German/Austrian branch of the Anabaptist movement. The roots of this story lie in the carnage of the Peasants' War and in the influence of Hans Denk (1495-1527) and Hans Hut (1495-1527). Denk was a teacher in Nuremberg who came under the influence of Thomas Munster (1490-1525) and Thomas Karlstadt (1477-1541). Expelled from Nuremberg in 1525, he spent his last years traveling to German cities pressing for radical reform. His teaching emphasized the inner word and listening to the voice of the Spirit, reflecting the influence of late medieval mysticism. Denk baptized Hut and Hut engaged in an itinerant ministry of his own, establishing Anabaptist congregations in southern and central Germany. He stressed union with Christ, spending less time with mourning over sin and emphasizing becoming like Christ in suffering. This southern German strand also stressed the inner work of the Spirit and had an apocalyptic bent.

§3-105. Apocalyptic branch.—This was the Northern German/Dutch branch of the Anabaptists. Here the story's origin lies in the thinking of Melchior Hoffman (1495-1543). A furrier by trade, Hoffman served for several years as a Lutheran lay missionary before joining the Anabaptist movement. He emphasized the prophetic books of the Bible and the imminence of Christ's return. By 1530, he was in Emden in Holland and the desperate straits of people there drew them to Hoffman's message. Hoffman and others thought they could help usher in the end times. He taught that the apocalypse would come in 1533 with righteous magistrates exterminating the godless in Strasbourg, supported, prayerfully and otherwise, by Anabaptists. Hoffman allowed himself to be arrested and imprisoned, thinking that this would hasten the end. He died in prison ten years later.

These eschatological hopes framed events in Munster, where the Anabaptists achieved a majority on the city council in early 1534. The rise and fall of the Kingdom of Munster (1534-1535) in northern Germany was one of the most spectacular episodes of the Reformation era. Jan Matthijs took control of the Anabaptist movement after Hoffman's apocalyptic predictions of 1533 proved false. Matthijs changed the date to Easter, 1534, and the place from Strasbourg to Munster. Munster was the New Jerusalem and became the destination for large numbers of Anabaptists. An internal rift developed between Lutheran and Zwinglian factions which facilitated an Anabaptist takeover of the city. Leadership of the movement then passed from Matthijs to Jan van Leiden, who ruled the city as a dictatorial prophet-king. By February 1534, the Anabaptists gained control of the city council and forced all those unwilling to receive adult baptism out of the city. Leiden established a community of goods, instituted polygamy, and brutally dispatched those who opposed his rule. Munster was besieged by forces led by a Catholic archbishop. The siege eventually crushed the trapped inhabitants of the town. Most were killed and the leaders gruesomely executed.

The Kingdom of Munster episode shocked Europe and had longstanding consequences. Munster cemented the secular and ecclesiastical authorities' suspicion of religious radicalism after the Peasants' War. The Dutch Anabaptists were harshly suppressed throughout the 16th century. Both Catholics and magisterial Protestants joined in the condemnation and repression. The Protestants wanted to prove that rejection of Rome did not entail political and social radicalism. The severe repression after Munster

crippled the Dutch Anabaptism movement.

§3-106. Menno Simons as Anabaptist stabilizer.—The leader of the new generation of Anabaptists was Menno Simons (1496-1561). Simons was born in 1496 in Friesland, received a monastic education, and was ordained a priest in 1524. After witnessing the execution of an Anabaptist for being rebaptized in 1531, he searched the New Testament, concluded that the biblical basis for infant baptism was weak or non-existent, and embraced believer's baptism. During the fiasco at Munster, Menno consistently preached peaceful Anabaptist views in opposition to the violent wing of the movement.

Simons spent a lifetime rehabilitating the Anabaptist reputation as a serious and pacifistic movement. In 1536, he joined an Anabaptist fellowship and became its leader. In the 1540s and 1550s, Menno emerged as the leader of the most important Anabaptist group in the Low Countries. His reward was to be placed on the Holy Roman Empire's most wanted list. He and his family spent the remainder of their days running for their lives throughout Germany and Holland, all the while teaching and preaching. His wife and children died before Menno himself. The Mennonite leader died in 1561, severely crippled at the time of his death.

His influence was profound. His followers were soon known as Mennonites rather than Anabaptists. In 1539, he published *The Foundation of Christian Doctrine*, which summarized his teaching. He believed traditional Anabaptist teaching, including pacifism, a rejection of taking of oaths and vows and of holding positions requiring them, necessity of obedience to the civil authorities, practice of church discipline, the sacraments as symbolic, and the practice of foot-washing. Menno's writings emphasized the direct imitation of Christ, based on a self-conscious faith commitment flowing from, and in response to, the regenerative mercy of God. He insisted that one's life and actions must reflect one's faith. The Mennonites rejected the two-tier medieval model distinguishing model and ordinary Christians. True Christians were those who lived out this radical discipleship in fellowship with a "spotless congregation" set apart from the world.

§3-107. Practice of communal discipline.—The purity of the congregation was to be enforced through admonition and, if necessary, through banning and shunning. Menno Simons claimed to derive these practices from the New Testament. The purpose of banning and shunning was to shame the sinner into remorse and motivate reunion with the godly community. The Mennonites' understanding of themselves as distinct communities of true Christians was reinforced by their experience of persecution in the middle of the 16th century. Mennonites saw themselves as defenseless sheep among ravenous wolves, the ecclesiastical and political authorities of the day. Menno, like Calvin, insisted that true Christians must be willing to imitate Christ in suffering unto death, if necessary.

§3-108. Divisions among Anabaptists.—From the 1550s on, the Mennonites and other Anabaptist groups split into more factions. In the 1550s, a group called the Waterlanders and the Mennonites separated over the application of banning and shunning. The dispute concerned whether the community ought to require an upright wife to shun her husband. In the 1560s, the Mennonites split into the Flemish and Frisian groups over issues involving church structure and congregational autonomy. Further splits occurred in the 1580s over various disciplinary issues. By the late 16th century, Europe's main Anabaptist groups were divided and often hostile. Their beliefs and practices were strikingly similar, but they belonged to entirely separate communities of faith. They often condemned each other based on minutely different community practices.

§3-109. Quiet of the land.—The Swiss Anabaptists had a period of peace in the latter part of the 16th century, but were persecuted throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, for their belief in believer's baptism and for their pacifism. By contrast, the Mennonites experienced more favorable conditions in Holland which allowed them time for theological reflection. The result was the *Dordrecht Confession* in 1632. From this time to the early 19th century, the Anabaptists experienced a numerical decline. They became efficient farmers and business people, tended to withdraw to isolated rural areas where they were unmolested—the “quiet of the land”. They benefited from the growing spirit of tolerance in Europe and from Pietism's emphasis on unity and practical devotion.

§3-110. Anabaptists in America.—Anabaptists first arrived in America in the 1640s, settling in the middle states on the Eastern coast. In the 18th century, a number continued west, with Mennonites and Amish settling in southwestern Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. In the 19th century, the Mennonites in the United States and Canada experienced revival and different reactions to that caused tension. The more progressive Mennonites adopted Sunday schools, choral singing, church operated schools and colleges, foreign missions, developed periodicals while the old Mennonites stoutly resisted these developments. The 20th century also brought changes. No longer a persecuted minority, Anabaptist identity was in issue. Anabaptist identity had been being “pilgrims and strangers” in a hostile world. The lack of persecution brought their self-identity to the fore again.

§3-111. Impact of modern developments.—Faithful living is prioritized over the precise expression of theological beliefs. This theological de-emphasis has contributed to doctrinal drift in some quarters of Anabaptism. Quaker churches have imbibed liberal theological beliefs with a social rather than an individual salvation focus. In addition, Mennonite churches have been influenced increasingly by modern developments that have called aspects of their tradition into question.

B. Distinctive beliefs

§3-201. In general.—Historically, rank and file Anabaptists have been students of the Scriptures and little else in terms of theological development. They were distrustful of traditional theology and highly formalized theological systems for two reasons:

- They were the target of persecution, often led by theological types.
- The circumstances led them naturally to more practical concerns, giving more weight to Christian practice than to doctrinal formulations. An attitude of “the immersion in books takes time away from deeds of mercy” permeated the movement.

However, there are Anabaptist confessions (some have counted as many as twenty-five to thirty) from the earliest days (*Schleitheim Confession* in 1527) to our modern times (*Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* in 2001). In these, they tend to see theology in light of ethics, rooted in life rather than in fine-tuned reasoning. Abandonment to God and His will is the key to a true understanding of God's truth.

§3-202. A-systemic; characteristic beliefs.—Anabaptist have resisted the creedal orientation of classical theology. It is ironic that one of the earliest confessional statements of the Reformation emerged from the least dogmatic of the Protestant groups. In 1527, two years after the inauguration of the group, Anabaptist leaders met in Schleitheim, Switzerland and issued a brief

document expounding the foundational beliefs and practices of their group. The *Schleitheim Confession* reflected emphases that have characterized Anabaptism ever since:

- Believers' baptism and the strong objection to infant baptism as undermining the true church of repenting believers.
- Church discipline for those backsliding believers refusing to amend their lives and thus banned from the communion table. Discipleship goes beyond conversion and the acceptance of doctrines. It must entail a daily walk with the Lord. Reformers like Martin Bucer in Strasbourg and John Calvin in Geneva, followed this emphasis.
- Congregationalism—Decision-making authority rested with the local congregation.
- Communion was only for the baptized.
- Believers must separate from all that is not united with God in Christ.
- Pastoral duties were specified.
- Separation of church and state—The Church was distinct from society. The Anabaptists repudiated the notion of Christendom. Christ's true followers were a pilgrim people, aliens in the land.
- Opposition to the Christian use of the sword was to characterize the group. Christian love involved embracing pacifism and required Christians to aid one another in daily life. It encompassed the redistribution of wealth within the Christian community.
- Opposition to oaths and vows—a literal obedience to Christ's admonition to "let your yes be yes and your no, no. Anything beyond this is evil."

§3-203. Bible as authority.—In their approach to the Bible, Anabaptists affirm the Protestant principle of *sola scriptura*. Most view Scripture as the inspired but fallible means for knowing and following Jesus. Jesus is the living Word; Scripture is the written Word that points to Him. In interpreting the authoritative Biblical text, they have common characteristics:

- Biblical interpretation is best done in Christian community. This seeks to ward off the tyranny of individualistic interpretation, but in so doing this tends to insulate community conformity from biblical critique.
- The interpretative community must be obedient to God.
- Spirit direction—Bible reading and study is enabled, both individually and corporately, by the same Spirit who inspired the writing.

All sixty-six books of the Bible are inspired, but the twenty-seven New Testament books are given priority over the thirty-nine Old Testament books. The New Testament itself is understood from its central Christo-centricity. Jesus, in His teaching and life, is the Bible's key interpretative principle.

§3-204. Church.—The church is the body of Christ, the assembly of Christ's disciples who obediently follow Him in the power of the Holy Spirit. The church is to be holy, loving, servicing, devoted to a simple lifestyle, and peaceable. This community provides a wholesome witness of life as God intends it to the world. It is in this community of discipleship that the "habits of heaven" are practiced and acquired. No established system of ecclesiastical governance is acknowledged. Leadership involves providing service and is mainly focused on local contexts.

§3-205. Separation from the world.—Following Jesus is synonymous with obedience in community. This obedience leads to a separation from the world. The world is in rebellion against God and there must be a line of demarcation between the church and the world (stressing such texts as Jn. 17:14; Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 6:17; Col. 1:13; Titus 2:14; 1 Pt. 2:9). Anabaptists prefer the term nonconformity to separation in this teaching. Sadly, this separation or nonconformity must also be applied to others who call themselves Christians. Separation or non-conformity is the only way that genuine Christian community can be realized. Their beliefs in believers' baptism and in banning and shunning as a mode of discipline is in the context of this community emphasis.

§3-206. Pacifists and nonresistance.—Commitment to peace and nonresistance, reinforced by the sad experiences of the Peasants' War in 1525 and the Kingdom of Munster debacle in 1535, are woven into the teaching and practice of most Anabaptists. These principles are seen in the teaching (Mt. 5:36-45; 16:24; 20:25; 23:1-36; 26:52; Lk. 2:14; 12:13; Jn. 2:13-22; 8:22; 14:27; 18:36) and life of Jesus. Commitment to nonresistance flows from the call to communal obedience and is properly expressed in deeds of mercy.

§3-207. Sacraments as ordinances.—Baptism and the Eucharist are memorial rites. Baptism and the Lord's Supper do not impart grace to the participants. They are only symbols of Christ's work. Baptism is for believers only, a sign of commitment to follow Jesus. The Lord's Supper is a memorial of His death.

C. Contemporary setting

§3-301. In general.—Millions of Anabaptists live in the world today with adherents scattered across all inhabited continents. The largest groups are the Mennonites, the German Baptist Brethren, the Amish, and the Hutterites. In the 21st century, there are large cultural differences between assimilated Anabaptists, who do not differ much from evangelicals and mainline Protestants, and traditional groups like the Amish, the old order Mennonites, the Hutterites, and the old German Baptist Brethren.

In the United States, the Mennonites and other Anabaptist traditions are concentrated in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Kansas. They also have a very visible presence in the provinces of Canada. The Mennonites have tended to reflect the situation of many denominations, dividing along conservative/liberal lines. The conservatives, or *old Mennonites* (notably the *Mennonite Brethren* and *the Brethren in Christ*), are mostly in the mid-western states and are more open to cooperating with evangelical Christians (they are members of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE)). The most liberal Mennonite group, the *General Conference Mennonite Church*, has links with other Mennonite groups and in 2001, collaborated on a confession of Mennonite faith—*Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*.

§3-302. Four branches from the three Reformation streams.—Four general lines of Anabaptists emerged from the three Anabaptist streams of the Reformation discussed above:

- Hutterites—from the Anabaptists in southern Germany and Moravia, significantly influenced by Denk and Hut;
- Amish—from the Swiss Anabaptists who moved north in the 16th century. Like the Mennonites, they have old order and new order groups within their midst;

- Mennonites—from Anabaptist groups in northern Germany and the Netherlands, taking their name from Menno Simons;
- Brethren groups—from Anabaptists heavily influenced by German Pietism.

§3-303. Related groups.—Anabaptists share similarities with the early General Baptists, but these similarities are not that significant. Anabaptists do not reflect the historical teaching of the Baptists. Indeed, the early English Baptists went out of their way to condemn the Anabaptists and clearly differentiate themselves from Anabaptism as seen in the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1644. German Baptist Brethren are not related to the English Baptist movement. Rather they were inspired by central European Anabaptists. Upon moving to the United States, they associated with the Mennonites and the Quakers.

The term *Neo-Anabaptist* describes a late twentieth and early twenty-first century theological movement within American evangelicalism which draws inspiration from representatives of the Anabaptist tradition but are ecclesiastically outside it. *Neo-Anabaptists* have been noted for their "low church, counter-cultural, prophetic-stance-against-the dominant culture ethos" as well as for their focus on pacifism, social justice, and poverty.

§3-304. Distinctive lifestyle.—The Anabaptist tradition has been in the forefront of a Protestant witness for a distinctive Christian lifestyle. While other Protestant traditions may tend to see Anabaptist distinctives as a little too much and the Anabaptist tradition as culturally ingrown, it must be granted that their pursuit of a unique lifestyle has been relentless. This is a challenge to Christians. How are we against the world, but for the world? How are we resisting the conforming pressures of our worldly environment, while being in the world and making a forthright witness to Jesus Christ to it?

D. Observations and concluding thoughts

§3-401. In general.—Anabaptists, in their “better angels,” place priority on obediently following Jesus in separation into genuine community, in peaceful nonresistance, and in service to the world. The Anabaptists have proven to be the forerunners of modern ideas:

- Voluntary church membership and believer's baptism;
- Freedom of religion and liberty of conscience;
- Separation of Church and State;
- Separation from and nonconformity with the world;
- Nonresistance or pacifism;
- Priesthood of all believers.

Early Anabaptists were radical egalitarians; women had the same rights as men and, in theory at least, rich and poor were treated similarly. Their thinking on Church-State relations also reflected later ideas. The Church was to be separate from the civil authority and the State had no call to determine the religion or irreligion of its subjects. Their pacifism subjected them to persecution which reinforced their separatism but also prompted in believers a line of questioning of the use of war as a policy option for national promotion.

§3-402. Christocentric and counter-worldly challenge.—The Anabaptist tradition was born with an insistence on the Christocentric nature of faith and on an earnest challenge to live out that faith in a world that is no friend to faith. Query whether their insistence on community conformity and obedience has trumped their Christo-centricity and whether their posture of being against-the-world has trumped their for-the-world witness.

§3-403. Separatist and ingrown.—Alas, as is so often the case, a strength can give birth to a weakness. The Anabaptist concern for committed community gave birth to practices of banning and shunning and an insistence on lockstep community obedience that led to divisions over the tiniest differences in community practices.

IV. Reformed

A. Historical background

§4-101. In general.—The Reformed tradition refers to the Protestant tradition led by John Calvin in Geneva and Ulrich Zwingli and Henry Bullinger in Zurich. From the 1560s to the end of the 16th century, Reformed was equivalent to evangelical, which was used interchangeably at the time for Protestant. Originally, it did not differ substantially (with the notable exception of the “real Presence” in the Eucharist) with Luther. There was an additional difference in the approach to reform. Luther wished to purge from the church anything the Scripture forbids, while the Swiss Reformers hoped to purge the church from everything the Scripture did not explicitly warrant.

It was John Calvin (1509-1564) who shaped Reformed theology. His theology is seminal and central to the development of the Reformed tradition. His *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, his commentaries, the Geneva Psalter revision, his worship reform, and volumes of his correspondence demonstrate his framing influence. Other significant early influences include: Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531), Martin Bucer (1491-1551), Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575), John Knox (1513-1572), and Theodore Beza (1519-1605).

§4-102. Zwingli and Calvin.—The story begins in Zurich with Ulrich Zwingli. Luther wanted to eliminate from church life everything condemned in Scripture. The Swiss Reform insisted that Christian practice should have positive warrant in Scripture. Thus, the Swiss Reform under Zwingli in the 1520s began with rejecting all Christian practice that lacked specific warrant in the Bible in their reform of the worship and teaching of the church. Images, instruments, elaborate décor were removed from the churches. Subjects like purgatory, invocation to Mary and the saints, and any number of monastic practices were eliminated from teaching. Zwingli died at the battle of Kappel in 1531 and Bullinger succeeded him. He was more diplomatic in his leadership style and took the lead in the formulation of statements of faith, most notably the *First Helvetic Confession* in 1536 and the *Second Helvetic Confession* in 1566.

The Reformed movement also took root in Geneva in Switzerland, where William Farel helped recruit John Calvin to the reforming work. Calvin was a second-generation reformer, following Farel in Geneva and being a student of Martin Bucer at Strasbourg. Calvin's work was one of a total ecclesiastical and social reform, outlined in his *Articles Concerning the Organization of the Church and Worship at Geneva*. He published his first edition of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in 1536, which went through various expansions and revisions culminating in the last edition of the work in 1559. This seminal work proved to be an abiding resource within the Reformed tradition, providing the clearest statement of the theological characteristics of the tradition.

§4-103. Major tenets of Calvin's thought.—

- **Knowledge of God**—Calvin approaches this in his *Institutes* from two sides—natural revelation in the created order and special revelation in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the true Word, and in the Word of God in writing, the Scripture.
- **Humanity**—Humanity's creation in the image of God was distorted in the Fall. All humanity has inherited the effects of Adam's sin. Human beings are completely bound by sin and

incapable of righteousness. If the candid truth is that humanity does not desire righteousness.

- **Salvation**—Due to the debilitating effects of sin, humans are incapable of coming to God by themselves. God must initiate salvation if humanity is to escape its desperate plight. Christ's sacrifice opens the door for human salvation, but no human being will come unless the Holy Spirit provides the faith necessary to respond to God's offer. This gift of faith is not based on any inherent goodness in people, but solely on the righteousness of Christ. Thus, the believing sinner is declared righteous based on Christ's atonement—Christ's righteousness is imputed to the believer.
- **Election or predestination**—While this doctrine has come to be the hallmark of Reformed theology, it did not occupy such a preeminent place in Calvin's thought. He introduced the subject only after his discussion of the doctrine of salvation and warned against making too much of the doctrine. His scholastic successors, substituting deductive logic for Calvin's inductive exegesis, placed discussion of predestination first in their considerations and ignored Calvin's advice on the subject. Calvin's treatment of predestination was in the mode of God's sovereign distinguishing choice of people and not based on His foreknowledge of how people would respond to the offer of the gospel. Indeed, in their own ability, people could not respond unless enabled by God's grace. He defined predestination as “God's eternal decree, by which He determined with Himself what He willed to become of each [person]”.
- **Church**—The true church is wherever the Word of God is faithfully preached and heard and the sacraments are administered according to Christ's institution. Calvin rejected apostolic succession. Apostolic authority lies not in the laying on of hands but in the true preaching of apostolic thought and doctrine. In church organization, Calvin saw four key offices:
 - Pastors charged with ministering the Word and sacrament and exercising discipline;
 - Teachers charged with Scriptural interpretation;
 - Elders charged with church oversight and discipline; and
 - Deacons who cared for the poor and for the needs of people in the church.
- **Sacraments**—Calvin taught that there were two sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. He disagreed with Luther's idea of consubstantiation and Zwingli's reduction of the Lord's Supper to a mere memorial. The debate revolved around how the Lord was present at the Supper. For Calvin, the Lord's Supper is a way in which God's Spirit works to strengthen the faith of those who accept His work. For Calvin, Baptism neither saves nor converts the person baptized. He believed that believers and their children were both proper subjects of Baptism. Infant baptism is to be understood as a covenant sign like circumcision in the Old Testament. As circumcision did not save, neither does Baptism. Rather it brings the child within the covenant community and signifies a commitment of the community to raise or help raise the child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

§4-104. Later 16th century growth.—From Switzerland, especially from the training schools established by Calvin at Geneva, the Reformed movement spread to France and by 1559, had formed a national synod. The story of the Huguenots, as these French Calvinists became known, is one of alternating periods of war and peace, governmental suppression and freedom, and of contraction and expansion. Calvinism also spread to Germany, where it was outlawed by the Peace of Augsburg in 1555. It nonetheless prospered in the Palatinate in southwestern Germany and flourished into the 17th century. It was here that a variation of Calvinism, known as covenant theology, emerged. Also in Germany, the Heidelberg Catechism was published, authored by Ursinus (1534-1583) and Olivianus (1536-1587). It became, by some estimates, the most popular and enduring Reformed confession of

faith. The movement spread to Holland and became firmly rooted there where another standard Reformed confession, the *Belgic Confession of Faith*, was produced in 1561.

The Reformed tradition spread to the British Isles. Martin Bucer, who spent his last years in England, was a significant influence for British Reformed tradition. In addition, a Reformed pastor Jan Lasco, helped to bring a Reformed influence to bear on the 1552 edition of the Book of Common Prayer, the liturgical heartland of British Anglicanism. The Reformed became the predominant form of Protestantism that emerged in Scotland, led first by George Wishart (1513-1546) and succeeded by John Knox, who had spent considerable time with Calvin at Geneva and Bullinger at Zurich. He was the chief leader of the Scottish Reform and the primary author of the *Scottish Confession of Faith*, published in 1560.

§4-105. 17th century scholasticism.—In the 17th century, Reformed thinkers were in the forefront of what is described as Protestant scholasticism. They vigorously debated among themselves and produced detailed works of theology that had wide influence. Francois Turretin (1623-1687) was one who published a comprehensive theology, which proved influential at schools like Princeton into the 19th century. William Ames (1576-1633) published the widely read *Marrow of Theology*. Another landmark Reformed confessional statement emerged in the 17th century from England, the *Westminster Confession* in 1647.

§4-106. Theodore Beza.—Theodore Beza succeeded Calvin in Geneva. Whereas Calvin's methodology was inductive and based on Scriptural exegesis, Beza's method was deductive like Catholic scholasticism. The focus was on systematization and precise propositions. He attempted to extend theological knowledge into fine details and tended to obscure theological reflection's relationship to real life. Pressures developed between Protestant communities that led to controversies that invited theological combat and the formulation of ever more precise theological definitions. The entire enterprise tended to build walls around Protestant camps and turn their focus inward. Scholars have identified four tendencies of scholasticism:

- It employs a deductive form of reasoning rather than an inductive form.
- Reason is elevated to assist the Scriptures so much in coming to a conclusion on various matters as to be almost equal to the authority of divine revelation.
- Scholasticism assumes that Scripture contains a full-blown and rational theology that can be humanly distilled into a comprehensive statement.
- Scholasticism tends to be interested in the kind of abstract and speculative thinking that Calvin avoided or made short work of.

Beza moved the discussion of predestination from the doctrine of salvation, where it functioned as a check-valve to remind the believer that salvation is ultimately a work of God, to the knowledge of God, giving the concept a preeminent place. He developed a theological framework called *supralapsarianism* (from the Latin, *supra* (above) and *lapsum* (the Fall)). In this perspective, God's decree to elect some and reprobate others comes above or before the decree to allow the Fall. The opposing view, *infralapsarianism* (from the Latin *infra* (below) and *lapsum* (the Fall)), understood God's elective decree as logically following the decree to allow the Fall.

Order of God's Decrees

Supralapsarianism	Infralapsarianism
1. Elect some, reprobate others	1. Create the world and populate it
2. Create the world and populate it	2. Permit the Fall
3. Permit the Fall	3. Provide salvation for humanity
4. Provide for salvation of the elect	4. Elect some, pass over others
5. Accomplish/apply salvation of the elect	5. Apply salvation to the elect

Thus, God is seen from the very beginning as favoring some and damning others for eternity, even before creating them. The shift made God appear an arbitrary and distant deity instead of a loving Father. Beza also developed the idea of the *limited* atonement, which asserted that Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross was only for the elect. Once the decree to elect is understood as preeminent, to posit a universal atonement would put God at cross purposes with His will. Calvin's inductive exegesis suggests a limited atonement, although he appeared hesitant to conclude this. The entire system developed by Beza serves as an illustration of the pressing to logical conclusions by the scholastic method.

§4-107. Jacob Arminius and reaction.—Jacob Arminius (1560-1609) was a Dutchman who came to study under Beza in Geneva. He returned home to pastor a church and during that time began to question the conclusions of Reformed scholasticism. He thought that making the doctrine of predestination so preeminent not only made God appear distant and arbitrary but also the author of sin and damnation. Arminius' followers drafted an appeal for theological toleration that came to be known as the Remonstrance. The resulting controversy came to a head at the Synod of Dordt.

§4-108. Synod of Dordt and Five Point Calvinism (TULIP)—The Calvinist-Arminian controversy had political overtones in Holland, which goes beyond our discussion here other than to note that it provoked the first Reformed synod to resolve the issue. The result was the adoption of the Canons of Dordt that came to be summarized by the acrostic T-U-L-I-P:

Scholastic Calvinism's T-U-L-I-P	
1. T otal depravity	People are unable to save themselves because they are entirely depraved by sin.
2. U nconditional election	God elects people for salvation unconditionally. Election is not based on anything in the person elected, nor is it based on faith that God foresees the person will exercise.
3. L imited atonement	While the death of Christ is sufficient for all humanity, its redeeming benefits are designed only for the elect.
4. I rrresistible grace	God works irresistibly to draw the elect to Himself by faith. His grace is irresistible.
5. P erseverance of the saints	All who are truly regenerated and justified by God

will persevere in faith until the end.
--

§4-109. Covenant theology.—One of the unique contributions of Reformed theology is the understanding that God deals with humanity through divine covenants. Covenants with Noah (Gen. 9), Abraham (Gen. 12, 15), Moses and the people of Israel (Ex. 20ff; Deut. 6ff), David (2 Sam. 7), and the promised New Covenant (Jer. 31; Ezek. 36), unfold this relationship in its various facets. Seeing covenant as a central biblical theme emerged at the very outset of the Swiss reformation in the writings of Zwingli and Bullinger. However, as supralapsarian Calvinism gained ascendancy, this covenant theme, with its emphasis on a personal relationship within a divinely initiated structure, got lost. The conception of God as the omnipotent sovereign, distant and arbitrary, grew. Regaining the covenant theme as central in Reformed thinking occurred in three stages:

- In Calvin's writings and elsewhere, covenant described God's dealings with the patriarchs, Israel, and the church, detailed in passages like those cited above.
- After Calvin, the concept of covenant grew to include the arrangements God made with Adam at the outset of human history.
- Still later, Reformed thinkers extended this concept to supposed dealings between the members of the Trinity, who allegedly agreed to provide redemption of humanity and to predestine each human being.

Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669) is the name associated with the emergence of full-blown covenant theology in the 17th century. He developed a covenant understanding of biblical redemption, identifying three general periods of God's covenant dealings with humanity:

- Covenant of works with Adam;
- Covenant of grace with Moses;
- New Covenant with Jesus Christ.

His attempt at an integrating biblical theme was preempted by the scholastics when they postulated a covenant of redemption within the Godhead with predestination as the central thought.

§4-110. Puritans.—This group may have been the most consistent embodiment of the Reformed perspective subsequent to the continental European Reformation.

The English Reformation was a politically motivated one. To obtain a legitimate divorce, Henry VIII had to break with the Roman Church. The waxing and waning of political fortunes resulted in the Elizabethan Settlement, a via media compromise broad enough to encompass both Catholic concerns and Protestant ones under the umbrella of the Anglican Church. The Puritans did not buy in. They were a movement of revival and reform, seeking to purify the Anglican Church of its vestiges of Catholicism in worship forms, liturgy, and doctrine.

The Puritans emphasized the conversion experience. Their writings abound on the subject. However, their focus was quite different than that of modern revivalists. They saw a person's turning to God to be an act of God turning the person to Himself. Conversion was not so much an act of individuals, but of God acting on them. The evangelist, if employed at all, was that of a spiritual midwife, helping the process along but not bringing it about.

Strict Sabbath adherence was more a Puritan thing than it was a continental Reformed emphasis. The Puritan practice flew in the face of contemporary English customs and practices. The Puritans brought their strict notions of Sabbath observance to New England in the 17th century, a practice that profoundly affected American Christianity. Once again, Reformed descendants pushed Calvin's thoughts further than he did. Calvin took the Sabbath principle and applied it to New Testament Christians suggesting that the principle was a commendable one that should be practiced. However, he stopped short of the type of Sabbath regulation implemented in Puritan New England.

§4-111. Westminster Confession and Catechism.—Puritan and Reformed concerns dominated the task of formulating a confession (from 1643 to 1647) to guide the English Church. The Westminster Confession and its associated Shorter and Longer Catechisms became the standard confessional statements among the Reformed in the English-speaking world. The Confession reflects the ideas of the Reformed scholastics. The doctrine of predestination is introduced and developed (chapter 3) before the Christological and soteriological ideas are introduced. The doctrine of saving faith does not appear until chapter 7. The Confession seems to favor the limited atonement but makes no explicit statement on that issue. Covenant theology as discussed above is central in the theological system developed by the Confession.

§4-112. Reformed faith in early America.—The Puritans brought the Reformed faith to the American shores in the mid-17th century, where it was dominant in New England at least until the Revolutionary War (1775-1783). Classic patterns of Reformed divisions occurred during the First Great Awakening in America in the 1730s and 1740s between the Old Lights (who doubled down on confessional conformity) and the New Lights (who were more open to revival and expressions of experiential piety). Interestingly, the foremost American theologian of the period, Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), author of such works as *On the Freedom of the Will*, *On Original Sin*, and *On Religious Affections*, was a New Light defender of the awakening occurring in his and other Reformed congregations.

The early 19th century witnessed controversy among Reformed groups between the New Divinity movement, growing out of Jonathan Edwards' thought, and the New Haven theology, developing at Yale primarily by Nathaniel Taylor (1786-1858). This posed a liberal challenge to traditional Calvinism in support of the revivalism of the Second Great Awakening. The New Haven theology proposed alternatives to such doctrines as original sin and total depravity.

§4-113. 20th century: Conflict with modernism.—In the 20th century, Princeton became a venue for the modernist-fundamentalist controversy. J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937) led a conservative faction that left Princeton and started Westminster Theological Seminary in 1929 and later provided leadership in forming the Orthodox Presbyterian Church in the mid-1930s. Perhaps the most influential Reformed systematic theology in the 20th century was written by Louis Berkhof (1873-1957), influenced by Dutch Calvinism, particularly the thought of Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) and Herman Bavinck (1854-1921). He was a stout defender of traditional Calvinism and a robust critic of modernism.

§4-114. Princeton school and Princeton theology.—In the 19th century, Princeton Seminary became the bastion of Reformed theology in America. From birth in 1812 until the Seminary was reorganized and its last remnants of old Princeton left to form Westminster Seminary in 1929, Princeton set the standard of historic Reformed orthodoxy in America. Men like Archibald Alexander, Charles Hodge, A.A. Hodge, and Benjamin Warfield provided over a century of stability in theological thought. They

saw their task as one to preserve rather than to innovate. At the celebration of Charles Hodge's 50th anniversary as a professor at Princeton, Hodge boasted that a new idea had never arisen at Princeton. The guideposts of Princeton theology was an absolute biblicism and a reliance on Scottish common sense realism and on the Reformed confessions.

Princeton was committed to the Reformed confessions, particularly the Westminster Confession. The influence of Francis Turretin was quite apparent, especially in the works of Charles Hodge. The Princeton dons did not recognize the various strands of Reformed theology that simultaneously existed at the time. For them, the tradition spoke with one voice, theirs. The major themes emphasized included:

- Good creation by a good God.
- Reality of the Fall whereby humanity fell under judgment.
- Imputation of Adam's sin to the entire race and the subsequent depravity and spiritual inability of all humanity to accomplish any spiritual good; New Covenant with Jesus Christ.
- Just condemnation of humanity for sin.
- Inability of sinners to turn to God apart from God's sovereign mercy.
- God's love expressed in the covenants of grace and redemption that brought about the salvation of the elect.
- Continuing effects of sin, even upon those redeemed, but the ability to work for the furtherance of God's kingdom despite the effects of the Fall.

The Scottish common-sense realism was an epistemology (the study of how humans know things) that arose in reaction to the skepticism of David Hume. Hume asserted that the human mind cannot know reality directly. Scottish common-sense realists asserted that the mind can and does know reality in an immediate way. God has provided humanity with common sense. It was an approach to truth that was empirical, inductive, and tended to see reason and empirical research as having no presuppositions.

Scottish common-sense philosophy had four key characteristics:

- Stress on the objective, external nature of revelation.
- Common sense use of the inductive method of study. The Bible was assumed to contain all the facts or truths which form the contents of theology, just as the facts nature form the content of the natural sciences. Just like a scientist in nature, the theological student could assume the trustworthiness of his natural senses and safely rely on his own mental faculties in their legitimate exercise.
- Conviction that all knowledge is of the same type. There is the same subject-object distinction in theological study as in any other discipline. The natural knowledge of God and the spiritual knowledge of God differ only in degree, not in kind.
- Disdain for any mystical tendencies.

Princeton dons, particularly Warfield, relied heavily on realistic epistemology in the arena of apologetics. They saw faith as arising from sufficient evidence. The action of the Holy Spirit in giving faith to the elect was not apart from evidence, but along with it. Faith was grounded in reason and conformed to objective evidence. They also saw revelation as rationally received. The knowledge of God was of the same order as the knowledge of any other truth.

§4-115. Dutch Calvinism.—Dutch Calvinism was profoundly influential worldwide and on the Netherlands as a nation. The dominant figure was that Reformed branch was Abraham Kuyper (1827-

1920). Initially drawn to classical liberalism, he came to see that approach as bankrupt, and turned to historical evangelicalism in the Reformed tradition. He wrote on many subjects (particularly well known for his ideas on sphere sovereignty), founded two newspapers, helped establish the Free University of Amsterdam, led a movement to break away from the liberal state church and establish the Reformed Church, was elected to Parliament, and became Prime Minister of the Netherlands. Whew! Theologically, he stood in line with the *Belgic Confession* (1561), the *Heidelberg Catechism* (1563), and the *Canons of Dordt* (1619). Where the Dutch Calvinists chiefly differed from the Princeton dons was in apologetics. The Princeton dons held firmly to Scottish common-sense philosophy and believed that people can understand and come to believe in Christianity. They believed it possible to rationally demonstrate a coherent system of belief that anyone could understand. In this framework, apologetics is the greatest task of the theologian. The Dutch Calvinists thought their American counterparts overestimated human reasoning abilities. They believed that the only way a person came to know the truth was by the inner witness of the Holy Spirit. In this framework, apologetics was the last task of the systematic theologian.

§4-116. 20th century: Neo-Orthodoxy and beyond.—Neo-Orthodoxy is part of the Reformed story in the 20th century. Karl Barth (1886-1968) and Emil Brunner (1889-1966) and other early exponents of Neo-Orthodoxy emphasized central themes of Reformed thought, such as divine transcendence and human sinfulness. However, their approach to the Bible deviated from traditional Reformed thinking. We will elaborate on Neo-Orthodoxy and its substantial influence in the 20th century in a separate part of these Notes.

B. Distinctive beliefs

§4-201. In general.—Reformed theology is built around the central concept of God's sovereignty. The whole of reality falls under the supreme rule of God. He is perfect in every respect and holds all righteousness and power. He created all things and sustains them. As Creator, He is in no way limited by creation.

The Reformed tradition, by its better angels, sees doing theology as part of the call to live a sanctified life. Fully understood, theology is really a matter of the heart (*cardia*), it reflects the whole person, intellect, will, and emotions that the Greek term *cardia* reflected in Koine Greek. Theology serves to sharpen the intellect, the will, and the emotions of people in such a way as to bring glory to God.

The Reformed tradition is centered on God, submitted to Scripture, focused on a properly ordered church, committed to a transformed and edifying lifestyle, and guided by a thoroughly biblical worldview. Reformed thought seeks to be God-centered, focused on His sovereign rule and redemptive work, Word-based, with Scripture as the theological norm, salvation focused, on God's redemptive work, and comprehensive, in articulating “a faith of a grand design”, encompassing state and culture, nature and cosmos.

Reformed theological method is one in which Scripture is the uniquely supreme source and authority. That authority is established through the witness of the Holy Spirit. It is a matter of Spirit and Word. In addition, the Reformed tradition has long been a confessional one. The creeds contain the testimony of the Church respecting the truth revealed in the Bible. Drawing on Scripture in the formulation of

confessions, the Church employs those confessions as guides in the subsequent interpretation of Scripture.

Scripture is the norm of norms, The voice of the church, as articulated in the confessions of faith, needs to be grounded in a sound interpretation of Scripture. The Reformed tradition reads the Scripture under the tutelage, but never the tyranny of confessional tradition. Confessional statements, properly understood, have only provisional, temporary, and relative authority. They are open to modification, giving real meaning to the Reformed motto—*reformata et semper reformanda*, reformed and always reforming. Lutheran confessional development came to a conclusion with the Formula of Concord in 1577 and the *Book of Concord* in 1580. Nothing in the Reformed tradition corresponds to this. There is no global Reformed confession.

§4-202. God.—The Reformed tradition has rejected the notion, so common in the contextual theologies of the 20th century, that human experience constitutes a source, guiding norm, or proper starting place for theology. Theology starts with God and His revealed truth, Our experience is to be guided and interpreted by the revealed truth of Scripture, not vice-versa.

For the Reformed tradition, the doctrine of God is the doctrine of doctrines. Typical Reformed descriptions of God—God as creator, as sustainer-ruler, and as redeemer—serve to flesh out an exalted view of God's sovereignty. God is absolutely prior, wholly other, and the origin of all that is. He created *ex nihilo*, out of nothing. The origin of all that exists is attributable to God and God alone. By His sovereign will, God was pleased to create as He did, and in sovereign power, was able to create as He did. God is the sustainer and ruler of all that is. This is an affirmation of divine providence. God does not abandon the world He created. He maintains and preserves that creative work. This providence consists in the governance or purposeful control over creation.

God alone is the redeemer of a fallen creation. The One who created the world will be faithful to work in and for the redemptive good of that world. He will not abandon a fallen creation but sustain and govern it to the fulfillment of His redemptive purposes. Thus, for Reformed thought, faith in providence is linked to faith in divine redemption.

Reformed faith has emphasized God's grace. Salvation is in Christ alone and by grace alone. Reformed thinking encompasses God's common grace and His saving grace. God's common grace operates in the realm of nature in general and in the realm of human affairs. This life-sustaining grace is granted to all people indiscriminately. By virtue of common grace, the full consequence of our human rebellion is restrained and life, though corrupted, is livable. Saving grace is both special because it saves us and is efficacious because it unerringly saves us.

§4-203. Bible.—Reformed biblical interpretation utilizes the principle of the analogy of faith, that Scripture is to interpret Scripture. Particular truths must be understood in light of fundamental truths. There have been differences as to what these central fundamental truths are. In the days of the Reformation, justification by faith constituted a hermeneutic key. Since the era of Protestant scholasticism in the 17th century, the biblical theme of covenant has served as an interpretative key for Reformed thinkers. Reformed thinking has always aimed to be full-orbed, to strive for a thoroughly biblical worldview.

§4-204. Election and predestination.— God in eternity past chose fallen creatures to be reconciled to Himself. In time, Christ came to save the chosen. The Holy Spirit enlightens and enables the elect to believe the gospel and receive salvation. The elect cannot resist the work of the Holy Spirit nor fall away after receiving salvation. Salvation doctrine is summarized in high Calvinistic Reformed circles by the acrostic T-U-L-I-P:

- T otal depravity;
- U nconditional election;
- L imited atonement;
- I rresistible grace;
- P erseverance of the saints.

§4-205. Protestant beliefs regarding salvation

This table summarizes the classical views of three typical Protestant beliefs regarding salvation.

Topic	Calvinism	<u>Lutheranism</u>	Arminianism
Human will	Total depravity. Humanity possesses free will, but it is in bondage to sin, until it is transformed.	Original sin. Humanity possesses free will in regard to goods and possessions but is sinful by nature and unable to contribute to its own salvation.	Humanity possesses freedom from the necessity to sin, but not freedom from sin unless enabled by prevenient grace.
Election	Unconditional election.	Unconditional election.	Conditional election in view of foreseen faith or unbelief.
Justification and atonement	Justification by faith alone. Various views regarding the extent of the atonement.	Justification for all people completed at Christ's death and effective through faith alone.	Justification made possible for all through Christ's death but only completed upon choosing faith in Jesus.
Conversion	Monergistic (of God), through the means of irresistible grace.	Monergistic (of God), through the means of resistible grace.	Synergistic (of God and people) resistible due to the common grace of free will.
Perseverance and apostasy	Perseverance of the saints: the eternally elect in Christ will certainly persevere in faith.	Falling away is possible, but God gives gospel assurance.	Perseverance is conditioned upon continued faith in Christ, with the possibility of a final apostasy.

§4-206. Church and sacraments.—The Church is the community with which God has made the covenant of grace, a promise of eternal life and relationship with God. This covenant extends to those under the "old covenant" whom God chose, beginning with Abraham. The church is both visible and invisible. The invisible church is the body of all believers, known only to God. The visible church is the institutional body which contains both members of the invisible church as well as those who appear

to have faith in Christ but are not truly part of God's elect.

To identify the visible church, Reformed theologians have spoken of certain marks of the Church. For some, the only mark is the pure preaching of the gospel of Christ. Others include the right administration of the sacraments. Still others, such as those following the Scots Confession, include a third mark of rightly administered church discipline, or exercise of censure against unrepentant sinners. These marks allowed the Reformed to identify the church based on its conformity to the Bible rather than an official magisterium or church tradition.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the sacraments. Baptism symbolizes entry into the covenant community for both children and adults. It is not necessary for salvation but is a sign of the covenant of grace. When believers partake of the Lord's Supper in faith, the Holy Spirit works in them to make them spiritual participants in the sacrament. Jesus' body and blood are spiritually present to believers in the Lord's Supper. Elders, elected by the church, teach and oversee the local church body. The unity of the church is grounded in doctrinal agreement.

§4-207. Worship practices.—The regulative principle of worship is a teaching shared by Calvinists and Anabaptists on how the Bible orders public worship. The substance of the doctrine regarding worship is that God institutes in the Scriptures everything he requires for worship in the Church and that everything else is prohibited. Based on this regulative principle, many early Calvinists also eschewed musical instruments and advocated a cappella singing exclusively from the psalms, albeit Calvin himself allowed other scriptural songs. This practice typified Presbyterian worship and the worship of other Reformed churches for some time. The original Lord's Day service designed by John Calvin was a highly liturgical service with the creed, alms, confession of sin, the Lord's Supper, doxologies, prayers, psalms and the Lord's prayer being sung, and the benediction.

Since the 19th century, Reformed churches have modified their understanding of the regulative principle and make use of musical instruments, believing that Calvin and his early followers went beyond the biblical requirements in their prohibition. Despite the protestations of those who hold to a strict view of the regulative principle, today hymns and musical instruments are in common use, as are contemporary music styles and worship praise bands.

§4-208. Covenant theology.—Reformed theologians use the concept of covenant to describe the way God enters fellowship with people in history. The concept of covenant is so prominent in Reformed theology that Reformed theology is sometimes called "covenant theology". The sixteenth and seventeenth-century theologians developed a particular theological system called covenant theology or federal theology which conservative Reformed churches continue to affirm today. This framework orders God's life with people primarily in two covenants: the covenant of works and the covenant of grace.

The covenant of works is made with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The terms of the covenant are that God provides a blessed life in the garden on condition that Adam and Eve obey God's law perfectly. Because Adam and Eve broke the covenant by eating the forbidden fruit, they became subject to death and banishment from the garden. This sin passed to all humankind because all people are said to be in Adam as a covenantal or "federal" head. Federal theologians usually infer that Adam and Eve would have gained immortality had they obeyed perfectly.

A second covenant, called the covenant of grace, was made immediately following Adam and Eve's sin. In it, God graciously offers salvation from death on condition of faith in God. This covenant is administered in different ways throughout the Old and New Testaments, but always by grace.

Through the influence of Karl Barth, contemporary Reformed theologians have discarded the covenant of works, along with other concepts of federal theology. Barth saw the covenant of works as disconnected from Christ and the gospel, and rejected the idea that God works with people in this way. Instead, Barth argued that God always interacts with people under the covenant of grace, and that the covenant of grace is free of all conditions whatsoever. Barth's theology and that which follows him is "mono-covenantal" as opposed to the "bi-covenantal" scheme of classical federal theology.

C. Contemporary setting

§4-301. In general.—The Reformed tradition emerging from the Reformation had three significant streams:

- Swiss branch;
- Scottish-English branch; and
- Dutch-German branch.

Today, the Reformed tradition is represented by the Continental Reformed, Presbyterian, Evangelical Anglican, Congregationalists, and the Reformed Baptist denominational families. The Reformed family of churches is one of the larger Protestant Christian groups with estimates running as high as seventy-five million adherents.

§4-302. Continental Reformed churches.—Considered to be the oldest and most orthodox bearers of the Reformed faith, the continental Reformed uphold the *Helvetic Confessions* and the *Heidelberg Catechism*. In the United States, immigrants belonging to the continental Reformed Churches usually joined the Dutch Reformed Church or the Anglican Church.

§4-303. Congregational churches.—The Congregational Churches are a part of the Reformed tradition founded under the influence of the New England Puritans. The *Savoy Declaration* is the confession of faith held by the Congregationalist churches. An example of a Christian denomination belonging to the Congregationalist tradition is the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference.

§4-304. Presbyterians.—Presbyterianism grew out of the Reformed tradition as it emerged from England and Scotland. Representative Presbyterian denominations include the Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA) and more conservative groups such as the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. The modernist-fundamentalist controversy has significantly impacted Presbyterianism.

§4-305. Evangelical Anglicans.—Historic Anglicanism is a part of the wider Reformed tradition, as the founding documents of the Anglican church—the *Book of Homilies*, the *Book of Common Prayer*, and the *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion*—expresses a theology in keeping with the Reformed theology of the Swiss and South German Reformation.

§4-306. Reformed Baptists.—Reformed Baptists, also known as Primitive Baptists, are a Christian denominational family that teaches believer's baptism rather than infant baptism which otherwise adheres to Reformed theology as set forth in the 1689 *Baptist Confession of Faith*.

D. Observations and concluding thoughts

§4-401. In general.—God is sovereign. In creation and in providence, He sovereignly distributes common grace to all His creatures. In redemption, He reclaims for Himself the creation and creatures He gracious calls to Himself. It is God who reforms us and is reforming us still. This is the persistent and salutary message of the Reformed tradition—*reformata et semper reformanda*, reformed and always reforming.

§4-402. Biblical commitment—Spirit and Word, but light on the Spirit.—There is a commendable emphasis on the life of the mind in the Reformed tradition. This will often take the form of worldview discussion in its quest to bring all reality into the focus of the life of faith and thinking about that faith. What is not as apparent, or rather, who is not as apparent, is the Spirit in this endeavor. While you will often hear the mantra of Spirit and Word whenever you probe Reformed thinking on the preaching and teaching ministry in this tradition, the role of the Spirit seems quite muted. He is a part of the exegetical process and that process alone.

In addition, Reformed people tend distance themselves from any type of “enthusiasm” that is often associated in discussions of the “Spirit,” whether that be revivalism or the manifestation of certain gifts of the Spirit. The phrase “doing things decently and in order” quells any discussion of the Spirit's manifestation in the believing community. It is as if the manifestations of the Spirit or enthusiastic devotion are deemed weird and inappropriate.

§4-403. Realistic assessment of human nature.—The Reformed emphasis on the true human condition is a salutary feature of this tradition. Our lost condition is certainly not the stuff of pleasant press copy, but it is a needful emphasis in an age lost in Pollyanna assessment of human nature or the machinations of secular denials of genuine evil in our midst. God's redemptive work will not reach us if we insist on denying our true condition.

§4-404. Reformed scholasticism.—Various forms of Calvinism claim to be the true version of Calvin's thought. Most of them go beyond Calvin in various ways. Scholastic rationalism is that medium. The scholastic approach to Calvinism came to the fore almost immediately after his death, always seeking to fine-tune and more precisely define his thought. They looked to the biblical text to be sure, but asked questions of it that were foreign to the text and to Calvin himself. Calvin showed little interest in precisely defining biblical inerrancy, the limited atonement, or double predestination. You can look at any number of historical controversies and expand this list of issues. The rationalism of subsequent Reformed scholars attempted to reduce everything to propositional truth, substituting deductive logic for Calvin's inductive exegesis. They assumed that Scripture answered all their questions, that it contains a full-orbed system of truth extractable by careful reasoning. Establishing first principles and using a syllogistic methodology would logically lead to the coherent, systematic whole of God's truth. The variegated nature and the multiple perspectives in Scripture were flat-lined. Inductive exegesis played a secondary role to the deductive framework posited to understand, prove and defend that very framework.

§4-405. Reducing Calvinism to T-U-L-I-P.—This is a reductionism of Calvin's thought. It is challenging to maintain the notion that Calvin fully endorsed all five points of Calvinism. In addition, the Institutes go well beyond the narrow array of theological propositions covered by T-U-L-I-P. Calvin's thought was a whole life system covering many more subjects, including the sacraments, civil government, prayer, Christian living in its variegated reality. Abraham Kuyper better captured the nuances of Calvin's thought in his *Lectures on Calvinism*.

§4-406. Covenant theology.—The idea of covenant came to be central to the articulation of Reformed theology. As originally presented, Cocceius seems to have intended a reintroduction of the idea of the relationship between God and people as central to the biblical witness, which was obscured by the scholastic emphasis on the decrees of God. The initial articulation of the covenant of works and the covenant of grace emphasized divine grace and human responsibility in accord with the biblical focus. Once again, subsequent elaboration lost this focus. The introduction of the covenant of redemption within the Godhead let in through the back door the very idea of sovereign determinism that the covenant focus was intended to obviate.

§4-407. Challenge of practical theology.—Within the Reformed tradition, especially in America, there is a tendency to substituted correct doctrine and adherence to it as the answer to an array of spiritual issues connected with practical Christian living. Rigid commitment to the tradition's emphasis on divine sovereignty, election, and predestination, have allowed those concepts to deaden human responsibility to be obedient to the Great Commission. Witness the active opposition of Reformed Baptists to the missions initiatives of William Carey.

Witness to the frequent issue in Reformed circles arising out of the questions to how one can be assured of salvation. How does one know they are truly one of the elect? Much popular Calvinistic teaching stresses an approach known as “Lordship salvation.” Increased emphasis was placed on the believer's response as proof of the desired state and began to obscure the focus on initial saving faith being a passively received knowledge of God. Justification ceased to be the balm of the troubled soul and became a new source of angst as to whether you really were saved. The practical result was that the troubled believer was directed inward – did the person find the fruits of righteousness in his or her life such as to warrant confidence before the face of God? But wasn't that precisely the wrong place to look? Contemporary advocates of this type of thinking, reminiscent of the tortured Puritan concern for a true conversion, seem unwittingly to undermine the central Reformed idea of justification by faith alone.

§4-408. New Calvinism in evangelicalism.—New Calvinism is a growing perspective within conservative Evangelicalism that embraces the fundamentals of 16th century Calvinism while also trying to be relevant in the present-day world. In March 2009, *Time* magazine described the New Calvinism as one of the "10 ideas changing the world". Major figures who have been associated with the New Calvinism are John Piper, Al Mohler, and Tim Keller.

V. Anglicans

A. Historical background

§5-101. In general.—Anglicanism emerged in England as Christians embraced the Reformation in varying degrees. The Lollards and the humanists criticized the established theological and ecclesiastical structures back in the 14th and 15th centuries. John Wycliffe, the morningstar of the Reformation, effectively critiqued the church in this time period and served as a predecessor to John Hus, Martin Luther, and others.

The governmental actions that led to the break between England and Rome began in the 1530s, especially with the Supremacy Act of 1534. These reforms in the Church of England attempted to navigate a middle way between Catholicism and Protestantism. In addition, others saw reform as navigating a middle way between Lutheranism and Calvinism. A distinctive Anglican theology began to take shape with the first two editions of the *Book of Common Prayer* (in 1549 and 1552), overseen by Thomas Cranmer. Richard Hooker's *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* in 1594 provided a more definitive for Anglicanism. Its emphasis became known as the three-legged stool—Scripture, tradition, and reason.

§5-102. Via media; Anglican history as following the royal lines.—The history of Anglicanism follows the royal line. Henry VIII (1509-1547) started things with his break with Rome, promoted an English Bible in the churches, but reasserted many Roman Catholic teachings and practices with the Six Articles Act in 1539 (transubstantiation, communion in one kind, clerical celibacy, vows of chastity, private Masses, and sacramental confession). Under Edward VI (1547-1553), Reformational changes began in earnest with two editions of the *Book of Common Prayer* (1549, 1552). Clergy were allowed to marry and reform-minded bishops were appointed. Mary I (1553-1558) attempted a full return to Roman Catholicism and martyred those instrumental in Edward's reforms, including Thomas Cranmer, Hugh Latimer, and Nicholas Ridley, among many others.

Elizabeth I (1558-1603) sought a middle way in the Elizabethan Settlement. Two Acts in 1559, the Supremacy Act, re-establishing Protestantism after Mary's reign, and the Uniformity Act, establishing a liturgical norm for church life were foundational to this settlement. Another edition of the *Book of Common Prayer* was also issued in 1559. Anglican theology followed the political settlement rather than the other way around. The *Thirty-Nine Articles* were issued in 1563 and clearly indicated where the English Church practice stood at the time. The via media approach aimed at a church that was catholic and reformed, rooted in Scripture and in Christian antiquity without the medieval practices considered corrupt.

§5-103. 17th century turmoil and resolution.—The Stuart kings followed the Tudors. James I (1603-1625) resisted Puritan calls for a more thorough reform at the *Hampton Court Conference* in 1604 but authorized a new English translation of the Bible that emerged in 1611, the King James or Authorized Version. Charles I (1625-1649) sought a return to more Roman Catholic practices, placing the Church under the oversight of William Laud (1573-1645). Civil and religious controversy led to a civil war that ended in Charles' defeat in 1646.

Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658) proved to be an able commander and eventually the Lord Protector of the Commonwealth promoting the rule of Parliament and reorganizing the Church of England along Presbyterian rather than Episcopal lines. A process of doctrinal revision and formulation resulted in the Westminster Confession in 1647, which became a standard expression of Calvinism in the English-speaking world. The rule of the saints wore thin, and the monarchy was restored under Charles II (1660-1685). The episcopal structure of the Church of England was restored and worship conducted in accordance with the *Book of Common Prayer*. That manual was revised once again in 1662 keeping in the spirit of the via media approach of the Elizabethan years. By the end of the 17th century, Anglicanism was firmly rooted in the threefold basis of Scripture, tradition, and reason.

§5-104. 18th and 19th centuries: Anglicanism in America and beyond.—In America, Anglicanism rooted in the southern colonies and, initially was an extension of the Church of England. In the 18th century, the theological climate was diverse. One wing was characterized by a strong strain of rationalism most notably in the prominence of deism. The other was a strain of revivalism that was moderately Calvinistic, affirming total depravity and the priority of God's grace, but refusing to make predestination a central tenet or to teach double predestination.

The Revolutionary War brought significant change to Anglicanism in America. After the war, English missionary societies withdrew their support and left the American churches in an impoverished condition. American Anglicanism was divided between those remaining loyal to England (mostly in the North) and those supporting the Revolution (mostly in the South). By the end of the war, Anglicanism in America was destroyed as an institution. The Episcopal Church emerged in 1789, independent from and autonomous of the Church of England. It did preserve the cultural ethos of English Anglicanism and appealed to Americans who considered themselves modern, rational, moderate, and enlightened (as did the English at the time).

Through the expansion of the British Empire and the activity of Christian missions in the 19th century, this autonomous model was adopted as the model for newly formed churches, especially in Africa, Australia, and Asia-Pacific. The term *Anglicanism* was coined to describe the common religious tradition of these churches.

§5-105. 19th century in England: Oxford movement and Latitudinarianism.—In the 19th century, there grew in English Anglicanism the Oxford Movement, a visible manifestation of neo-Catholic renewal. It distanced Anglicanism from its Protestant heritage, stressing the sacramental doctrines and the historic continuity of apostolic succession among bishops. Vigorous in the 1830s, it lost much of its steam in the 1840s by its overly aggressive pro-Roman proponents. Most notable in this period of waning influence was the resignation of John Henry Newman from his clerical duties in 1843 and his subsequent conversion to Roman Catholicism in 1845.

In addition, in the 19th century, theological liberalism flourished, finding a welcomed reception in Latitudinarianism. These people of a broad intellectual girth emphasized reason in theology and a wide tolerance of various theological beliefs.

A significant theological landmark for Anglicanism was the adoption of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral in 1867. The four points, the sufficiency of scripture, the historic creeds, the two sacraments, and the historic episcopate (apostolic succession), were proposed as a basis for ecumenical

discussion. A conference, convened by the Archbishop of Canterbury, aimed at Anglican unity and mutual encouragement and cooperation among Anglican churches. These Lambeth conferences met every ten years or so and led to a greater acceptance of pluralism among Anglicans and was influential in the revision of the *Book of Common Prayer* in 1892.

§5-106. 20th century: Fragmentation and controversy.—In the 20th century, liberalism continued to have considerable influence, as did Neo-Orthodoxy. As the century progressed, more Episcopalians came to regard each of the legs of Richard Hooker's three-legged stool of Anglican authority, – Scripture, tradition, and reason, as of equal weight, rather than Scripture having preeminence. The 20th century has brought significant controversy among Episcopalians, including the ordination of women, the consecration of homosexual bishops, the substantive changes in the *Book of Common Prayer* and in the *Hymnal*, and the effect of growing egalitarian American sentiments upon Anglican theology, polity, and worship.

B. Distinctive beliefs

§5-201. In general.—Thomas Hardy, in one of his novels, has one of his characters deliver a telling line: “There's this to be said for the Church [of England]. A man can belong to the Church and abide in his cheerful old inn and never trouble or worry his mind about doctrines at all.” Anglican characteristics often seem more familial and historical than doctrinal. Anglican theology is a method not a system. Unity in Anglicanism is conceived primarily as a shared liturgical tradition rather than a shared system of theology or explicitly delineated body of doctrinal belief.

§5-202. Method or ethos rather than system.—Instead of referring to doctrine, Anglican divines use terms like “attitudes” or “spirit” to describe the distinctives of their tradition. This ethos can be characterized as follows:

- Anglicanism is episcopal. Its polity is a central feature.
- It is liturgical. “Anglicans do their theology to the sound of church bells.”
- Anglicans are tolerant. There is a willingness to tolerate error, at least for the time being.
- Anglicanism seeks to be comprehensive, encompassing a wide variety of perspectives.
- Anglican doctrine has two central points of reference—the church and the sacraments.

§5-203. Liturgy as central.—Especially for high-church Anglicans, doctrine is not established by a teaching magisterium, or derived from the theology of a significant founder, or summed up in a confession of faith beyond the ecumenical creeds. For Anglicans, the earliest theological documents are its prayer books, which they see as the products of profound theological reflection, compromise, and synthesis.

The key is the essential relationship between liturgical worship and theology. The *Book of Common Prayer* not only shapes Anglican piety but theology as well. Anglicans do their theology to the sound of church bells is more than just a saying. Anglicanism will assert that a liturgically informed theology is a Scripturally based one. The principle of looking to the prayer books as a guide to the parameters of belief and practice is called by the Latin name *lex orandi, lex credendi* (the law of prayer is the law of belief).

The Book of Common Prayer is the foundational prayer book of Anglicanism. The original book of 1549 (revised in 1552) was one of the instruments of the English Reformation, replacing the Latin rites used in different parts of England with a single compact volume in the language of the people. It was suppressed under Queen Mary I, revised under Elizabeth I in 1559, and revised again in 1662 under Charles II. The latter version was made mandatory in England and Wales by the Act of Uniformity and was in standard use until the mid-20th century.

Although Anglican public worship is ordered according to the canonically approved services, in practice many Anglican churches use forms of service outside these norms. Liberal churches may use freely structured or experimental forms of worship, including patterns borrowed from ecumenical traditions. Anglo-Catholic parishes might use the modern Roman Catholic liturgy of the Mass or more traditional forms, such as the Tridentine Mass (which is translated into English in the English Missal) or the Anglican Missal. Catholic devotions such as the rosary and the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament are also common among Anglo-Catholics.

§5-204. Scripture, tradition, and reason.—Anglicans base their Christian faith on the Bible, traditions of the apostolic Church, the "historic episcopate", and the writings of the Church Fathers. Article 6 of the *Thirty-Nine Articles* states: "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation." It is interpreted in accordance with tradition and reason. The Anglican tradition stands opposed to the Puritan view that the church must find Scriptural warrant for everything it affirms or practices. Anglicans affirm that the Church probe Scripture for rules concerning the details of the corporate life of the Church. Anglicans value the ancient traditions of the faith and make an appeal to antiquity (or the "Fathers") for guidance in faith and practice. They often appeal to the rule of faith (the Scripture) and various standards of faith (sources like the Creeds, the Book of Common Prayer, the Thirty-Nine Articles, the catechisms, the "standard divines", and official decision councils like the Lambeth Conference of Bishops). In this confluence of Scripture and tradition, reason is not to be feared, but extensively used. However, how Scripture, tradition, and reason are to relate to one another is not clear and indeed varies considerably within the Anglican fold.

Anglicans look for authority in their "standard divines". Historically, the most influential of these, apart from Thomas Cranmer, has been the 16th-century cleric and theologian Richard Hooker. So influential was he that after 1660, he was portrayed as the founding father of Anglicanism. Hooker's description of Anglican authority as derived primarily from Scripture, informed by reason and tradition, has influenced Anglican self-identity and doctrinal reflection perhaps more powerfully than any other formula. The analogy of the "three-legged stool" of Scripture, reason, and tradition is incorrectly attributed to Hooker. Hooker's description of authority is a hierarchy, with Scripture as foundational and reason and tradition as important, but secondary authorities.

General principles that shape the reading and understanding of Scripture include:

- Scripture is internally coherent and authoritative in all its parts. Scripture is to be used to interpret Scripture.
- The Church is responsible for and accountable to a proper understanding and teaching of Scripture.
- The Holy Spirit guides the Church in the true understanding of Scripture.
- The Church looks to tradition for guidance in its interpretative task.
- Scripture reading and study is to be soteriologically and Christologically informed. As between the Testaments, the Old reveals Christ by pointing to Him as its fulfillment in the New. The

New reveals Christ as the One who fulfills what is foreshadowed in the Old.

§5-205. Church.—The church is of the utmost importance because it provides the corporate or social context for the life of faith. Article 19 of the *Thirty-Nine Articles* states: “The visible Church is the congregation of faithful [people], in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the sacraments are duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance.” This Church is both visible and invisible. Anglicans acknowledge the mixed nature of this body, but this mixed state does not render the church unworthy or incapable of its God-given functions. The visible signs of this God-given function include Baptism (the sign for incorporation into the body of Christ), Eucharist (the sign of abiding in the body of Christ), teaching (the sign of the gospel ministry of the Church), and apostolic ministry (the sign that the Church is the continuation of the ministry of the apostles).

Anglicans teach that there are three God-appointed orders of ministry: bishops, priests or presbyters, and deacons. Bishops, and only bishops, ordain priests and deacons. This is the embodiment of the Anglican belief in the historic episcopate or apostolic succession. The bishop is the living sign of the continuity of the Church and of its unity. Apostolic succession is conceived in Anglican thought in the following ways:

- Bishops are viewed in continuity with Christ's apostles.
- Bishops as having the same mission as the apostles.
- Bishops maintain the faith taught by the apostles.
- Bishops possess ministry and authority in continuity with the apostles.

The Church is the body of Christ, one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. Its unity is based on the “apostolic succession” of bishops going back to the apostles. One of those bishops is the bishop of Rome, but only one of many. The Anglican community is part of the church, and Anglican unity worldwide is represented by the archbishop of Canterbury.

§5-206. Sacraments.—The *Thirty-Nine Articles* describe sacraments as “badges or tokens of Christian profession” and “sure witnesses and effectual signs of grace.” The 1978 *Book of Common Prayer* refers to them as “signs of inward and spiritual grace.” Through the sacraments, God nurtures our faith in Him. The efficacy of the sacrament is not contingent on the moral state of the minister but their effect on the recipient is related to the recipient's moral disposition.

The Anglican tradition recognizes two sacraments: Baptism and the Eucharist. It also conveys various degrees of respect to five other rites: confirmation, ordination, matrimony, reconciliation, and unction. Baptism is both “a sign of profession” and “a sign of regeneration or of new birth”. Anglicans see infant baptism as in keeping with the analogy between circumcision in the Old Covenant and baptism in the New (citing Rom. 4:11), the Scriptural precedent of little children being included in covenants with God (Num. 3:28; Deut. 29:10-12), in accordance with Jesus' attitude toward little children in the Gospels (Mk. 10:13-16). and with Jesus' institution of the sacrament (Jn. 3:5).

The Eucharist is both a commemorative and sacramental rite. Commemorative in that the community witnesses to the sacrificial death of Christ; sacramental in that the community is nourished by the body and blood of Christ. This is possible because Christ is spiritually present in the Eucharist. Anglicans do not affirm the Roman Catholic view of transubstantiation but insist that Christ's spiritual presence is a

real one. Christ did not explain it, so the Anglicans do not try to.

C. Contemporary setting

§5-301. In general.—Anglicanism represents one of the largest Christian communions in the world. By one count, the number of Anglicans in the world is over eighty-five million as of 2011. There has been significant growth in Africa in recent decades. There are now more Anglicans in Africa than there are in England.

§5-302. Ecumenism.—Anglican interest in ecumenical dialogue dates to the Reformation. There were dialogues with both Orthodox and Lutheran churches in the 16th century. In the 19th century, with the rise of the Oxford Movement, there arose greater concern for reunion of the churches of Catholic confession. This desire to work towards communion with other denominations led to the development of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, approved in 1888. The four points, the sufficiency of scripture, the historic creeds, the two sacraments, and the historic episcopate (apostolic succession), were proposed as a basis for discussion.

§5-303. Theological diversity.—Anglicanism is committed in principle to embracing a diversity of theological viewpoints. People often describe Anglicanism as “ambiguous,” or as showing tolerance of diverging theological perspectives, or as valuing “catholicity,” or pursuing “comprehensiveness.” Their unity is liturgically based. As to Anglican theology, there are really four types:

- Evangelical Reformed;
- Broad Church or Latitudinarian;
- High Anglicans;
- Anglo-Catholics.

Anglican denominations in North America have displayed theological differences typically centered on revisions to the 1928 *Book of Common Prayer*, the ordination of women, issues related to sexuality, and the growing perception of theological liberalism. In America, the Episcopal Church is the largest communion. There are other more conservative splinter communions, such as the Reformed Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church in North America.

§5-304. Evangelical Anglicans.—These Anglicans stress Scripture rather than tradition and emphasize Calvinistic conceptions like total depravity, conversion, and justification by faith. These Anglicans are full-fledged kin to people in the Reformed tradition.

§5-305. Descendants of the Latitudinarians.— They are not particularly interested in theological issues. They are concerned with theological temper and method rather than particular formulations. Reason has wide girth here as does the diversity of opinions. These are the theological liberals of Anglicanism.

§5-306. High Anglicanism.—This group stresses the catholic continuity of the Church with a respectful appreciation of Anglicanism's Protestant heritage. The catholic continuity is expressed in sacramentalism and in the liturgy, while the Protestant heritage is expressed theologically, which tends

to be Arminian.

§5-307. Anglo-Catholics.—These are the descendants of the Oxford movement of the 19th century. They stress the catholic continuity of the Church, but with a strong tendency to minimize Anglicanism's Protestant distinctives.

D. Observations and concluding thoughts

§5-401. In general.—Via Media describes a middle way between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism and a tolerant way amidst the variety of Protestant faiths. This is done by embracing ambiguity and comprehensiveness and by emphasizing its liturgy.

§5-402. Unity and catholicity.—Anglicans do place a great deal of value on unity and catholicity. Their emphasis on unity and their tendency to a studied doctrinal ambiguity sometimes makes their ecumenical focus seem unprincipled.

§5-403. Studied ambiguity or doctrinal irrelevance.—The *39 Articles* are the doctrinal norm for the more conservative groups. That document itself was a Reformed one, but one that allowed a good deal of room among Reformed confessions. Many find the lack of specificity in Anglican doctrine, a studied ambiguity, to be disconcerting. Beyond the conservative groups in the Anglican tradition, one senses a doctrinal irrelevance amidst a series of controversies through the years. Members may accept or reject the Roman Catholic doctrines regarding Mary. Ordination of women has been approved since the 1970s and the ordination of gay bishops since 2009. The Church has allowed the blessing of same sex union.

§5-404. Centrality of liturgy.—Their worship patterns are where the Anglicans vest and the Book of Common Prayer have nourished and inspired many a worship experience. Anglican aesthetic in Christian spirituality and in worship environments is treasured by many.

VI. Baptists

A. Historical background

§6-101. In general; origins.—Baptists form a major branch of Protestant Christianity distinguished by their practice of believer's baptism by immersion. Baptist churches also subscribe to a belief in soul competency (the responsibility and accountability of every person before God), salvation by faith alone, Scripture alone as the rule of faith and practice, and congregational church polity.

There are three views of the origins of the Baptist tradition:

- An unbroken line of Baptist churches traced back to Jesus and the apostles;
- Links its origins to the Anabaptist movements of the 16th century;
- English Puritanism and Separatism as the primary contexts from which the Baptist tradition emerged.

§6-102. Early development.—John Smyth (1554-1612) provides a viable starting point for the discussion. Educated at Cambridge and ordained an Anglican priest in 1594, he withdrew from the Church of England in 1606. By 1607, he was in Amsterdam to avoid persecution and established a church based on the literal reading of its depiction in the New Testament. That included a congregational polity where each church elected its own leaders, believer's baptism, and a regenerate church membership. These are all points Baptists still affirm today. By 1610, Smyth's associate, Thomas Helwys, returned to England and established the first Baptist church in Britain, near London. The church was committed to believer's baptism, autonomous local congregations, human free will, a general rather than limited atonement, belief in original sin, traditional Christology, and observation of the Sabbath (meaning Sunday). The church was to consist of regenerate, baptized people and advocated religious freedom for all Englishmen. This church represented a stream of Baptists known as General Baptists.

A Calvinistic understanding of the atonement (the limited atonement) emerged among the Baptists shortly thereafter in the 1630s and 1640s. These were the beginnings of the Particular Baptists who gradually adopted Baptism by immersion rather than by dipping or pouring. A third stream emerged in the mid-17th century, the Seventh Day Baptists committed to sabbatarianism. All these Baptist groups faced persecution in Britain until the Act of Toleration was passed in 1689. The most influential Baptist confession is the Second London Confession of 1677. It is an adaptation of the Westminster Confession with changes conforming it to dominant Baptist views of church governance and the sacraments or ordinances.

In America, the basic divide between Baptists was between the Arminian or General Baptists, predominate in New England and the southern states, and the Calvinistic or Particular Baptists, numerous in the mid-Atlantic states. However, the centerpiece of Baptist identity was opposition to religious persecution.

§6-103. 17th century: Roger Williams and the emergence of Baptist distinctives.—The first Baptist church in America was established in Providence, Rhode Island, under the leadership of Roger Williams (1603-1684). Early Baptist churches struggled with divisions over differences between

General and Particular Baptists, between seventh day and first day worship practices, and opposition from hostile civil and ecclesiastical authorities.

§6-104. 18th century revivalism; Focus on religious liberty.—Baptists in America did not experience significant growth until the mid-18th century. It was the First (1730s and 1740s) and Second (1780s to 1805) Awakenings that brought thousands of people into the Baptist fold. Isaac Backus (1724-1806) was one of these and became an influential spokesman for religious freedom. The Baptist focus on autonomous congregations offered freedom in worship that attracted many slaves and former slaves. The first baptist church was organized in Georgia in 1778. Baptists tended to put up fewer obstacles to the formation of black churches. However, most Baptist leaders were very reluctant to allow women to participate fully in church life and governance.

§6-105. 19th century: Baptist tradition flourishes.—The first Baptist missionary society in America was formed in 1800. This missionary drive carried the Baptist message overseas but also was a catalyst for cooperation among American Baptist congregations. During the 19th century, Baptists thrived, becoming one of America's most numerous and important denominations. As the 19th century progressed a growing Baptist consensus developed represented by Augustus Strong in the North and E.Y. Mullins in the South.

§6-106. 19th and 20th century controversies.—Controversy also arose in the 19th century over missions, slavery, and modernism. Early in the 19th century, the rise of the modern missions movement, and the backlash against it, led to widespread and bitter controversy among the American Baptists. During this era, the American Baptists were split between missionary and anti-missionary.

§6-107. —Slavery controversy and its aftermath.—Leading up to the American Civil War, Baptists became embroiled in the controversy over slavery in the United States. In the First Great Awakening, Methodist and Baptist preachers had opposed slavery and urged setting the slaves free. However, over time they made accommodation with the institution, working with slaveholders in the South to be more paternalistic. Both denominations made direct appeals to slaves and free blacks for conversion. The Baptists allowed them active roles in congregations.

By the mid-19th century, northern Baptists grew in their opposition to slavery. In 1844 the Baptist Home Mission Society refused to appoint a slaveholder as a missionary who had been proposed by churches in Georgia. In reaction, the Southern Baptist Convention was formed in 1845, explicitly stating that they believed the Bible sanctioned slavery and that it was acceptable for Christians to own slaves. They believed slavery was a human institution which Baptist teaching could make less harsh.

As early as the late 18th century, black Baptists began to organize separate churches, associations, and mission agencies. In the postwar years, black people quickly left the white congregations and associations, setting up their own churches. In 1866 the Consolidated American Baptist Convention, formed from black Baptists of the South and West, helped southern associations set up black state conventions. In 1880, black state conventions united in the national Foreign Mission Convention to support black Baptist missionary work. Other national black conventions were formed, spinning off other conventions. It is the largest black religious organization and the second-largest Baptist organization in the world. By the early 21st century, forty-five percent of all African Americans identify

or had some touchstone with Baptist denominations, with the vast majority of those being within the historically black tradition.

§6-108. —Modernist controversy and its aftermath.—Late in the century, Baptists wrestled with the classical liberalism coming out of Germany, including issues arising from biblical criticism, the fundamentalist-modernist controversy, and debates over the Social Gospel. In England, Charles Haddon Spurgeon fought against modernistic views of the Scripture and severed the London Tabernacle from the Baptist Union because of this conflict. The Northern Baptist Convention in the United States had internal conflict over modernism in the early 20th century, embracing it. Two new conservative associations of congregations that separated from the convention were founded as a result: the General Association of Regular Baptists Churches in 1933 and the Conservative Baptist Association in 1947. The Southern Baptist Convention had similar conflicts over modernism, choosing to adhere to conservative theology as its official position. In the late 20th century, Southern Baptists who disagreed with this direction founded two new groups: the liberal Alliance of Baptists and the more moderate Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

§6-109. Calvinist-Arminian divide.—Issues revolved around Calvinist-Arminian divide and then later around the modernist-fundamentalist controversy. In 1833, the Baptist Convention of New Hampshire adopted a new confession of faith that softened the Calvinist theology evident in the Philadelphia Confession of 1742. This was due to the increased influence in New England of the Free Will Baptists, who rejected the doctrine of predestination. The Missions controversy described above largely grew out of the hyper-Calvinism of Baptists in the early 19th century.

§6-110. 20th century: fragmentation.—The 20th century proved to be a turbulent one for many Baptists, with differences between the conservatives who sought strict adherence to the confessional heritage and moderates, who sought greater theological latitude under Baptist principles of the supreme authority of the Bible and the freedom of individual conscience. However, despite the controversy, Baptists continued to champion the Bible as the supreme authority for faith and practice, the autonomy of local churches, believer's baptism, and the imperative of the Great Commission and missions work.

B. Distinctive beliefs

§6-201. In general.—What the Bible teaches is the primary source and final court of appeal for theology. However, formal confessional documents also play a significant role in Baptist theology. Baptists distinguish between creeds and confessions. Creeds are as authoritative, unalterable, final, and binding statements of faith and usurp the authority of the Bible. Confessions are not binding, final, and unalterable. Commitments to confessions are voluntary and express a Baptist consensus providing general instruction and guidance concerning the articles of Christian faith.

Baptists attempt to formulate their theology based on Scripture alone and approach the text in its most obvious or literal sense. They rely on the grammatical-historical method of interpretation with two tendencies:

- New Testament priority over the Old Testament;
- Affirmation of the believers' right and obligation to read and interpret the Bible directly, free from restraints by ecclesial or secular authorities.

§6-202. Staunchly biblical; not creedal.—Baptists are staunchly anti-creedal, but care deeply about theology. No creed but Christ may echo in their halls, but the theological enterprise is a real and earnest quest for truth. Eventually, truth impacts our experience. Baptists place special emphasis on the role of truth (and thus theology) in the transformation of human beings.

§6-203. Characteristic beliefs.—The Baptist emphasis on an individual's soul competency and the freedom and autonomy of the local church led to differences from the scholastic and magisterial theologies, whether Catholic or Protestant. With Scripture as the authoritative guide, Baptists emphasize the following:

- Sufficiency and supreme authority of the Bible.
- Autonomy of the local church from ecclesial and civil authorities.
- Regenerate church membership.
- Democratic form of church governance.
- Observance of the ordinances of believer's baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper.
- Most Baptist congregations emphasize evangelism and missions.
- The separation of Church and state has been a key theme since the founding of Baptist congregations.
- Baptists include both sides of the Calvinistic-Arminian divide. Calvinistic Baptists are dominant in the Southern Baptist Convention and Arminian Baptists are dominant in the mainline Baptist groups and the Free Will Baptists.

§6-204. Church local and universal; local autonomy.—Baptists emphasize the difference between the church universal and the church local. Belief in the church universal is based on passages like Matthew 16:18; 1 Corinthians 15:9; Galatians 1:13; Ephesians 1:22; 3:10, 21; Philippians 3:6. The universal church is understood as “spiritual” and does not and should not have a visible or external organization (see Jn. 15:19; Acts 4:32; Gal. 5:22; Col. 3:14; 1 Thess. 4:9; 1 Jn. 3:14; 4:7, 21). *Ekklesia* refers to local churches in the New Testament (see Acts 8:1; 9:31; 13:1; 1 Cor. 1:2; 14:23; 16:1; 2 Cor. 8:1; Gal. 1:2; Rev. 2:1). The church is not the sum of the local churches; rather the whole is present in each locale.

There is no governance structure over or between churches. Each are on an equal footing. Baptist churches associate with other local churches for mutual encouragement and ministry, and these are manifested in associations and conventions. These cooperative associations are voluntary. Local Baptist churches are democratically governed. Each believer has direct access to Christ and is his or her own priest and may be a priest to other persons. The local church is a fellowship of regenerate believers. Because of this, it is imperative to know how to identify such people. Regenerate people manifest themselves in a sanctified lifestyle.

§6-205. Ordinances, not sacraments.—Baptists understand what other Christian traditions see as sacraments (sources of grace) as ordinances (memorials to salvation events that bless the believer). They are outward rites which Christ has appointed to be administered as visible signs of the saving truth of the gospel.

§6-206. Believer's baptism as foundational.—Believer's baptism follows logically from the conviction that the church consists of regenerate believers. Baptism is a sign, a symbolic act of obedience. It does not in any way convey God's saving grace to an individual. Obedience to the

directive of the New Testament entails baptism by immersion. *Bapto* and *baptizo* convey the meaning of “to dip,” “to plunge,” or “to immerse.” In addition, the symbolism of the act requires immersion. Baptism symbolizes the death and resurrection of Christ on our behalf and the believer joined with Christ in that great deliverance. The only proper subjects for baptism then are regenerate believers. This is consistent with the teaching and example of Christ and the apostles (see Mt. 28:19; Acts 8:12; see also Mt. 3:2-3,6; Acts 2:37-38, 41: 18:8; 19:4).

C. Contemporary setting

§6-301. In general.—Many see Baptist diversity as a chief characteristic of the Baptist tradition, witnessing as it does to the idea of freedom of conscience. Theological differences among Baptists do exist in the doctrine of salvation, the place of the freedom of the will, and the extent of the atonement. The first Baptists in America were Arminian, but staunch Calvinism soon became prominent among many American Baptists. Some Baptists insist on the seventh day as the proper Sabbath and others (Landmark Baptists) assert that there is an unbroken succession of Baptist churches from the New Testament onward. The Baptist tradition is the single largest Christian tradition among African Americans.

§6-302. Plethora of Baptist groups.—According to a denomination census released in 2020, there are 241 Baptist associational members in 126 countries, 169,000 churches and 47,000,000 baptized members. Another survey done in 2020, pegged the Baptist movement has having approximately 170 million believers around the world.

§6-303. Wrestling with liberalism; fundamentalist legacy.—As elaborated above, Baptists wrestle with the effects of modernism in their tradition. This wrestling operates in two directions. The liberal direction is increasingly concerned about directions in modern culture and accommodating these. The conservative direction is increasingly concerned with defining with greater precise doctrinal positions. Tensions between these groups are very real, whether within a particular Baptist denomination or group or between such groups.

D. Observations and concluding thoughts

§6-401. In general.—The “people of the book” affirm and protect the freedom to be immediately, directly related to God through Christ. In addition, the redeemed in Christ under the Lordship of Jesus expressed through the power of the Spirit, are free to interpret the Bible apart from the prescriptions of a creed and the demands of a church or a state. Lastly, in polity, the local congregation is free to oversee its own affairs.

Baptists stand for individualism above institutionalism, for the reforming prophet more than the conforming priest, for a pietism that is private and personal before it can properly become public and social. The Baptist tendency to cultivate an individualistic spirit is troubling. This manifests itself both in the way individual believers view their local church, and in the way Baptist congregations view their relationship with the greater body of Christ.

§6-402. Personal over confession or ritual.—Baptist emphasis on a personal relationship with Christ in contrast to groups stressing ritualistic Christianity is to be commended. Conservative

Baptist churches are quite unapologetic in insisting that God does not have spiritual grandchildren.

§6-403. Giving them Bible.—Baptist churches earnestly preach from the Bible and call just as earnestly for believing responses from the congregation. In Reformed churches, one hears criticism that Baptist preaching overemphasizes evangelistic invitations. However, I have observed a strong emphasis on in preaching and teaching on Bible information and understanding.

§6-404. Priesthood of the believer.—Baptists affirm and attempt to give play to the Reformation idea of the priesthood of the believer in their church life. In governance and in other arenas of service, Baptist laity sometimes have greater freedom and opportunities for service than laity in other denominations.

§6-405. Resistance to ecclesiastical hierarchy: pros and cons.—There is a degree of wisdom in refusing to subject the local church to ecclesiastical hierarchies. A casual observer of ecclesiastical politics, can place value in local church independence. However, that same observer can easily discern local conflicts begging for discerning help in their resolution by seasoned believers not embroiled in the heat of the conflict.

VII. Wesleyan-Arminian Holiness

A. Historical background

§7-101. In general.—All [people] need to be saved; all [people] can be saved; all [people] can know they are saved; all [people] can be saved to the uttermost. Some Wesleyan-Arminians have used that line to summarize the heartbeat of their Christian tradition.

Methodist movement is a group of historically related denominations within Protestant Christianity which derive their doctrine of practice and belief from the life and teachings of John Wesley. They were named *Methodists* for the methodical way in which they conducted their Christian faith. Methodism originated as a revival movement within the 18th-century Church of England and became a separate denomination after Wesley's death. The movement spread throughout the world due to vigorous missionary activity. Methodism today has approximately 80 million adherents worldwide. The movement adopted Arminian doctrine and was the seedbed of the Holiness movement of the 19th century. The Holiness movement in turn gave birth to the Pentecostal movement of the 20th century.

1. Development of Arminianism

§7-102. Hardening of Reformed theology.—After Calvin's death, the mantle in Geneva fell to Theodore Beza. With that shift came a shift in theological method from inductive exegesis to logical deduction. Beza made predestination the logical starting point of his system. He developed a system ordering God's decrees called supralapsarianism which stressed divine sovereignty in predestination and a view of the atonement that limited its intent to the elect. With that shift came an edge to scholastic Reformed thinking that is not present in Calvin's writings. This began an age of theological system building, where the goal was the building of an all-encompassing systematic articulation of truth. The concept of justification by faith was overshadowed by a focus on divine sovereignty. The logical sequence of God's decrees was emphasized, as if scholastic theologians were meticulously documenting His actions while He created the world and carried out His plans.

Wesleyan-Arminianism is a reaction against the perceived harshness of scholastic Calvinism. Arminianism emphasizes the unlimited atonement and human freedom, while Wesleyanism emphasized justification and sanctification as crisis experiences.

§7-103. Jacob Arminius' thought.—Arminius studied under Theodore Beza in Geneva and then pastored a congregation in Leyden, Netherlands from 1588-1603. During that time, he was called on to refute the views of an Anabaptist (Koornheert (1522-1590)), who attacked what Anabaptists saw as overly austere Calvinism, especially beliefs about double predestination. During his study to lead the refutation, Arminius came to doubt some cardinal tenets of scholastic Calvinism. He attempted to return to the inductive exegetical method that Calvin employed. While the logic of the second-generation Calvinists led them to the idea of the limited atonement, Arminius' exegesis led him to the unlimited atonement, limited redemption view. He came to believe that Christ died for all humanity and that death yielded prevenient gracious benefits for all, enabling all to respond to God. He believed, as did the Reformers, that justification was by grace alone. He saw humanity as unable, apart from God's grace, to respond to God. But he became convinced that the scholastic logic that led to

supralapsarianism and unconditional double predestination made God utterly arbitrary and indeed the ultimate author of the sin He condemned. He came understand predestination as conditional and as based on God's foreknowledge of who would respond to His grace. Since God's grace enabled sinful humanity to respond to His offer of salvation, they also could freely repudiate it. In addition, contrary to the spirit of his age, Arminius argued for toleration and for freedom of conscience for Christians of all stripes.

§7-104. Remonstrants and the Synod of Dordt.—The Synod of Dordt (1619) reflected not only a theological debate between the Remonstrants (followers of Arminius) and the strict Calvinists, but also a struggle between the precise supralapsarians and the flexible (*rekkelijke*) Calvinists. In addition, there was a struggle between political factions led by Prince Maurice and Gomarius on the strict Calvinist side and John Oldenbarneveldt and Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) on the more flexible side. The scholastics won and the result was the articulation of five-point Calvinism, often summarized by the acrostic T-U-L-I-P.

Remonstrants vs. Strict Calvinists	
<i>Remonstrants' Five Points</i>	<i>Scholastic Calvinism's Five Points</i>
Depravity is in extent and not in degree. God's prevenient grace enables people to freely choose to come to God.	T otal depravity
Decree of salvation applies to all who believe in Christ and who persevere in faith.	U nconditional election
Christ died for all.	L imited atonement
God's grace is resistible.	I rresistible grace
It is possible for Christians to renounce their faith and be lost eternally.	P erseverance of the saints

§7-105. Arminianism in England.—Even before the Synod of Dordt, Richard Hooker (1553-1600), an influential English preacher/teacher was instrumental in modifying strict Calvinism in Anglicanism. He insisted that justification was a divine act made possible only by the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. However, he was an advocate for the personal responsibility of the believer, arguing that “the validity of a [person's] election to justification does depend on [his or her] own consent”. William Laud (1573-1645), archbishop of Canterbury under Charles I, also argued for an interpretation of saving faith that made human beings cooperative agents with God in the work of their salvation. As the Anglican Church struggled for a mediating way between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, Arminian Anglicanism developed a following. While the Thirty-Nine Articles adopted in the 16th century were primarily Calvinistic, by the 18th century, most Anglican clergy held Arminian views of the atonement, election, and justification.

§7-106. Later developments.—In later developments, many English and Dutch Arminians developed rationalizing tendencies. In England, Arminianism developed a strong affinity to Socinianism in Christology (a view that denied both the Trinity and the deity of Christ) and took on a decidedly Pelagian view of humanity (a view that denied human depravity and the necessity of the substitutionary

atonement of Christ for salvation).

2. John Wesley and Wesleyanism

§7-111. In general; up to Aldersgate.—John (1703-1791) and Charles (1707-1788) Wesley were nurtured in an Anglican rector's home and taught an Arminian Anglicanism. Both were educated at Oxford and were leading members of the Holy Club there in the early 1730s. They were mocked for their methodical piety from which the term “Methodist” comes. In 1736, John traveled to the Georgia colony with an Anglican mission society. He failed miserably as a missionary. On his return, he attended a meeting at Aldersgate Chapel in London in 1738 where he felt his heart “strangely warmed”. He wrote in his journal “I felt I did trust Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given to me that He had taken away my sin, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.”

§7-112. 18th century Awakening and organization.—Wesley was influenced by the Puritan stress on moral earnestness and their insistence on single-minded devotion. His Moravian connections heightened his awareness of the Holy Spirit's workings and stressed the value of personal religious experience. Pietism's emphasis on practical religious devotion and lifestyle made its mark as did Arminian teaching, particularly its clear affirmation of the universal availability of divine grace. Wesley believed in conditional predestination. God issued a conditional decree that those who believe will be saved and offers this salvation through a grace that can be resisted by human free will. Those who receive this saving grace can make a shipwreck of their lives, forfeiting that grace and perishing forever.

The organizing conference of Methodism took place in 1744. In the years that followed, the various Methodist societies developed an interconnected network. Wesley's disputes with the Moravians confirmed Methodism's sacramentalism and his controversy with the Calvinists, its Arminian teaching. His earnest dispute with what he regarded as antinomianism helped intensify Methodist preaching and teaching on holiness and purity of heart.

Early Methodists were drawn from all levels of society, including the aristocracy, but the Methodist preachers primarily took the message to laborers and others who tended to be left outside organized religion at that time. In Britain, the Methodist Church had a major effect in the early decades of the developing working class (1760-1820). In the United States, it became the religion of many slaves who later formed black churches in the Methodist tradition. Methodists are historically known for their nonconformity to the world, reflected by their traditional standards of a commitment to abstinence from alcohol, proscription of gambling, regular attendance at class meetings, and weekly observance of the Friday fast.

Francis Asbury (1745-1816) and Thomas Coke (1747-1814) played key roles in shaping American Methodism. Coke served as the first bishop of the American Methodist Episcopal Church. Methodist teaching in America was shaped by Wesley's *Standard Sermons* and his *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*. During the 18th century, the American Methodist movement was essentially a missionary enterprise led by lay people. In 1784, the Methodist Episcopal Church was formally organized. The African Methodist Episcopal Church became an official denomination in 1816. The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church Followed in 1821.

§7-113. 19th century Awakening and Methodist growth.—American Methodism accepted as a

doctrinal standard Wesley's *Twenty-Four Articles of Religion*. In addition, Richard Watson's *Theological Institutes* (1823) and Adam Clarke's *Bible Commentary* (1810-1826) were widely used. Early Wesleyan theology emphasized salvation, moral responsibility, and the practical results of heart-felt faith. This became increasingly pronounced during the years of the Second Great Awakening.

As the 19th century progressed, Methodism became the fastest growing church in America (from 18,000 in 1794 to 580,000 in 1840). As Methodist itinerants settled into localized pastorates, the weekly class meetings of Methodist lay leaders declined. They were meant to support the work of Methodist itinerant preachers. Later in the century, Methodist systematic theologies appeared, including one by Miley (1892-1984) and another by Pope (1880), which took more of an analytical approach to the subject, rather than the experiential approach of earlier teaching.

§7-114. 20th century; impact of liberalism and contextual theologies.—In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, classical liberalism caught up with Methodism. The work of liberal scholars, who became known as Boston Personalists, attempted to craft a distinctive liberal tradition within Methodism. Holiness Methodists resisted this liberal movement. As the 20th century continued, so did this trend. There was a continuing debate between those who found Methodism's reason for being to be in the traditional Wesleyan heritage and those that located that reason for being in the current state of Methodist church life and in response to the modern situation as they perceived it. One side lamented the diminishing emphasis on the evangelical Arminianism of Wesley. The other wed current Methodism to schools of thought such as Neo-Orthodoxy, black theology, liberation theology, feminist theology, process thought, and the like, focusing their effort in addressing social issues. The latter group is characterized by the emergence of self-aware caucuses aimed at advancing the interests of various minority communities.

Theology has reflected this divide. The traditional Wesleyan conceptualization of the sources and norms of theology were fourfold: Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. The socio-cultural group focuses on its own unique group concerns and takes its direction from experience and reason. The Holiness groups focus on Scripture and emphasize a second, dramatic work of grace after conversion and an emphasis on Christian perfection. The most conspicuous thing about modern Methodist thought is its lack of consensus. Traditional Wesleyan thought has given way to diversity, disagreement, and division.

3. Methodism and the Holiness Movement

§7-121. Holiness movement; cradle of Pentecostalism.—In the late 19th century, within Methodist Holiness circles, it was perceived that theological developments in Methodism represented a deviation from traditional Wesleyan principles. There was particular concern about the neglect of Christian perfection. These rumblings over the importance and nature of holiness began to mute the traditional Wesleyan emphasis on the growth of holiness during life that every Christian should enjoy. This movement emphasized two crisis experiences, conversion and sanctification. A renewed emphasis on a second work of grace in an immediate fashion grew. New Methodist denominations sprang from this emphasis, such as the Free Methodists in 1860. Women were particularly active in the Methodist holiness movement of the second half of the 19th century. Phoebe Palmer (1807-1874) played an important role in popularizing Holiness sanctification doctrine in the United States.

§7-122. Move away from Wesley's teaching.—The Holiness groups themselves moved away from Wesley's holiness teaching when they followed a view of entire sanctification as one that was instantaneous. In addition, the movement tended toward legalism and absolutizing cultural norms, defining holiness in terms of activity or abstention from activity rather than as perfect love, as Wesley did. For Wesley, there was always a tension between crisis and process in sanctification. Holiness thinkers attempted to resolve this tension by suggesting a distinction between sanctification and maturity. Entire sanctification was instantaneous, while maturity was a gradual growth in grace.

§7-123. Synthesis of Wesleyanism and Arminianism.—Holiness groups adopted the position that God's prevenient grace provides for the ability of people to respond to God and that salvation is conditional. The charge of semi-Pelagianism (suggesting a level of human ability and human initiative in salvation) was not true of early Holiness groups. Evangelical Arminianism holds a view like that of Calvinism on human depravity. Apart from God's initiative, humanity is unable to respond without a prior work of grace. While Reformed theology asserts that saving grace is extended only to the elect and is irresistible, evangelical Arminianism contends that prevenient grace is extended to all humanity and is resistible. Prevenient grace does not itself bring salvation but restores humanity's ability to respond to God's saving grace. Evangelical Arminianism has emphasized the unlimited atonement, human free will, and justification by grace alone. Wesleyan holiness groups tended to ascetic self-denial, often saw God's presence confined to “religious experiences,” frequently over-emphasized feeling, and were eager to claim “the leading of the Holy Spirit.”

§7-125. Pentecostalism.—Pentecostalism is an offshoot of Wesleyan Holiness thinking. Holiness doctrine explained that entire sanctification was a “second work of grace” that culminated in the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Around 1900, Charles Parham formulated a doctrine that the initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was glossolalia, or speaking in tongues.

The revival that began on Azusa Street in Los Angeles in 1906 marked the beginning of the Pentecostal movement in America. The baptism of the Holy Spirit seen as a second blessing, inaugurating a fully sanctified and dedicated life, evidenced by speaking in tongues, became the hallmark of Pentecostal groups.

B. Distinctive beliefs

§7-201. In general.—Methodism is described as “non-theological,” being “practical and evangelical” instead. There is a concern for “practical divinity.. Wesley himself was characterized as a “folk theologian.” The Wesleyan tradition has been primarily concerned with preaching the message of salvation and with teaching the principles of holy Christian living.

Wesleyan-Arminian theology is concerned to ameliorate what it sees as the harshness of scholastic Reformed theology. It seeks to address the fairness of God because it sees scholastic Reformed thinking as projecting an arbitrary, uncaring, and distant deity. How could God hold human beings responsible for obedience to commands they are powerless to obey? This perspective emphasizes divine foreknowledge, free will and responsibility, and universal (common) enabling grace. Wesleyan thought is Arminian but has a stronger sense of the reality of sin and dependence on divine grace.

§7-202. Quadrilateral—sources and norms for theology.—Wesleyans appeal to the “quadrilateral”:

Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. Wesleyan preaching and teaching is grounded in Scripture, informed by Christian tradition, enlivened by experience, and tested by reason. However, the quadrilateral is not one of four coordinate sources, but one primary source (Scripture) and three subordinate sources (tradition, experience, and reason). The subordinate sources may complement Scripture when Scripture does not give specific guidance but only general principles.

Wesley's approach to Scripture was to seek the literal or plain sense of the text, not excluding figurative or analogical sense but not moving to those senses too easily. He also used unambiguous passages to interpret those whose meaning was less clear. He used Scripture to interpret Scripture, looking to the whole of Scripture to provide interpretative clues. A key Wesleyan concept was the idea of holiness, the theme that God desires the perfection of humanity.

Methodists also make use of tradition, drawing primarily from the teachings of the Church Fathers and Anglican traditions as sources of authority. Tradition may serve as a lens through which Scripture is interpreted. Common sources of tradition include the *Thirty-Nine Articles* and the *Book of Common Prayer* from the Anglican tradition as well as Wesley's *Sermons* and his *Notes* (on the New Testament).

Reason is properly embraced when received as a gift of prevenient grace. It can structure and systematize study, guide the interpretation of Scripture, and provide the conceptual vehicle with which theological ideas are expressed. Every doctrine must be defended rationally; faith must not be divorced from reason.

In addition, Wesley himself contended that a part of the theological method would involve experiential faith. In other words, truth would be confirmed in personal experience of Christians. Experience is not an emotion or a feeling, but a medium for receiving reality, for participating in the real world.

§7-203. Anthropology. The Wesleyan-Arminian tradition can be understood in contrast to Reformed theology. Reformed theology is driven by its theocentricity—the sovereign activity of God, who glorifies Himself by sending Jesus Christ to redeem His elect. Wesleyan-Arminianism is anthropocentric—God is viewed primarily as love. God in Christ extends His love to all people and each person must accept the personal responsibility for their response or lack thereof to that love. Wesley's idea of entire sanctification again revolved around this idea of God's love expressed in a purifying love in the believer's life. Evangelical Wesleyan-Arminianism has at its center a combination of Wesley's concept of holiness and an Arminian emphasis on a synergistic soteriology.

Most people in the Wesleyan-Arminian tradition believe that depravity is inherited. Wesley believed this inherited nature is totally depraved, corrupted in all its faculties. Late in his life, Wesley came to believe that the guilt of original sin inherited was canceled by the work of Christ on the cross. The Wesleyan-Arminian tradition usually defines original sin as the corruption of human nature, with death as its universal penalty. This differs from the Reformed tradition that understands original sin as the immediate imputation of Adam's sin. Wesley used the term *prevenient* (from Latin *prevenire* = God's grace that comes before) to describe the activity of God that restores human ability to respond to the offer of salvation. Both Wesley and Arminius believed that all human faculties are debilitated by sin, including the will, until assisted by divine grace. The fallen nature is not free; prevenient grace intervenes to restore the capacity to respond to God forfeited by the Fall.

§7-204. Justification by faith.—The center of Wesley's theological thought was justification by faith and entire sanctification. Perhaps his greatest influence on Christian thought and practice was his emphasis on a crisis experience in regeneration and in sanctification.

Arminians hold to a synergistic view of salvation, initiated by God and responded to by people. People must cooperate with God's gracious but resistible call to salvation. The free will to accept that gracious offer cannot be exercised without God's *prevenient grace* (the grace that comes before), so there is no merit whatever in our acceptance of God's grace. Synergism is the human response enabled by *prevenient grace* which leads to saving, justifying grace.

§7-205. Election; predestination.—Predestination is God's general and gracious plan of saving people by adopting them as children through Christ, based on their response to His offer of grace. Predestination is based on God's foreknowledge. God, based on foreknown faith in people, chooses people to be heirs of eternal life. This is conditional, dependent on the personal acceptance of the universal call to salvation by faith in Christ alone. This call to salvation is resistible by people.

Reformed groups are known for their extensive elaboration of the decrees of God. It is something of a distinguishing hallmark of scholastic Calvinism. One does not often hear of decrees in Arminian circles. Arminius did posit a set of divine decrees different from the Reformed articulation:

- God decreed salvation through Jesus Christ;
- He decreed that those who repent and believe would find favor;
- God decreed prevenient grace, an enabling grace so that everyone is able to repent and believe;
- God decreed who would be saved or condemned based on His foreknowledge of how they would freely respond to His gracious offer.

So when Arminians speak of God's foreordination, it goes like this: God predestined to salvation those who He foreknew would repent and believe (conditional election). Christ suffered for the sins of all humanity, thus making an unlimited atonement. However, redemption is limited to those who respond to the gospel by faith in Christ. Salvation can be lost by a believer, so those in the faith must persevere in faith to the end.

Thus, salvation is a three-step process of grace: prevenient grace (God's grace that goes before and enables fallen people to respond to His offer of salvation), justifying grace (the grace that saves), and sanctifying grace (the grace that completes or perfects one in the love of God).

The believer should seek this sanctifying grace, or what Wesleyans describe as entire sanctification. This is a second work of grace in the believer's life produced by the Holy Spirit that perfects the believer in love. This perfection is not absolute, but relative and dynamic. When one can love without self-interest or impure motive, then that believer has achieved the perfection of entire sanctification (not sinless perfection one later finds in the Holiness movements).

§7-206. Prevenient grace.—Prevenient grace is central to Wesleyan thought. This is the favor of God bestowed freely and selflessly to work redemptively for all humanity. Classical Wesleyan thought on human sinfulness is neither Pelagian or semi-Pelagian, both of which deny the necessity of divine grace for initiating salvation. It views human sinfulness as universal and disabling any self-energized response to God but also sees the corresponding availability of enabling grace. It rejects Calvinistic

ideas of predestination as deterministic and as deadening to evangelism. Prevenient grace is universally available to every human being, its object being to make people free and responsible. People are fallen and corrupt in their nature and therefore morally helpless in themselves. However, they are also recipients of this helping grace in Christ whereby they are made capable of responding to the gospel. This grace is a universal benefit of the atonement, making people savable, assuring the salvation of infants and those beneath the age of reason, and restoring a sufficient degree of moral ability to permit moral action in real freedom. Prevenient grace is the grace that comes before; God's activity prior to any human movement towards God. It enables human response without overriding human responsibility.

Arminians use the term *prevenient grace* in two distinct ways. In one sense, it is kin to the Reformed concept of *efficacious grace* with a crucial difference. Efficacious grace in Reformed usage is an inevitable and irresistible moving of the Spirit in working the salvation of the elect. Wesley understood *prevenient grace* as enabling humanity to respond to God's offer of salvation without compelling that response. In a second sense, Wesleyan-Arminians see *prevenient grace* as influencing every activity of humanity from the first stirring of faith to the most devoted response in sanctification.

§7-207. Protestant beliefs regarding salvation

This table summarizes the classical views of three typical Protestant beliefs regarding salvation.

Topic	Calvinism	Lutheranism	Arminianism
Human will	Total depravity. Humanity possesses free will, but it is in bondage to sin, until it is transformed.	Original sin. Humanity possesses free will in regard to goods and possessions but is sinful by nature and unable to contribute to its own salvation.	Humanity possesses freedom from the necessity to sin, but not freedom from sin unless enabled by prevenient grace.
Election	Unconditional election.	Unconditional election.	Conditional election in view of foreseen faith or unbelief.
Justification and atonement	Justification by faith alone. Various views regarding the extent of the atonement.	Justification for all people completed at Christ's death and effective through faith alone.	Justification made possible for all through Christ's death, but only completed upon choosing faith in Jesus.
Conversion	Monergistic (of God), through the means of irresistible grace.	Monergistic (of God), through the means of resistible grace.	Synergistic (of God and people) resistible due to the common grace of free will.
Perseverance and apostasy	Perseverance of the saints: the eternally elect in Christ will certainly persevere in faith.	Falling away is possible, but God gives gospel assurance.	Perseverance is conditioned upon continued faith in Christ; with the possibility of a final apostasy.

§7-208. Entire sanctification; Christian perfection.—The call to sanctified holiness is also a characteristic of the Wesleyan tradition. Imputed righteousness in justification must become imparted righteousness in sanctification. Believers are regarded as holy (set apart) but also can be holy and should be. Entire sanctification is a state of perfect love, righteousness, and true holiness that every regenerate believer can attain. It is that work of the Holy Spirit, after regeneration, by which the consecrated believer, exercising faith in Christ's atoning blood, is cleansed from all inward sin and empowered for service.

Entire sanctification, or Christian perfection as it came to be called, entails not only a cleansing from all sin but an infusion of divine love. This will enable clearer spiritual discernment, easier victory over temptation, greater strength for duty, more intense experience of love, and closer communion with God. Just as people must respond by repentance and faith in the new birth, so too they must respond in consecration and faith if Christian perfection is to be experienced. Usually, this experience is a specific and definite act of God distinct from conversion, often referred to as a “second blessing” or “second work of grace”. Later in the 19th century, Holiness teaching specifically associated this second blessing with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, manifested by the gift of tongues.

Christian perfection was one of Wesley's distinctive doctrines and one frequently maligned and misunderstood. By this he meant the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life in which the believer's heart is cleansed from sin so the person can live in perfect love toward Christ in an unbroken relationship. Wesley distinguished this teaching from absolute perfection when a person completely ceases from sinning. His idea of Christian perfection was not sinless living, but a purified love toward God. He thought this type of entire sanctification was both the proper goal of Christian living and a distinct possibility.

§7-209. Problem of assurance.—Assurance of salvation was/is a major pastoral concern for both Calvinist and Arminian pastors. If people cannot have any certainty of their state of salvation, then the good news of the gospel received is not one of joy but of trepidation and even fear. Wesley asserted that saving faith grows and is given an inward testimony of the Spirit that a person is a child of God. However, the Arminian understanding allowed the possibility of a final apostasy and that loomed large in Wesleyan thought and pastoral concern.

C. Contemporary setting

§7-301. In general.—Tens of millions of people associated with Wesleyan and Methodist churches. Methodism is a worldwide movement, and Methodist churches are present on all populated continents. Although Methodism is declining in Great Britain and North America, it is growing in other places—at a rapid pace in, for example, South Korea.

§7-302. Worship and liturgy.—The movement has a wide variety of forms of worship, ranging from high church to low church in liturgical practice, in addition to tent revivals, brush arbor revivals, and camp meetings held at certain times of the year. Interestingly, denominations that descend from the British Methodist tradition are less ritualistic, while American Methodism is more so. Methodism is known for its rich musical tradition. Charles Wesley was instrumental in writing much of Methodist hymnody.

With respect to public worship, the Wesley brothers endowed Methodism with worship characterized by the ritual liturgy of the *Book of Common Prayer* on the one hand and the non-ritualistic preaching service on the other. This twofold practice became distinctive of Methodism because worship in the Church of England was based solely on the *Book of Common Prayer* and worship in the nonconformist churches was exclusively that of preaching services, with the Eucharist observed infrequently. John Wesley's influence meant that, in Methodism, the two practices were combined. The Lovefeast, traditionally practiced quarterly, was another practice that characterized early Methodism. John Wesley taught that it was an apostolic ordinance.

§7-303. Various Methodist churches and Methodist-like groupings.—There is diversity in modern Methodism. Formal groups include United Methodist Church (1968), African Methodist Episcopal Church (1816), African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (1821), Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (1870), the Free Methodist Church (1860), and the Wesleyan Church (1843). There are numerous Methodist-like groups as well such as the Church of the Nazarene and the Salvation Army.

§7-304. Ecumenical activity.—Methodists have been involved in the ecumenical movement, which has sought to unite the fractured denominations of Christianity. Because Methodism grew out of the Church of England, a denomination from which neither of the Wesley brothers seceded, some Methodists have regarded their movement more as a preaching order within wider Christian life than as a church, comparing them with the Franciscans in Catholicism, who formed a religious order within the medieval European church and not a separate denomination. Methodists have been deeply involved in early examples of church union, especially the United Church of Canada and the Church of South India. In addition, a disproportionate number of Methodists take part in inter-faith dialogue.

D. Observations and concluding thoughts

§7-401. In general.—Evangelical Arminianism has always focused on practical theology and not on system building. Perhaps Wesley's greatest contribution was his quadrilateral, a hermeneutical method based on four sources: Scripture as paramount and tradition, experience, and reason as complementary. In addition, Wesley's emphasis on “practical divinity” and on earnest holy living has had a beneficial effect on generations of believers.

§4-102. Optimism concerning human nature.—Arminian theology has tended to lose the Wesleyan emphasis on the depravity of human nature. English Arminianism has consistently flirted with Pelagianism with its insistence on the essential goodness of human nature. In the 19th century that led to its fascination with the classical liberalism coming out of Germany.

§7-403. Tendency to theological drift.—Arminianism emerged in response to Reformed scholasticism and evolved towards Socinianism, unitarianism, and legalistic moralism. Arminius' approach to inductive exegesis was not fully adopted by his successors. They drank deep of the rationalism of the Enlightenment and progressively abandoned the supranaturalism of Christianity. Today, many in mainline Methodism has abandoned orthodoxy for the exaltation of the goodness of humanity.

§7-404. Earnestness for holy living.—The Wesleyan holiness doctrine of entire sanctification is problematical. On the one hand, it has inspired an earnestness for holy living in generations of

believers. On the other hand, it leads to an understanding of sin as conscious acts of willful disobedience to known law falls far short of the biblical picture and tends to treat sin as isolated acts rather than as a condition of radical fallenness. This idea of Christian perfection, flawed as it is, also produced an even more flawed concept that the sanctified person never sins. As embodied in the Holiness tradition, this emphasis on sinless perfection grew rigidly legalistic, attempting to define holiness in terms of outward piety or the avoidance of certain prescribed activities. In fairness, Wesley himself warned against such a definition of perfection and focused on a heart that was oriented toward the love of God. In addition, most evangelicals reject the idea of the instantaneous nature of Wesleyan entire sanctification.

§7-405. Assurance of salvation.—Wesley's teaching on the assurance of salvation has been critiqued. In fact, in Wesley's own journal, there are entries at various times in his life where he appeared to doubt the reality of his own salvation. At times, he reflected the problem inherent in the tradition that bears his name, looking inward for assurance of salvation opposed to looking away toward Jesus Christ.

§7-406. Forefront on issues of social engagement.—The genius of the Wesleyan revivals was this tradition's ability to meet people where they were. That led them to be engaged in the practical issues of people's lives in a far more effective than with the Anglican tradition. It has also tended to lead them to a reductionism, where the gospel was reduced to people's immediate social needs and issues.

§7-407. Women in ministry.—From its earliest days, women had a prominent place in Methodist ministry. Their gifts were recognized and utilized far more effectively in this tradition than in others.

VIII. Dispensationalists

“There are social and pastoral problems concerning which a preacher should be instructed, but these are secondary compared to his call to minister the truth of God.”

“Simply put, the basic unifying issue for all dispensationalists is that Israel is not the church.”

A. Historical background

§8-101. In general.—Dispensational history can be traced through four generations:

- Formulative era—This period began with John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) and flourished with the Plymouth Brethren movement in the early and mid-19th century.
- Crystallization era—This period was comprised of the generation of the Bible and prophecy conferences in the late 19th century, the work of C.I. Scofield (1843-1921), and reaching its conclusion in ministry of Lewis Sperry Chafer (1871-1952);
- Traditional era—This was the period between Chafer and the 1980s, including such figures as John Walvoord (1910-2002), Dwight Pentecost (1915-2014), and Charles Ryrie (1925-2016).
- Progressive era—This period began in the 1980s and continues today.

§8-102. Formulative era.—The movement started with Darby in the 1830s. A priest in the Church of Ireland, Darby abandoned its ranks for what he perceived to be its apostasy and joined the Plymouth Brethren. He developed a distinct understanding of the church. He did not think the church should be identified with any institution but was a spiritual fellowship. He saw a radical discontinuity between the church and Israel in the Scriptures, asserting that God had two separate peoples and two separate programs He was working out. This discontinuity made it essential to “rightly divide the Word of truth.” This understanding of the church combined with a futurist view of biblical prophecy and a doctrine of the pretribulational rapture of the church provided the initial structure of dispensationalism.

Darby saw successive periods in the Scriptures in which the principles governing the relationship between God and humanity seemed to change. These periods or dispensations all had a leading principle or condition God had sanctioned. These dispensations provided structure to view the sweep of redemptive history, but Darby's teaching itself was fundamentally concerned with a proper understanding of the church and its character of life. He saw the institutional church as apostate, and came to view the genuine church as “heavenly,” distinct and separate from the corrupted earthly church. It was the nation of Israel that constituted God's earthly and visible people.

Darby carried dispensational ideas far beyond England. His efforts as an itinerant preacher and the publishing efforts of early Brethren leaders gained a hearing for dispensationalism, particularly among Presbyterians and Baptists in America. Plymouth Brethren developed an emphasis on the priesthood of the believer and thus the responsibility of the laity in ministry, which sparked an interest in personal Bible study and devotional and expository literature.

The Bible and prophecy conferences began in 1876 designed to promote premillennial eschatology, but also gave a significant boost to dispensationalism. The promoters of these conferences insisted on the absolute authority of the Scriptures, the literal fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (in Israel, not the church), and the expectation of the imminent return of Jesus Christ. These conferences effectively

introduced and promoted dispensationalism to American Protestantism.

§8-103. Crystallization or confessional era.—The Bible conference movement in the late 19th century spread dispensationalism widely and popularized premillennialism as an eschatological system. However, dispensationalism as a single, cohesive system only came to the fore with the publication of the Scofield Reference Bible in 1909 and its revision in 1917. Scofield was in sync with Darby regarding the literal interpretation of the Bible, the basic structure of dispensations through which to view the sweep of redemptive history, the approach to end times events, and the distinction between Israel and the Church and the prophetic futures of both.

The Scofield Reference Bible attained an informal confessional status within dispensationalism. The most prominent feature of dispensational understanding in this period was that God was pursuing two different purposes, one earthly (with Israel) and the other heavenly (with the church). God's purpose on earth was to release it from the curse and restore humanity to freedom from sin and death. This would be accomplished in the millennial kingdom and continue throughout eternity. The church was God's heavenly people and should adopt an attitude of disengagement from the political and social structures of the world.

Early dispensationalists saw the church as a parenthesis in the history of redemption, essentially unrelated to God's purpose on earth. These early dispensationalists also distinguished between the kingdom of God (God's moral rule over the hearts of believers) and the kingdom of heaven (referred to only in Matthew and allegedly related to the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant for the kingdom inaugurated upon Christ's second coming). Scofield popularized dispensational eschatology and Clarence Larkin charted it. Larkin was a mechanical engineer turned preacher and developed and published charts seen as indispensable to understanding God's Word among dispensationalists of the era.

§8-104. Dispensational traditionalism.—Dallas Theological Seminary was founded in the 1930s and soon became the most noteworthy institution in the Dispensational tradition. Lewis Sperry Chafer was the seminary founder and first president and played a significant role in developing dispensational theology. In a phrase, what Scofield popularized, Chafer systematized. He taught the upcoming generation of dispensational teachers, including John Walvoord, Dwight Pentecost, and Charles Ryrie.

The New Scofield Reference Bible (1967) and Charles Ryrie's *Dispensationalism Today* (1965) marked changes in dispensational thinking from the 1950s and 1960s on. The eternal dualism between Israel and the church, so central to early dispensationalism, was abandoned and in its place came an understanding that God had two purposes in history but a single people in eternity. They had a unified view of salvation by grace across the various dispensations and moved away from previous distinctions between the “kingdom of heaven” and “kingdom of God.”

In addition, pastoral concerns came to the fore in the movement. While continuing to understand the church as a spiritual entity, and not involved with the world, the community aspects of the church and its “body life” and the need to encourage and build up one another emerged in dispensational teaching. In expositing the Scriptures, Ryrie and others insisted that the literal hermeneutic belonged to the essence of dispensationalism and disavowed the heavy indulgence in typology (a type of spiritualizing that attempted to interpret parts of the Old Testament as predictive images of New

Testament truth) that characterized early dispensationalism. Another shift came with the increasing agreement among dispensational scholars that the distinction in early dispensationalism between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven was a forced one, fundamentally driven by dispensational presuppositions regarding the dualism between Israel and the Church.

§8-105. Progressive dispensationalism.—In the 1980s, a group known as progressive dispensationalists came to the fore. This was a group that began to critique dispensationalism from within the tradition. They emphasized the progressive fulfillment throughout the dispensations of God's redemptive work. Earlier dispensational models had posited multiple purposes in God's redemptive plan but failed to integrate them in unfolding salvation history. The progressive dispensationalists also focused on continuities between God's peoples, Israel and the Church (still seen as separate communities in God's redemptive purposes). The eschatological kingdom was promised in both the Old and New Testaments, but its focus was always on the person and work of Jesus Christ.

B. Distinctive beliefs

§8-201. In general.—The earnest desire to rightly interpret the Bible is at the heart of the dispensational tradition. In addition, from the outset of the tradition, there was an accompanying vigilant pursuit of holy living. Darby himself was burdened about the moral purity and spiritual holiness of those who would name the name of Christ. Separated, holy living was to accompany and be in accord with biblical teaching.

§8-202. Bible exposition.—The dispensational tradition is committed to biblical exposition. Dispensationalists see their theological method as simply the unfolding exposition of the Bible. The Bible is the verbal, infallible, and inerrant revelation of God to His people, the church. The Bible provides the sure foundation for Christian life and practice. The inspiration and authority of the Scriptures is assumed; it is dispensationalism's “watershed presupposition”.

There is little attention given to theological traditions. This has given rise to tensions with other traditions, particularly the Reformed. Dispensationalists see the Reformed tradition as distorting Scriptural teaching because of too great an adherence to confessional loyalties and scholastic reasoning. Likewise, since rational extrapolation and a dependence on experience are not to be sources for theology, a natural suspicion of contextual theologies follows. The role of experience is not to reveal theological truth to us, but rather to be the arena in which Biblical truth finds its expression and impact.

Dispensationalists believe in the perspicuity of the biblical text. What that means is that those things relating to salvation which are necessary to be known, believed, and observed, are clearly communicated in Scripture. The Bible can be understood by the ordinary believer using the ordinary means of study. Scripture is not the preserve of theological scholars or members of ecclesiastical hierarchies.

§8-203. Biblical interpretation.—Dispensationalists see the sixty-six books of the Bible as marked by a divinely inspired unity. Scofield and others find that unity focused on the person and work of Jesus Christ. Biblical unity is seen as soteriological and Christological.

In addition, dispensationalists are insistent on a “literal” hermeneutic. This literal interpretation strives to give the words of the Bible their normal, ordinary, and customary meaning and usage. Especially early on in this tradition, the “literal” hermeneutic and its commonsense application often opened the door for viewing the biblical text apart from its historical context. With the “mellowing” of the tradition, particularly among “progressive” dispensationalists, the plain literal sense of earlier generations has gradually moved to a thoroughgoing historical-grammatical approach more in line with other Protestant traditions. Progressive dispensationalists have sought to integrate their theologizing with the diversity of the Bible. They have advocated a more complementary hermeneutic between the Old and New Testaments than dispensationalism has historically exhibited, emphasizing the progressive nature of revelation.

§8-204. Characteristic beliefs.—Some distinctive dispensational beliefs include the following:

- Distinguishing between Israel and the Church;
- Inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures;
- Literal, historical, grammatical hermeneutic;
- Progressive character of revelation;
- Recognition of distinct economies or dispensations in redemptive history;
- Pretribulational, premillennial eschatology, including the imminent return of Christ;
- Exposition of biblical covenants.

§8-205. Dispensations.—Dispensationalism understands God as looking on the world as a household over which He is superintending and working out His purpose and will. This purpose is worked out in stages or economies whereby God deals with people in particular ways. These stages or economies are called dispensations.

There is no universal agreed upon scheme of dispensations among dispensationalists. The most commonly recognized one is that of the Scofield Reference Bible, consisting of seven dispensations:

- Innocence (humanity before the Fall);
- Conscience (humanity to the Flood);
- Human government (humanity until the call of Abraham);
- Promise (until the time of Moses);
- Law (until the death of Christ);
- Church age (now);
- Millennium (inaugurated at the return of Christ).

Rightly dividing the Scripture is key to properly understanding it. Practically speaking, the entire Old Testament was given to Israel and applies to that period of divine administration. The bulk of the New Testament was given to the church and is governed by the dispensation of the church age. In other words, all the Bible was written for Christians, but not all of it is addressed to Christians.

Modern dispensationalists are particularly sensitive to the charge of teaching different bases of salvation in different ages. Some even grant that Darby and the early dispensationalists were open to this charge. Modern dispensationalists insist that salvation is always by grace through faith founded on the atonement of Jesus Christ. It is the content of the revelation to be trusted by individuals in

various stages that change, not the means or basis of salvation.

§8-206. Israel and the Church.—The respective character of and distinction between Israel and the Church repeatedly comes up at the heart of the dispensational tradition. It is the central idea of the tradition's eschatology (the Old Testament promises to Israel will be fulfilled literally in national Israel). Early dispensationalists believed there were two separate and distinct peoples of God, each with their own eternal sphere. Covenant theology expressed in the Reformed tradition understand both testaments as speaking to one people of God. Gradually the emphasis on extreme discontinuity fell away and dispensationalists today see Israel and the Church sharing in the same messianic kingdom of salvation history, but still distinct. All of God's Old Covenant promises to Israel will be fulfilled in and through Israel. Dispensationalists insist that this distinction must be emphasized so that biblical principles and promises intended for Israel are not misapplied to the Church. The church is understood as originating with Pentecost, is based on the death and resurrection of Christ, and is blessed and energized by the Holy Spirit.

§8-207. Covenants.—Many dispensationalists see the Old Testament covenants framing the outworkings of God's purpose with humanity on earth and in history. They define covenant as a declaration by God concerning His gracious and voluntarily assumed responsibility toward an individual, family, nation, or humankind. Dispensationalists place special emphasis on the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenant and see them as the heart of the God's unfolding redemptive plan. The fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant is understood as progressive over the course of redemptive history and entailing promises pertaining to a land, descendants, and spiritual blessings. The Davidic Covenant amplifies the Abrahamic, promising a ruler for these distinctive people with a lineage and kingdom that will be without end. The New Covenant deals with the problem of covenant infidelity seen throughout the Old Testament, promising new hearts to God's people which will obey and trust the Lord God. Early dispensationalists saw these covenants as exclusively geared to Israel. The Church may be a beneficiary of some of these blessings, but Israel is front and center. Progressives understand these covenants as have a progressive fulfillment through redemptive history and being fulfilled in both Israel and the Church.

§8-208. Covenant Theology and Dispensationalism compared.—

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Covenant Theology</i>	<i>Dispensationalism</i>
<i>Integrating theme</i>	God mediates His saving program through covenants. The central one is the covenant of grace or of redemption. This is an eternal covenant within the Godhead whereby (1) the Father chooses a people to be His own; (2) the Son agrees to pay the penalty for their sin; and (3) the Spirit agrees to apply the benefits of the work of the Son to the chosen people. The covenant of grace is worked out in history through subordinate covenants: Adamic, Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, and	God looks on the world as a household over which He is superintending and working out His purpose and will. This purpose is worked out in stages or economies whereby God deals with people in particular ways. These stages or economies are called dispensations and, since the time of the Scofield Reference Bible, have usually been designated as seven: innocence, conscience, human government, promise, law, grace, and kingdom.

	the new covenant. These covenants build on each other and culminate in the new covenant.	
<i>God's people</i>	God has one people, including those from both the Old and New Testament times.	God has two groups of people: Israel and the Church.
<i>God's plan for His people</i>	God purposes to call out His people into one body in both the Old and New Testament times.	God has separate plans for two distinct people: Israel and the Church. He plans an earthly kingdom for Israel, which has been postponed until Christ comes again in power. During the present Church age, God is calling out a heavenly people. There is disagreement whether these two groups will remain distinct in the eternal state.
<i>God's plan for salvation</i>	God's plan for salvation is one of grace, being worked out through the covenant of grace and comes through faith in Jesus Christ.	Most dispensationalists believe that salvation has always been by grace through faith. Some early dispensationalists seemed to have wrongly believed that the Old Testament believers were saved by works and sacrifices.
<i>Birth of the Church</i>	The Church existed prior to the New Testament era, including all those redeemed throughout time. Pentecost was not the beginning of the Church, but the empowering of the New Testament manifestation of God's people.	The Church was born on Pentecost. The Church, the body of Christ, is not found in the Old Testament. The Old Testament saints are in a different category.
<i>First Coming of Christ</i>	Christ came to die for the sins of the elect and establish the New Israel of God. The New Testament manifestation of God's people placed the Church under a new and better covenant. However, this is a new manifestation of the underlying covenant of grace. The Kingdom that Jesus taught about and offered is present, spiritual, and invisible.	Christ came to establish the messianic kingdom. However, His saving purpose always placed the cross before the crown. Most dispensationalists understand God's saving program as an unlimited atonement, but a limited redemption. His kingdom program comes first in an invisible form in which the Church participates, while the earthly kingdom awaits the Second Coming.
<i>Second Coming of Christ</i>	Christ's coming will be to bring final judgment and the eternal state. In the current era, most Reformed people are amillennialists. In earlier eras, most were postmillennialists. Both of these groups understand the Kingdom as present now	The Rapture will occur first, removing the true church from the great Tribulation which will come unto the earth and precede the coming of Christ in power. That will be followed by a thousand year millennial reign, and final revolt, and then

and do not think that a millennial era will precede the final judgment. The amillennialists are pessimistic about the current era, which the coming of Christ will end, while postmillennialists are optimistic and see the age as improving and actually welcoming its coming King when Christ returns. A few Reformed people are premillennial of the post-tribulational variety.	the final judgment and the eternal state. All dispensationalists are premillennists, although not all are pre-tribulational premillennialists.
--	---

§8-209. End Times teaching.—During the early 19th century in both England and America, apocalyptic movements gained attention and focused expectations on the imminent return of Jesus Christ to establish His kingdom. The premillennialism of this period was characterized by historicism, that is, the attempt to correlate biblical prophecy with contemporary events. The era featured many predictions for the date of Christ's return, most notably by William Miller's predictions for 1843 and 1844. These failures discredited historicism. The rise of dispensationalism was in this era and revived premillennialism by avoiding historicism and advocating a strict futurism to biblical prophecy.

Prophecy is treated in a more literal manner than in other Protestant traditions. Most other traditions see the promises in the Old Testament to Israel as being fulfilled in the church. This is not the case with dispensationalism. In early dispensationalism, the literal hermeneutic applied to graphically descriptive prophetic texts that led to a fascinated fixation on future events that was highly expectant, and at times, sensationist. That spirit has mellowed, especially among progressive dispensationalists, but is still very much an aspect of this tradition.

8-210.—Futurist premillennialism.—Dispensationalists are premillennialists, an understanding that Christ will personally return and rule as the Davidic king over the entire earth for a literal period of One thousand years. Unlike historic premillennialism, dispensationalists hold to pretribulational premillennialism, believing in the rapture or removal of the church prior to a tribulational period where God will pour out His judgment on the evil institutionalized in earthly structures. Those who are truly Israel will be saved through this period, while the church is removed prior to it. Once again, one sees the implications of the radical distinction between Israel and the church in dispensational thought. However, modern dispensationalism has “cooled the jets” on date setting that characterized kindred prophetic spirits in the 19th century.

C. Contemporary setting

§8-301. In general.—Dispensationalism is encompassed within evangelical and fundamentalist circles. There is not a substantial dispensational presence in mainline churches. Baptist and independent churches (particularly Bible churches) are the most common ecclesiastical affiliations of dispensationalists. Dispensationalism has also helped assert the primacy of Scripture and have focused on Bible teaching ministries helping regular folk understand the Scripture (a process one minister described as “putting the cookies on the lower shelf”).

§8-302. Active in the modernist-fundamentalist controversy.—Historically, dispensationalists are active participants in coalitions that counter the onslaught of modernism in America by publishing such works as *The Fundamentals*, by founding many Bible institutes, colleges, and seminaries, and making numerous contributions to contemporary evangelicalism. Theologically, it has played a major role in fostering evangelical ecumenism in the 20th century in its focus on the universal church, its de-emphasis on denominations, and its strong support for the para-church movement.

§8-303. Biblical prophecy as double-edged reality.—Dispensationalism's insistence on eschatology revived the doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ in Protestant traditions and made it meaningful in the churches. That doctrine had languished from neglect. This interest has proven to be a double-edged sword—fueling evangelistic and missionary activities with the hope of salvation prior to the rapture while contributing to the withdrawal of people from worldly occupations, politics, and institutions, and largely abandoning the public forums of the nation.

D. Observations and concluding thoughts

§8-401. In general.—Dispensationalism is a tradition driven by the desire to be scriptural and a recognition that infallibility is what the text possesses, not its interpreters. Throughout its history, dispensationalists have striven to open the Bible and rightly divide and discern the meaning of the Scriptures.

§8-402. Literal hermeneutic.—This emphasis often plays out in the broader dispensational community in naive and simplistic stances pitting the Bible against all other claims of understanding. Dispensationalism has moved beyond the naive literalism to a more consistent application of the historical, grammatical method of interpretation. However, there is still significant suspicion of serious scholarship in the ranks of this tradition.

§8-403. Ignoring portions of Scripture.—The phrase “rightly dividing the Word of truth” that characterized early dispensationalism's interpretative approach has led some to ignore portions of Scripture on the basis that they were “not written to us”. Even such portions as the Sermon on the Mount have been relegated by some to inapplicability to the church.

§8-404. Apocalyptic view of history.—This emphasis can obscure the redemptive core of the gospel with its focus on vivid apocalyptic imagery and can lead to speculation rather than concentration on readiness for Christ's return as emphasized in the gospels.

§8-405. Lack of focus on the local church.—Dispensationalism places its emphasis on the universal church, rather than local or denominational structures. This feature of dispensationalism has been the “glue” for many aspects of American fundamentalism and evangelicalism. This has also been a factor in the birth of numerous para-church ministries, evangelistic organizations, faith missions, and discipleship ministries in American evangelicalism in the 20th century. However, critics point to a lack of emphasis on the church as a visible and local institution and there is some substance to that claim.

§8-406. Dispensational influence in America.—Dispensationalism has become popular within American evangelicalism, especially among nondenominational Bible churches, Baptists, and

Pentecostal and charismatic groups. It has served as a type of ecumenical glue for fundamentalists and conservative evangelicals and figures prominently in the formation and support of many para-church organizations. Conversely, Protestant denominations that embrace covenant theology tend to reject dispensationalism.

Dispensationalism's prophetic stance looms large in its support of the nation of Israel. Dispensationalists typically endorse the modern state of Israel, consider its existence as a political entity as God revealing his will for the Last Days and vigorously reject anti-Semitism.

IX. Pentecostals and Charismatics

A. Historical background

§9-101. In general.—Pentecostals are a Protestant Christian movement that emphasizes direct personal experience of God through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The term *Pentecostal* is derived from the Pentecost event in Acts 2, an event that commemorates the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the early followers of the Lord Jesus. That event was accompanied by speaking in "foreign" languages previously unknown to the speakers. Pentecostals and charismatics earnestly believe that the common experience of the ancient author and modern reader lies in their shared faith in Christ and in their walk in the Spirit, whom the exalted Lord poured out at Pentecost. They vigorously contend that there is continuity in Christianity back to its origins in the operation of the Spirit of God and the manifestation of His gifting.

Pentecostals believe in the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible, the necessity of the new birth, repentance of sin and the acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. They believe in the baptism in the Holy Spirit that enables a Christian to live a Spirit-filled and empowered life. This empowerment includes the giving and use of spiritual gifts such as speaking in tongues and divine healing. These two realities tend to be defining characteristics of Pentecostalism. Because of their commitment to biblical authority, spiritual gifts, and the miraculous, Pentecostals tend to see their movement as reflecting the same spiritual power and teachings that were found in the early church.

§9-102. Pentecostal roots.—Pentecostalism is a 20th century phenomenon rooted in the Wesleyan Holiness and the Higher Life movements of the 19th century. It was in the Holiness movement that the idea of the second blessing, a crisis experience after conversion that resulted in purity of heart and power for Christian living, flourished. It was in that movement that the idea of entire sanctification and of Christian perfection was taught.

Initial leadership for this emphasis came from a Presbyterian minister, Edward Irving (1792-1842), in the early 1830s. He established the Catholic Apostolic Church which allowed and encouraged New Testament gifts such as speaking in tongues and a "word of prophecy" (meaning a revelation rather than a preaching experience). In the 1870s, Higher Life movements (like the Keswick movement in England) promoted the idea of a second work of grace. However, those movements emphasized the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit and did not teach the removal of the old nature in the believer so blessed. As the 19th century progressed, the Holiness movement grew increasingly fragmented, due to disagreements over the normative pattern for sanctification.

§9-103. Movement's birth in the 20th century.—In 1900, Charles Parham (1873-1929) founded the Bethel Bible College in Topeka, Kansas. Studies in the Book of Acts lead him and others to conclude that speaking in tongues was part of the normal Christian life and was the evidence for the second work of grace popularized by the Holiness movement. Later, he concluded that Spirit baptism, evidenced by tongues, was actually a third work of grace, distinct in time and nature from the second work of grace or the crisis experience of entire sanctification.

In 1906, one of Parham's students, William Seymour, was invited to speak at a mission in Los Angeles. During those meetings, Seymour and others experienced the onset of the gift of tongues. This launched

what the Azusa Street revival, the event described as the “Grand Central Station” of the Pentecostal movement. It marked the tremendous enthusiasm of the movement as well as other characteristics. Demographically, early Pentecostalism in America consisted of what one writer has characterized as “black birth, interracial infancy, and segregated childhood”. The Azusa Street revival lasted from 1906-1909 and crossed racial boundary lines. That would not last. Through the course of the 20th century, Pentecostal divisions resulted in a white Pentecostal experience and organizational reality and a parallel one in the black community.

§9-104. Divisions over the normative course of sanctification.—There were also divisions over beliefs about the normative course of sanctification—the “three-step” versus the “two-step” approaches. The three-steppers followed Parham's journey. Conversion was followed by the crisis experience of entire sanctification, which was followed by the baptism of the Spirit evidenced by speaking in tongues. The two-steppers did not deny the importance of sanctification in the Christian life, but did deny the crisis aspects of entire sanctification as normative. This came to be known as the “finished work” view, understanding sanctification as included along with justification at the time of conversion based on Christ's completed work at Calvary. The baptism of the Spirit was the second work of grace. This framework was adopted by the majority of Pentecostals who joined the movement from backgrounds other than the Wesleyan Holiness tradition. This “sanctification schism” resulted in numerous new Pentecostal denominations.

§9-105. Trinitarian divisions.—Another divide occurred a couple of decades later. Some Pentecostal preachers began to question traditional Trinitarian teaching, one God in three persons. They concluded that Jesus was the name for God, and references to “Father,” “Son,” and “Holy Spirit” were ways of referring to different roles or functions of God. This “Jesus Name” or “Oneness” movement not only caused divisions but spawned the first efforts in Pentecostalism for creedal development. Until then there had not been the perceived need to develop a full-orbed theology because the background that most Pentecostals came from affirmed Christian orthodoxy and was fully committed to a thoroughly Bible-based theology. The Oneness movement caused such divisions because it challenged the orthodoxy commonly accepted.

§9-106. Problem of theological reflection.—That creedal development itself caused problems. Most Pentecostals have little taste for the scholastic elaborations that contribute to the “cold definitionalism” they profess to see in other branches of Christianity. They do not want to see their denominations go the way of Protestant scholasticism. They desire to be theological minimalists to avoid the tendency of doctrinal elaboration and the equation of vital Christianity with statements of correct belief. However, by the 1930s, texts with comprehensive Pentecostal beliefs, such as Pearlman's *Knowing the Doctrines of the God*, began to appear.

§9-107. Charismatic movement.—In the 1960s and 1970s, the Charismatic movement arose. It did not require speaking in tongues as evidence of initiation into a deeper Christian life, but it did focus on the person and power of the Holy Spirit. In addition, the Charismatics did not separate into their own denominations but remained from whence they came, be it Protestant or Roman Catholic. Here was an ally for bringing an emphasis on the work and experience of the Holy Spirit to an increasing number of Christians, but also a challenger to the cubbyholes where Pentecostalism had comfortably landed. The Charismatics brought an ecumenical sense that challenged Pentecostal suspicion of ecumenism. Most Pentecostals were firmly rooted in an experiential faith that was committed to historic Christian

orthodoxy. They were not seeing much of that in the ecumenical movement as it progressed through the 20th century. By the 1980s, Charismatics also were contributing to the “evangelicalization” of Pentecostalism. Charismatics and Pentecostals were increasingly recognizing the rootedness in historic orthodoxy that they shared with evangelicals. The election of a Pentecostal as president of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) in 2003 symbolized this growing collegial relationship with evangelicals.

B. Distinctive beliefs

§9-201. In general; Fourfold gospel.—Classical Pentecostalism is characterized by a “constellation of motifs,” sometimes referred to as the “fourfold gospel”:

- Salvation as proclaimed in John 3:16, usually understood in the framework of Wesleyan-Arminianism.
- Baptism of the Holy Spirit as seen in Acts 2:4, evidenced by speaking in tongues (this opens onto the distinctive Pentecostal understanding of sanctification).
- Ready availability of divine healing as seen in James 5:15. Pentecostals emphasize the gifts of the Spirit, but particularly healing. Once again, this reflects the Pentecostal emphasis on God's continuity in His dealings with the world. You see healing in both the Old Testament and in Jesus' ministry in the New Testament.
- Imminent return of Jesus Christ according to 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, understood in the framework of pre-tribulational premillennialism.

§9-202. Teaching principles and observations.—

- Pentecostals attempt to be thoroughly biblical. They were born of evangelical Wesleyanism and display a full-fledged biblicism in the genes of their movement. They understand Scripture as inspired, the final, fully trustworthy rule of faith. The Protestant canon is accepted, but many groups view certain leaders as prophets with authoritative messages from God. The best of these look to see these messages confirmed by Scripture, but there are examples in which these messages and messengers are viewed as independently authoritative.
- Pentecostals emphasize experience. For example, the central doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is richer in Pentecostal experience than in Pentecostal explanation. Sometimes, this has caused concern that experience is given priority over the biblical text. They are committed to *sola scriptura* as a concept but sometimes struggle to overcome the temptation to elevate spiritual experience to the same level of authority as the Bible.
- Pentecostals believe in a second work of grace akin to Methodism's belief in entire sanctification. This second work of grace is evidenced by speaking in tongues. Other Pentecostals, often describing themselves as charismatics, accept tongues speaking as a gift for today, but do not view the gift as the initial and necessary evidence of the second work of grace.
- Pentecostals do not regard reason or tradition as significant sources for theological reflection. Early Pentecostals were particularly impatient with and suspicious of both tradition and creeds. Those attitudes linger.
- As for biblical interpretation, Pentecostals are pragmatic and intuitive in their approach. Two principles underly this approach. First, there is confidence that the Holy Spirit will illumine and guide the interpreter. Second, Pentecostals believe in the continuity of God's presence and work in the world from the time of the Resurrection to the Second Coming. This can be seen in the way Pentecostals take certain passages from the Book of Acts as normative for Christian

experience throughout the ages.

§9-203. Baptism.—Pentecostals identify three distinct uses of the word “baptism” in the New Testament:

- ***Baptism into the body of Christ:*** This refers to salvation. Every believer in Christ is made a part of his body, the Church, through baptism. The Holy Spirit is the agent, and the body of Christ is the medium.
- ***Water baptism:*** Symbolic of dying to the world and living in Christ, water baptism is an outward symbolic expression of that which has already been accomplished by the Holy Spirit, namely baptism into the body of Christ.
- ***Baptism with the Holy Spirit:*** This is an experience distinct from baptism into the body of Christ. In this baptism, Christ is the agent and the Holy Spirit is the medium for a fuller, sanctified life.

§9-204. Healing.—Pentecostals cite four major reasons for believing in divine healing: (1) it is reported in the Bible, (2) Jesus' healing ministry is included in his atonement (thus divine healing is part of salvation), (3) "the whole gospel is for the whole person"—spirit, soul, and body, and (4) sickness is a consequence of the Fall and salvation is the restoration of the fallen world. In the words of one Pentecostal scholar, "Because sin leads to human suffering, it was only natural for the early Church to understand the ministry of Christ as the alleviation of human suffering, since he was God's answer to sin ... The restoration of fellowship with God is the most important thing, but this restoration not only results in spiritual healing but many times in physical healing as well."

For Pentecostals, spiritual and physical healing serves as a reminder and testimony to Christ's future return when his people will be fully delivered from all the consequences of the Fall. However, not everyone receives healing when they pray. It is God in his sovereign wisdom who either grants or withholds healing. Common reasons given in answer to the question as to why all are not healed include:

- God teaches through suffering;
- Healing is not always immediate;
- Lack of faith on the part of the person needing healing;
- Personal sin in one's life.

§9-205. Spiritual gifts.—Pentecostals believe that all of the spiritual gifts, including the miraculous or "sign gifts", found in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 12:27-31; Romans 12:3-8; and Ephesians 4:7-16, continue to operate within the Church in the present time. As gifts freely given by the Holy Spirit, they are not earned or merited, and they are not appropriate criteria with which to evaluate one's spiritual life or maturity. Just as fruit should be evident in the life of every Christian, Pentecostals believe that every Spirit-filled believer is given some capacity for the manifestation of the Spirit.

§9-206. Speaking in tongues.—A Pentecostal believers may "speak in tongues", a vocal phenomenon believed by Pentecostals to include an endless variety of languages. These languages may be an unlearned human language, such as the Bible claims happened on the Day of Pentecost, or it might be of heavenly tongue of angelic origin. In the first case, tongues could work as a sign by which witness is given to the unsaved. In the second case, tongues are for praise and prayer when the mind is superseded and "the speaker in tongues speaks to God, speaks mysteries, and ... no one understands

him".

Within Pentecostalism, there is a belief that speaking in tongues serves two functions. Tongues as the *initial evidence* of the second or third work of grace, baptism with the Holy Spirit, and as an assistant in an individual's prayer life. All Spirit-filled believers, according to initial evidence proponents, will speak in tongues when baptized in the Spirit and, thereafter, will be able to express prayer and praise to God in an unknown tongue. This type of tongue speaking forms an important part of Pentecostals' personal daily devotions. When used in this way, it is a "prayer language" as the believer is speaking unknown languages not for the purpose of communicating with others but for "communication between the soul and God".

Besides acting as a prayer language, tongues also function as the *gift of tongues*. Not all Spirit-filled believers possess the gift of tongues. Its purpose is for gifted persons to publicly "speak with God in praise, to pray or sing in the Spirit, or to speak forth in the congregation". There is a division among Pentecostals on the relationship between the gifts of tongues and prophecy. One school of thought believes that the gift of tongues is always directed from people to God, in which case it is always prayer or praise spoken to God but in the hearing of the entire congregation for encouragement and consolation. Another school of thought believes that the gift of tongues can be prophetic, in which case the believer delivers a "message in tongues"—a prophetic utterance given under the influence of the Holy Spirit—to a congregation.

§9-207. Oneness Pentecostals.—In the early 1900s, the Finished Work Pentecostals split into two camps over the nature of the Godhead. One group accepted the Trinity and the other viewed the doctrine of the Trinity as polytheistic. The majority of Pentecostal denominations believe in the doctrine of the Trinity, which is a matter of Christian orthodoxy. Oneness Pentecostals are non-Trinitarian believers. In Oneness theology, the Godhead is not three persons united by one substance, but one God who reveals himself in three different modes. Thus, God relates to humanity as our Father within creation, he manifests himself in human form as the Son in the incarnation as Jesus Christ, and he is the Holy Spirit by way of his activity in the life of the believer. The Oneness doctrine is a form of modalism, an ancient teaching declared heresy by the early church.

In contrast, Trinitarian Pentecostals hold to the doctrine of the Trinity. The Godhead consists of three completely distinct persons who are co-eternal with each other and united as one substance. The Son is from all eternity who became incarnate as Jesus, and likewise the Holy Spirit is from all eternity, and both are with the eternal Father from all eternity.

C. Contemporary setting

§9-301. In general.—Comprising over seven hundred denominations and many independent churches, Pentecostalism is highly decentralized. No central authority exists, but many denominations are affiliated with the Pentecostal World Fellowship. The movement is growing rapidly in many parts of the world, especially the global South. Since the 1960s, Pentecostalism has increasingly gained acceptance from other Christian traditions. Non-Pentecostal Christians in Protestant and Catholic churches have embraced spiritual gifts through the charismatic movement.

Estimates place the number of worldwide Pentecostals and Charismatics in the hundreds of

millions. While the movement originally attracted mostly lower classes in the global South, there is a new appeal to middle classes. Most middle class folks are three-steppers, born out of the Wesleyan Holiness tradition. Distinct from and after conversion is a second work of grace, a crisis of entire sanctification in which the sin nature in the believer is abolished. After this experience is the third work of grace, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, evidenced by speaking in tongues. Groups like the Pentecostal Holiness Church and the Wesleyan Pentecostal Church are representative of this approach.

Other Pentecostal denominations are two-steppers. They view sanctification as positional and progressive. At conversion, the believer is positionally sanctified and this first work of grace begins a lifelong process of sanctification wherein the believer is transformed. Somewhere along this trek, the believer is to experience the baptism of the Holy Spirit (the second work of grace), which may be evidence by speaking in tongues. The Assemblies of God and the Foursquare Gospel groups are representative of this approach.

Jesus' Name or Oneness or Apostolic Pentecostals affirm a Christological unitarian understanding of God. They believe there is one God, who is Jesus. References to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit reflect Jesus' various roles. Most Oneness Pentecostals are two-steppers, believing the finished work view of sanctification. "Apostolic churches" reflect this approach.

One survey indicates that out of over seven hundred Pentecostal denominations, two hundred and forty are classified as part of Holiness Pentecostalism, three hundred and ninety adhere to the finished work position and eighty are Oneness or Apostolic Pentecostals.

§9-302. Reality of racial divides in Pentecostal development.—Assemblies of God (historically white) and the Church of God in Christ (historically black) are the largest Pentecostal communions in the United States. The initial inter-racial reality of Pentecostalism sadly gave way to a significant racial divide.

D. Observations and concluding thoughts

§9-401. In general.—The Pentecostal emphasis is on God's continuity in dealing with the world. The way God works through His Spirit, the way this work manifests itself in the lives of His people, and the way His people experience this work in their lives remains the same yesterday, today, and forever. The God-produced experiences of the early church, particularly those recorded in Acts, provide patterns for God's activity in this age and every age.

§9-402. Pentecostal theological development; making peace with the academy.—Pentecostals have not devoted much energy to theological development. Worship, evangelism, and Christian service have taken precedence over theology in their communions. With their increased exposure to and involvement with other Christian traditions, there are increasing calls for "informed Pentecostalism" that ask Pentecostals to "make peace with the academy" and understand that Jesus is Lord of learning too.

Pentecostal theological development can be viewed in four stages: definition, inculcation, defense, and reflection. Pentecostalism formulated its distinctives through the sanctification and Trinitarian controversies. After this defining period came an inculcating period. This was a time for theological

writing primarily geared for Pentecostal pastors who had received little formal training. As Pentecostals interacted with others on a broader basis, they were pressed to defend their distinctive views. This defensiveness continues today but is also joined with Pentecostal thinkers going beyond inculcation and defense to a more full-orbed reflection, including thinking about hermeneutics.

§9-403. Controversies.—

- Too much attention to mystical manifestations—Particularly speaking in tongues often in dramatic manifestations (falling to the ground, moans and cries during worship services, etc.)
- Prosperity theology—A particularly controversial doctrine in the evangelical circles in the 1970s and 1980s in the United States, involving charismatic televangelists. Prosperity theology teaches that Christian faith is a means to enrich oneself financially and materially, through a "positive confession" and a contribution to Christian ministries. Pentecostal pastors adhering to prosperity theology are criticized for their lavish lifestyle.
- Faith healing—This practice has been associated with a wide variety of shenanigans and false claims. Some churches have advised their members against vaccination or other medicine, stating that it is for the weak in the faith and that with a "positive confession," they would be immune.

§9-404. Ongoing issues.—These are issues for the Pentecostal movement as it matures in our day:

- Tension between experience and the Bible as the governing authority;
- Neglect of, if not hostility toward, reason and tradition;
- Pragmatic and intuitive hermeneutic;
- Spiritual dimension of the biblical interpretive process (the Holy Spirit illumines, so do not think too much about the process of interpretation).

X. Classical Liberalism

A. Historical background

§10-101. In general.—Classical liberalism was an attempt to salvage Christianity from the fires of the Enlightenment. It saw itself as arising from within the Church as an effort to retain the essence of Christianity by surrendering the accretions and features of the faith that were no longer defensible in the modern, rational world. Many 19th century religious leaders were raised in pious Protestant homes but educated in universities strongly influenced by attitudes critical of traditional Biblical studies and very receptive to the secular bent of modern science and philosophy. These leaders felt scarred by their well-intentioned, but austere Puritanical upbringing. They desired a faith that was more relevant, intelligent, and authentically livable.

The popular 20th century American preacher, Harry Emerson Fosdick, stated that the central aim of liberal theology was to make it possible for a person to be both an intelligent modern and a serious Christian. These efforts tended to rest its case on the twin towers of Christian experience and trends in modern thought.

§10-102. Coming to terms with modern science.—Liberals believed that Christian theology must come to terms with modern science if it ever hoped to hold the allegiance of intelligent people. Faith had to pass the test of reason and experience. They accepted the modern attitudes that the world was a grand and harmonious machine. The point was unity, harmony, and coherence. Biblical creation seemed to press the point of “orders” in the universe that characterized earlier beliefs—inanimate matter, plants, animals, people, God. Liberals pressed for continuity and coherence, between revelation and natural religion, between Christianity and other world religions, between the saved and lost, between Christ and other men, between God and people.

1. As Rooted in the Enlightenment

§10-106. In general.—For Enlightenment thinkers, reason was the ticket. They thought it possible to reason their way to understanding all reality. It was a modern reincarnation of the Tower of Babel with all the hubris that implies. The Enlightenment gave birth to the modern mindset we recognize today:

- Any truth must justify itself before the bar of reason;
- Nature is the primary source of answers to fundamental human questions;
- Pragmatic and intuitive interpretation;
- Necessity of freedom (meaning no limits) to advance progress and human welfare;
- Necessity of literary and historical criticism to determine the legitimacy of our historical legacy;
- Need for critical philosophy;
- Ethics as separate and independent from religious authority and religious knowledge;
- Suspicion of any truth claim grounded in anything other than reason (e.g. tradition or revelation);
- Supreme value of science by which humanity can find truth;
- Toleration as the highest value in matters of religion;
- Continuation and expansion of the humanism of the Renaissance.

The Enlightenment attacked the supernaturalism of historic Christianity in general, and doctrines like the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the virgin birth, the atonement, the resurrection, and the hypostatic union (Jesus as the God-man) in particular. They spoke of a type of universe operating exclusively by natural law.

Two thinkers, Immanuel Kant and Georg Hegel were particularly influential with the liberalism that emerged from Germany in the 19th century.

§10-107. Immanuel Kant.—Before Kant, philosophers speculated about how human beings know things and divided into two camps—rationalists and empiricists. Rationalists understood ultimate reality to be in the mind and that knowledge arose from the mind itself. Empiricists saw ultimate reality in the physical universe and argued that all knowledge came to us from outside of us. Kant asserted that neither was entirely right. Human knowledge arises from an interplay of incoming sensory data (through the five senses) and innate categories in the human mind that processes this data and makes it knowledge. He asserted that reality is divided into two realms, the phenomenal (the created world in which we live and which is open to us to experience) and the noumenal (spiritual or metaphysical reality). Kant thought that there were no human categories by which we can receive data from the noumenal world. Since humans are blind to noumenal reality, they cannot know the thing in itself. All that can be known are things as they are experienced. Thus, attempts to know God by reasoning is a vain project doomed from the outset. God inhabits the noumenal realm and cannot be experienced by humans.

Kant was not an atheist. He believed God existed but denied the possibility of any true knowledge of Him. Since God surpasses the phenomenal realm (space and time), Kant's analysis detached faith from reason. For Kant, Christian faith was not about metaphysics derived from revelation from the Scripture. It was about practical reason or ethical decisions that guide one's life. Religion reduced to outward morality. People were to live by the categorical imperative summarized as (1) acting only on that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law and (2) acting as if the aim of your action were to become by your will a universal law of nature. In other words, every action should be regulated in such a way that it would be morally profitable for humanity as a whole if it were elevated to the status of a law.

Much of 19th century theology was Protestantism's relationship with the Enlightenment, that is, to make sense of the new intellectual landscape after Kant. Nineteenth century liberal theologians agreed that the faith was not about dogma, actual historical events, or rational formations and belief structures based on ancient documents. Influenced by the Romantic movement, they based faith on the experience: the feeling of one's *absolute dependence on a reality beyond oneself* or the formulation of one's *sense of moral value*. The two most influential spokesmen for "Christian experience" were Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and Albecht Ritschl (1822-1889).

§10-108. Georg Hegel.—We cannot leave classical liberalism's philosophical forebears without considering Hegel. Georg Wilhelm Hegel (1770-1831) came on the heels of Immanuel Kant. Kant had argued that reason can never tell us about God or the reality behind ordinary experience. The way we know can never grasp the thing in itself.

Hegel followed a very different path from Kant. He sought to build a magnificent system of eschatology to go beyond the skepticism of Kant. He denied that anything was beyond the mind's ability to know and emphasized human history as the stage for the drama of human reflection. Hegel claimed that there is a great deal we can know about both God and natural reality, which he believed was rational and spiritual. God, or as Hegel described Him Spirit, Reason, or Absolute Mind, is not other than the world, as Christianity had always held. It is the fundamental reality of which all things, ourselves included, are manifestations. All activity is essentially activity of Spirit, and rational thought is the Spirit seeking to understand itself.

For Hegel, all reality was the outworking of what he called Absolute Spirit. History is the objectification of spirit; it is the spirit/mind working itself out in the historical process. He posited a continual progress in history by means of a dialectic. There is a thesis, followed by its opposite (an antithesis), which is resolved in a synthesis that becomes a new thesis in the progressive pull of the historical process. This philosophical backdrop was adopted by the emerging schools of biblical criticism and cast an optimistic light on that endeavor in the 19th century. Progress became the watch word of the age. The governing assumption of this progressive spirit was that humanity was perfectible. In addition, there was a key shift in philosophy. Until this time, philosophy had been traditionally occupied by the concept of being. Hegel replaced the focus on being with one on becoming. This will have tremendous impact on variants of Process thinking in the 20th century and beyond.

Within this framework of a philosophy of history, Hegel reinterpreted Christianity, seeing it as the culmination of the unfolding of the Spirit. He rejected the rationalists' idea of a universal natural religion. All religions do reveal the ultimate nature of reality in the unfolding of the Spirit. However, this process culminates in the Christian religion.

2. As Emerging from Germany

§10-111. Schleiermacher, father of Liberalism.—Schleiermacher' thought proceeded from three premises:

- The Enlightenment's critique of scholastic Protestantism was valid;
- Romantic idealism was a better locus for understanding Christian faith than the shallow rationalism of the Enlightenment;
- Christian theology reinterpreted along romantic idealistic lines allowing a person to be both Christian and modern and at the same time, intellectually honest.

The new seat for theology untouched by Enlightenment criticism was feeling (*gefühl*). This feeling was not just mere emotion, but “God-consciousness.” Schleiermacher did not start with objective revelation. Religion was subjective to the core. Experience gave rise to doctrine, rather than doctrine to experience. Christian doctrines are just accounts of religious affections set forth in speech. Humans are by nature in a state of “God forgetfulness” from which they cannot save themselves. Redemption is only found through the experience of Christ in the corporate life of the church. This redemption was mystical, centered in a personal communion of the believer with the fully God-conscious man, Jesus Christ. Jesus displayed the “veritable existence of God in him” by his uninterrupted God-consciousness.

Schleiermacher posited three levels of human consciousness: (1) animal grade where there is no

distinction between self and the world; (2) human consciousness which begins as a distinction between self and the world and continues with an increasing sense of freedom vis-à-vis the world (i.e. that we can affect the world); and (3) God consciousness where we become aware that both self and the world are absolutely dependent on a reality beyond either of them.

Christianity was superior to other religions because of Jesus. Jesus could be thought of as divine because he experienced God-consciousness in such a complete and powerful way that it can only be explained because of divine intervention. Jesus communicated his pure awareness of God to his disciples, and the Church he founded continued to inspire this God-consciousness in new generations. Schleiermacher argued that theology should focus on the meaning and dynamics of religious affection (this God-consciousness) rather than on the doctrines and external features of religion. Indeed, those doctrines only have significance to the extent that they dealt directly with and focused on God consciousness.

Thus, for Schleiermacher, the proper realm of religion is neither knowledge nor morality but feeling. Religion is the feeling of unity with the Whole. It is “the consciousness of being absolutely dependent, or, which is the same thing, of being in relation with God.” It is the constant, profound awareness of the Other whose presence is the source and basis of all that is. Schleiermacher discussed traditional doctrines like regeneration, justification, conversion, repentance, faith, forgiveness, adoption, sanctification, and perseverance from the point of view of God consciousness. Through the transformation of the self to which these various terms refer, Christians became active instruments within the world through which the redemptive activity of Christ was conveyed to others.

The historical aspects of redemption history all drained away along this line. The cross was not a substitutionary atonement, but an example of Jesus' willingness to enter misery sympathetically. Redemption was not the personal embrace of an atoning sacrifice but the transformation of people from God forgetfulness to God consciousness. Schleiermacher could claim that his thought was Christo-centric, but that Christo-centricity was utterly unlike previous orthodoxy.

§10-112. Ritschl and theological agnosticism.—Albert Ritschl (1822-1889) saw religion not in mystical terms (God-consciousness) but in terms of morality. Religious truth involved moral-ethical judgments subjectively determined by the individual. He attempted to separate religion and theology. Theology without metaphysics was the watchword of the day. Human knowledge was strictly limited to personal experience and verifiable history. Since God was in His essence outside the possibility of human experience, nothing of His nature and attributes could positively be known. Religious truth could not be known in objective verifiable propositions, but only in the realm of subjective experience (for Ritschl, in value judgments). God was personal yet unknowable in any real sense. He was mediated through the person of Jesus Christ as he appeared in history. Looking beyond this was a vain, doomed exercise. Any contact with God was not in mystic rapture but in moral effort to corporately promote His kingdom on earth.

Ritschl desired to expel any form of metaphysical speculation from theology. The locus of religion is not metaphysical knowledge but moral value. Ritschl represents a return to Kant. He insisted that true religion was concerned with practical living freed from sin, selfishness, fear, and guilt.

This practical faith needed to look to the true, historical Jesus. The great Christian fact was the

tremendous impact Jesus has made upon the church and people through the centuries. Nature spoke ambiguously of God and the Bible was not credible to moderns. Therefore, the task of theology was to turn again to Jesus. If biblical criticism denies Jesus' miracles, his Virgin birth, his pre-existence, it

does not make Jesus less valuable to us. Jesus' divinity does not rest on any traditional religious proofs but solely on the fact that he is the source of a value-creating movement. He led people to find the God of values. Jesus' life was the embodiment of such high ethical values that inspires us to live as he did. Jesus is divine in the sense that he can do for us what God does. He makes us conscious of the highest in life.

In *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation*, he states that Christianity is like an ellipse with two foci: redemption and the kingdom of God. The redemption of Christ is not based on an objective act of the expiation of our sins, but the consciousness of guilt for not fulfilling the moral destiny for us set by God loses its power to separate us from God. Ritschl rejects the "objective" theory of the atonement for a modern version of a "subjective" theory of the atonement. It is like a one-sided version of Luther's imputed righteousness. God imputes his righteousness to us but has no wrath to deal with since the central divine attribute is love. Vengeance, wrath, and punishment just are not part of God's make-up.

Reconciliation implies more than justification because the latter idea only speaks of the forgiveness of sins, whereas the former refers to a new life based on that forgiveness. It is here that the kingdom of God comes in, for the new relationship with God ushered in by reconciliation is not purely individualistic. The kingdom is a corporate state of life in which spirit rules over nature and there is a loving and free mutual service among human beings.

Ritschl reflected the direction theology took in the late 19th century:

- He emphasized the love of God to the point of rejecting divine justice and wrath.
- Both sin and grace are reduced in importance. Sin originates in ignorance and consists of acts rather than a state of being. Grace is little more than our awareness of God's love.
- The best approach to the study of the essential nature of Christianity is through historical study, rather than biblical study.
- His emphasis on judgments of moral value and on the application of such judgments to the kingdom of God led to the Social Gospel of the likes of Walter Rauschenbusch as well as to other attempts of applying Christianity to the reordering of society.

Ritschl's influence was felt throughout Europe and the United States. Humanitarian concerns about the conditions caused by industrialization and urbanization gave rise to Christian movements that considered social responsibility as part and parcel of the gospel message (some would say, as the gospel message). In the United States, the most important of these was the Social Gospel movement.

§10-113. Comparative religions/History of religions school.—Within the context of the growth of liberalism in the 19th century, was the birth of the study of comparative religions. Romantic philosophy of the early 19th century was curious about other religions which European colonization was bringing increasingly to light. New knowledge of competing cultures and their religions was available and archaeology was allowing the Bible to be studied in the backdrop of its cultural milieu.

Two presumptions framed this endeavor:

- That all religions, in their most basic form, led to truth about the ultimate (God);
- That all religions promoted a common ethic of love for one's neighbor.

In the extremely critical environment of German academia, the comparative religions school took the form of a history of religions that concluded that the Israelite religion had taken elements of the surrounding pagan beliefs and placed them within a structure of monotheism. This school concluded that biblical faith in both Old and New Testaments was not a distinct faith resulting from supernatural revelation, but represented humanity's syncretistic and evolving concepts of God and religion.

§10-114. Adolf von Harnack.—Von Harnack (1851-1930) represents the apex of liberal theology. He saw the pristine purity of the gospel as corrupted in the New Testament era, transforming a religion of Jesus to one about Him. The faith was further corrupted as Christianity moved out of a Jewish context into a Hellenistic one. Hellenistic philosophy twisted the pure gospel and the task of the theologian was to extract the kernel of the gospel from its Hellenistic husk.

Harnack wrote *History of Dogmas* in the vein of Ritschl and his followers. He believed that the development of Christian dogma involved the gradual abandonment of the original teachings of Jesus. The teachings of Jesus could be summarized in three points: (1) the kingdom of God and its coming; (2) God the Father and the infinite value of the human soul; and (3) the higher righteousness and the commandment of love. He called for a return to the simplicity of original Christianity and urged Protestants away from the dogmatic, liturgical, and ecclesiastical results of he called the Hellenization of faith.

The gospel did not have anything to do with the Son, it was all about the Father. Jesus' preaching did not demand any belief in Himself but focused on keeping the commandments. Paul (primarily) introduced modifications to the faith where the simple gospel of Jesus was replaced by adherence to doctrines relating to His person. Paul invested the death and resurrection of Christ with redemptive significance. With redemption being traced to a proper understanding of the person and work of Jesus Christ, the formulation of correct knowledge about Christ threatens to assume the chief position of importance and to pervert the simplicity of the original gospel message.

3. As Experienced in America

§10-116. Social gospel.—The Social Gospel was the liberal Protestant attempt to apply biblical principles to the problems associated with emerging urbanization and the social upheaval caused by the Industrial Revolution. The poverty, injustice, and oppression that people like Walter Rauchenbusch witnessed in the slums of New York City caused this rethinking of the gospel. Key to this was that the kingdom was seen as a social and political entity. Sin was seen primarily in evil social structures. The task of the church was to work to end human suffering and establish social justice.

§10-117. Modernism.—This term was applied to the radical edge of liberal theology in the early 20th century. In the early decades of the 19th century, the American religious scene was enmeshed with the fundamentalist-modernist controversy. It progressively affected every Protestant denomination. Modernism embraced the Enlightenment and an overly optimistic view of history based on the radical

immanence of God. The Holy Spirit was seen as an immanent power perfecting both nature and human culture. It emphasized autonomous human reason, humanity's freedom and self-determination, and saw humanity perfecting itself by its own efforts based on humankind's innate goodness. The radical power of sin and evil was denied on the individual level and only operated on the social level. On that level, liberals saw themselves as bringing in the kingdom. Modernism understood religion as helping people make sense of their environment. Theology was viewed as transcendentalized politics arising out of the church's interaction with its culture. These ideas would once again find a receptive audience during the radicalism of the 1960s and beyond.

B. Distinctive beliefs

§10-201. In general; Liberalism's views charted.—

<i>Topic:</i>	<i>Description:</i>
<i>Central themes</i>	Liberalism seeks to articulate Christianity to modern, contemporary culture and thinking. Liberals attempt to maintain what they assert is the essence of Christianity in modern terms and images.
<i>God</i>	God is immanent, not transcendent. He dwells within the world and is not above it or apart from it. Thus, there is no distinction between the natural and the supernatural. Liberalism is often unitarian, not Trinitarian, recognizing only the deity of the Father. The Father does not work supernaturally, but through human culture, philosophy, education, and society.
<i>Christ</i>	Christ was neither God nor savior, but merely God's representative. Jesus was a man “full of God,” but was not God incarnate. He gave a moral example for humanity and expressed God to us. He did not die to pay the penalty for sin and does not impute righteousness to us.
<i>Holy Spirit</i>	The Holy Spirit is the activity of God in the world, not the third person of the Godhead who is equal to the Father and the Son.
<i>Revelation</i>	The Bible is a fallible record of the religious experiences and thoughts of a particular people. The historical validity of the Bible is problematical and doubted (and should be). Modern scientific assessments prove that miracles do not occur and are simply religious expressions of a pre-scientific culture.
<i>Salvation</i>	Liberals have denied the fall of humanity, original sin, and the substitutionary nature of the atonement. People are not innately sinful. They possess a universal religious sentiment and interest. The goal of salvation is not personal conversion but individual and societal improvement. Christ is the ultimate example of what humanity is striving for and will ultimately become.
<i>Future events</i>	Christ will not personally return. His kingdom will come because of universal moral improvement of humanity.

§10-202. Universal fatherhood of the immanent God.—God is a loving, immanent Father in

constant communion with His creation and working within it to bring it to perfection. As a loving Father, He corrects His children (i.e. everybody) but is not retributive in His punishment.

§10-203. Universal brotherhood of human beings and the infinite value of the human soul.—

People are not radically sinful and in need of redemption. Humanity is in communion with God. There is no infinite qualitative difference between God and human beings. God can be known in some measure by analogy to human personality.

§10-204. Jesus Christ, the supreme example.—Liberal theology emphasized the humanity of Jesus to the neglect of His deity. Instead of the incarnate God-man, Jesus Christ becomes the perfect man, who attains divine status (of sorts) by His perfect piety (or God consciousness). He is the supreme example of God indwelling people.

§10-204. Religious authority, salvation, and the kingdom.—Liberalism made religious authority subjective, based on individual experience. The Bible is merely the record of people's religious conceptions. Salvation is by following the teachings and example of Jesus. Substitutionary atonement, repentance of sin, conversion, and the like are concepts of traditional orthodoxy that moderns cannot accept. God's kingdom is a moral kingdom with God ruling in the hearts and minds of His people. It is also manifested in society by the establishment of justice and righteousness in the political sphere.

C. Contemporary setting

§10-301. In general.—The optimism that drove classical liberalism died in the 20th century. That certainly does not mean that theological liberalism died, but that it migrated. Existentialism and process theology are where most liberals migrated to.

§10-302. Existentialism as a carrier of post-Liberal theologizing.—

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Description</i>
Central themes	To demythologize Scripture. This is not to reject Scripture or the Christian message but the worldview of a past historical epoch. Everything supernatural is explained as myth. It is a way of speaking of the transcendent as being of this world, the beyond as if it were here and now. When the Bible is demythologized, it speaks not of God, but of humanity. The important part of Christian faith is the subjective human experience, not an objective truth underlying it.
God	Objective knowledge of God's existence is impossible. "God" was an aid for primitive people to understand themselves, but moderns see beyond these myths. "God" is our statement about human life, about ourselves. The Trinity is a myth relating to the supernatural content of the Bible about a supreme being. If God does exist, He works in the world as if He does not exist at least not in ways we can know anything about.
Christ	Jesus was an ordinary man. We do not know much at all about the "historical Jesus." The picture of Jesus unadorned with "divine" elements is a meager one. The cross carries no import for the vicarious bearing of the sins of

	humanity, the Resurrection is inconceivable as an historical event, and the Virgin birth and the other miracles of Jesus are primitive and gullible embellishments that obscure the real Jesus.
Revelation	The Bible is not a source of objective knowledge about God. To understand themselves better, early people created myths (all the supernatural content) around the person of Jesus. If we can strip the Gospel of these myths, we can find the original purpose behind them and find guidance for our lives today. The Bible transforms people, not by conveying actual knowledge of God, but by being an occasion for encounter with God.
Salvation	Salvation is to find your “true self.” This is done by choosing to believe in God and that choice will change our view of ourselves. Salvation is a change in our outlook on our lives and in our conduct built on an experience of God. This is a finding of ourselves, not a change in our nature.
Holy Spirit	What we “know” about the Holy Spirit comes from those parts of the Bible full of supernatural myths. The way to understand the Holy Spirit is to see it as a force immanent in and cascading through the natural world.

§10-303. Process theology as a follow-on to Liberal theologizing.—Process theology is a 20th century movement teaching that God is bipolar, both transcendent and integrally involved in the endless processes of the world. In His transcendent nature are the timeless perfections of His nature and character. In His consequent or worldly immanent nature, He is part of the cosmic, evolving process of the world. The attributes of God are His divine qualities that are necessarily true of Him regardless of circumstances. However, His concrete nature are those particulars which He has gained by His interaction with the world. In His concrete actuality, God is a living person in process. Thus, He is necessary and supremely absolute in His abstract, divine nature but dependent and supremely relative in His concrete nature. God is more than just the world in its totality (contra to pantheism) because He has His own transcendent self-identity. Yet God includes the world within Himself (contra to classical theism) by His perfect prehension or participation in the creative, evolving events of the world. This view is called panentheism (all in God-ism).

§8-227. —Representatives.—Charles Hartshorne (1897-2000) was the foremost exponent of Process theology in America. Beginning with the doctrine of God, Process theologians sought to show that Process thinking was more in accord with the Biblical view of God as dynamically related to the world and human history than the more traditional Christian theism. Such people as John Cobb, Stuart Ogden, and Norman Pittenger were involved in this endeavor.

D. Observations and concluding thoughts

§10-401. In general.—Many Christians are critical of liberalism and the biblical criticism it spawned. These critics characterize the result of liberalism much the way Richard Niebuhr did later in the 20th century: “a God without wrath brought [people] without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a Cross.”

Liberal Christianity was too willing to accommodate modern thought and to forsake or reformulate

doctrines that had for centuries been central to the Christian faith. Liberal culture, with its belief in the natural goodness of people and the inevitable progress of society toward a better world, encouraged an easy, undemanding Christianity that bore little resemblance to the authentic faith of earlier days.

§10-402. Divine immanence over transcendence.—Liberals de-emphasized the transcendence of God, the reality of God apart from the world. They believed that concept was unacceptable to moderns. They identified the supernatural with the interior spirituality of people and then linked the spiritual with human consciousness, the intellectual and emotive side of people. Life coursing through the world (they were very comfortable with traditional ideas of God's immanence in the created realm) and in human consciousness was "God." Their view of God's immanence seemed to fit well with scientific studies. God worked entirely through natural laws. Liberals agreed with the popular characterization: "Some call it evolution, and others call it God."

The liberal emphasis on divine immanence did not represent a return to the orthodox idea of God's omnipresence. The orthodox idea emphasizes the distinction between God and the world, whereas the liberal idea of immanence implied an intimate relationship that the universe and God are in some sense truly one. This thoroughgoing idea of immanence led liberal Protestants to functionally deny the supernatural as classically understood. There were not two realms—natural and supernatural, and miracles did not happen in the sense of God breaking into the natural order. Indeed, God was not understood as being "out there" to break into the natural order. The term "miracle" was watered down. All was miraculous for God was all in all.

§10-403. Lack of a doctrine of sin.—Human position was elevated at the same time as divine transcendence was denied. Humans are not inherently sinful and separated from God. Sin on the individual level is a minor peccadillo rather than a radical evil that necessitated the incarnation and atonement. When the liberals lather up about sin, it is societal evils and social structures that are the target. As a result, conversion becomes a non-issue. Liberal salvation is a moralistic one and fundamentally a societal and corporate one. Redemption is a mystical communion with Christ in the community of the church working to establish the kingdom of God on earth.

§10-404. Rise of Biblical criticism.—Liberals made a wholesale assault on the *sola scriptura* foundation on traditional Protestant faith. The rise of textual criticism shook confidence in the inspiration, accurate transmission, and preservation of the biblical text. A thoroughgoing anti-supernaturalist presupposition undermined the traditional understanding of the authorship of the biblical books, their proximate dates, their milieu, and their historical accuracy. It served to undermine the unique character and authority of the Bible both in the scholarly and worshipping communities.

§10-405. Loss of the uniqueness of Christ; quest for the historical Jesus.—With the attack on the supernatural content of the New Testament, came the denial of the "Christ of faith" and a resulting search for the "historical Jesus." Since the history of the Bible was relegated to myth or fabrication, this "search" was long, arduous, and unsuccessful. Liberal Protestantism was looking back through many centuries of Catholic darkness only to find a Jesus that was the reflection of a contemporary Protestant scholar. The Jesus of liberalism bore little resemblance to the church's historic understanding of Jesus as having both a human and a divine nature joined together in one person. Jesus was fully human but only human. He was not so much as Savior as an example. He was the founder of a religion who

embodied in his own life what he taught concerning God. His unique God-knowledge constituted him as the Son of God and was the source from which his vocation flowed. But this is not the Jesus of the orthodoxy, the hypostatic union of God and man in one person.

§10-406. Social activism.—Liberalism, particularly in America, took on an activist cast. The social gospel sought to right social injustice but at the expense of a recognition of personal sin and the need for personal piety. There was a blending of the church's agenda with the agenda of secularly dominated political systems, often making these agendas indistinguishable.

XI. Neo-Orthodoxy

A. Historical background—

§11-101. In general.—World War I shattered the optimism that fueled the drive of Protestant liberalism. Belief in the essential goodness of people and in a progression to an ideal society took a direct hit in a gruesome war among the world’s “civilized elite nations.” The aftermath of that war only heightened this effect as the world witnessed the rise of genocidal ideologies and totalitarian extremism on both the political right and left.

In 1933, one author observed that “the most important fact about contemporary theology is the disintegration of liberalism.” Even such an ardent spokesman as Harry Emerson Fosdick, who argued that Christianity took “the intellectual culture of a particular period and adjusted Christian teaching to that standard,” changed his tune. Liberalism had wedded itself to the culture of an earlier age which had collapsed with World War I and Fosdick himself would later confess to liberalism’s failure. “We have been all things to all [people] long enough. We have adapted and adjusted ... long enough. We have at times ... talked as though the highest compliment that could be paid to Almighty God was that a few scientists believed in Him.”

Neo-Orthodoxy arose out of the dustbin of liberal optimism and as a powerful corrective to liberal theology. Neo-Orthodoxy is a reaction against classical liberalism and saw itself as striving to retain the essence of the Reformation while adapting to contemporary culture and modern issues. Neo-Orthodox thinkers stressed the rooted sinfulness of human beings, scorned liberal ideas of the inevitability of the progress of the human condition and society, and rejected liberal ideas of fundamentally finding God in our own consciousness, in nature, and in messianic efforts to create an ideal society. They emphasized the otherness or transcendence of God, looked to the Scripture to find Him revealed, and saw “crisis” points when humans must choose to believe and encounter the One who is infinite and eternal. This last tendency lent Neo-Orthodoxy its pseudonym—“crisis theology.”

§11-102. Post-Kant milieu.—A radical change in worldview and thinking took the place in the wake of Immanuel Kant. Kant’s thought cut humanity off from any rational knowledge of God. Until then theology was centered on rationality. Now, following in the steps of Schleiermacher and others, the center became feeling, or God consciousness, and the task was an exposition of humanity’s religious experience.

In addition, Hegel’s dialectic had worked its way into both popular and scholarly thought. The notion of progress, and a dialectical version of that as well, was the order of the day. Humanity was not encumbered by such ideas as depravity. Indeed, they were perfectible, for God Himself was working Himself out in history.

§11-103. Marginalization of the Bible.—The 19th century saw a radical reinterpretation of Biblical history at the hands of vehement anti-supernaturalist critics. The traditional authorship and even the unity of Old Testament books was denied. In the New Testament, the Christ of faith so mythologically presented was rejected and a century long search for the “historical Jesus” began to find real human Jesus behind all the supernaturalist accounts. Hegel’s dialectic was variously applied. For example, F.C. Baur posited a thesis, Petrine Christianity, followed by an antithesis, Pauline Christianity,

and resolved in a synthesis, Johannine Christianity. The apostles were at loggerheads, a development only obvious to the brilliant scholars nineteen centuries after the fact. As a document, the Bible lacked divine authority, historical reliability, and provided no normative basis for doing theology. Indeed, it was not the “word of God” at all, but the evolving religious thinking of the Old Testament Jewish people and the early church. The new norm was the person of Jesus (fully human and only human) and his teachings (which the Bible had distorted, but the critics would get it right). Jesus, the perfectly God-conscious man, was the only continuing authority for religious thought and affection. The Bible was lost to theology, for 19th century liberalism reduced theology to philosophy and anthropology.

§11-104. Theology at loggerheads: Liberalism vs. Fundamentalism.—David Hume was a fountainhead of Enlightenment skepticism. Indeed, Kant credited Hume as awakening him from his dogmatic slumber. Hume also caused another reaction of a different type, that of Scottish common sense movement. Thomas Reid was influential in this development. This development emphasized that the mind could indeed objectively know reality outside of itself. When applied to theology, it emphasized rationality and made a strong apologetic for a God inspired word that formed a solid basis for an inductively built theology about God, people, the world, salvation etc.

§11-105. Neo-Orthodox reaction against liberalism.—The devastation of World War I exploded the naive bubble of liberal optimism. With millions dead in the trenches of the Western Front, killed by representatives of the very nations who liberals presented as the apex of human progress, the innate goodness of people and their natural brotherhood rang hollow. It was against this backdrop that the Neo-Orthodox protest against the theological climate of 19th century Europe began. Karl Barth led the way, joined by the likes of Brunner, Niebuhr, and Bonhoeffer, pioneering what was variously called dialectical theology, crisis theology, neo-orthodoxy, or even Barthianism.

§11-106. Karl Barth.—Barth was educated in the reigning liberal theology of the day and in the historical-critical method, but felt that these were unsatisfactory because they did not grapple with the subject matter of the text. He went against the tide of his day and challenged the prevailing assumptions of liberal theology. After ordination, he took an intern pastorate and then a pastorate of a small church for the next twelve years. In his first publication in 1909, he noted that graduates of liberal seminaries were more averse to pastoral duties than graduates of more conservative institutions. In his full-time pastorate, he found that as he preached from week to week, he increasingly had nothing to say to his congregation. Under the demands of pastoral ministry, he came face-to-face with the need for and promise of Christian preaching.

The second edition of Barth's commentary on Romans in 1922 fell like a bomb on the playground of liberal theologians. Here was one of their own, incisively critiquing the system. He emphasized the infinite qualitative distinction between humanity and God, between time and eternity. All traces of the liberal continuity between God and humanity had disappeared from his thinking. Following this publication, Barth and like-minded theologians established a journal providing a forum for the exposition of biblical theology and the critique of liberalism.

The advent of Nazism led Barth to speak out vigorously against the new paganism. He and Bonhoeffer were major contributors to the Barmen Declaration of the German Confessing Church, which arose to oppose Nazism. Refusing to take an oath of allegiance to the Fuhrer, Barth lost his teaching post and

fled to Switzerland. He taught theology at Basel from 1935 until his retirement in 1962. Barth's master work was his monumental *Church Dogmatics*, which he worked on from 1932 until his death in 1968.

§11-107. Emil Brunner.—Brunner's thought developed separately from Barth's but followed a similar trajectory. His thought is Christocentric and socialistic. He met Barth after Barth published his commentary on Romans. The two men studied Luther and Calvin together and agreed that the original reformers had recovered the insights of the biblical message that subsequent generations blurred or even lost. In addition, Brunner was influenced by the Oxford group movement in noting the close connection between spiritual reality and the fellowship of community. Buber's ideas of I-Thou also influenced Brunner's anthropology. Brunner and Barth broke over a disagreement over whether there was a place for natural theology and whether there was a continuation of the image of God in fallen humanity. Brunner was insistent, throughout his career, that God can only be known through personal encounter. Truth about Christ is not to be discovered in discussion about His nature and work but in a living encounter with Him.

§11-108. Reinhold Niebuhr.—The most influential American Neo-orthodox theologian was Reinhold Niebuhr (1893-1971). Like Barth, he found that the liberal theology in which he was trained was impotent to meet the challenges of pastoral ministry. His magnum opus was *The Nature and Destiny of Man*. He was an advocate of Christian realism. He repudiated his earlier notions of the essential goodness of humanity and argued that human beings and their social groupings were essentially self-serving. His method was dialectical and paradoxical. People were free and bound, limited and limitless, sinners and saints, subject to the social forces of history, yet shaped those same forces, creatures of the Creator, yet potential lords (lower case) of creation. He posited the radical evil in humanity and decried the “easy conscience of modern man.” People were an inherent contradiction, existing as the image of God and yet radical sinners. In God's image, people are tempted to “play God” and make themselves the center of all things. Even in people's regenerate state, they continue to display sinful and egotistical behavior.

Niebuhr believed that people in history stood before ever new possibilities of good and evil. There was something of the Renaissance optimism in Niebuhr. Yet, the power of sin was ever present to infect even the best of human efforts, very much reflecting the Reformation understanding of people. This synthesis of traditions led Niebuhr to his twin focus of tolerance and social justice as core values for human society. Humanity can achieve and should strive to achieve a society of law and justice while recognizing that any achievement of these virtues always falls short of the kingdom of God.

§11-109. Dietrich Bonhoeffer.—Bonhoeffer died so young that his thought seems enigmatic. What did he mean by such phrases as “cheap grace,” “worldly Christianity,” and “religionless Christianity in a world coming of age.” Those phrases from Bonhoeffer have taken on a life of their own. His provocative thinking fired the imaginations of others that went off in various directions—ecumenism, liberation theology, death of God movement, and thoughts concerning Christian resistance to political oppression.

Like other Neo-Orthodox theologians, he was schooled in liberalism and eventually rejected it and espoused the themes trumpeted by Barth. He cooperated with Barth in composing the Barmen Declaration of the Confessing Church, opposing the Nazi program. Bonhoeffer had no use for “religion” as such. He centered on the reality of the transcendent God in Jesus Christ and the church as

the continuing presence of the revelation of God in the world by being the vehicle to proclaim the Lordship of Jesus Christ. A Neo-Orthodox thinker at his core, his ultimate focus was on a personal encounter with God in Christ.

B. Distinctive beliefs—

§11-201. In general; chart on Neo-Orthodox distinctives.—

<i>Distinctive beliefs</i>	<i>Description</i>
God	God is transcendent except when He chooses to reveal Himself to people. He is sovereign over His creation and free from it. Neo-Orthodox thinkers centered their system on God who is holy, absolute, sovereign, eternal, and wholly Other. This view of a transcendent, sovereign God is opposed to the immanent, subjective view of God held by liberals since the days of Schleiermacher and Ritschl. Because of the discontinuity between God and people and history, people cannot know God by reason or sensation. He cannot be known by rational proofs or by objective doctrine, but only in encounter.
Christ	Christ as manifested in the Scripture is the Christ of faith, not the “historical” Jesus. Christ is the revelation of God, which is experienced by individuals in encounters. The historical details relating to His person are unimportant. He is the symbol of the new being which removes all that estranges people from God.
Revelation	God's revelation to people is threefold: Jesus is the Word made flesh; Scripture points to that Word; and preaching proclaims the Word made flesh. The Spirit reveals the Word as the Bible and Christ are proclaimed. The Bible contains the Word of God but is a human and fallible document that is only reliable when God reveals Himself through an encounter over the Scripture. The historicity of the Scripture is unimportant; encountering God through it is what matters.
Salvation	People are sinful and are saved only by God's grace. The Word proclaimed produces a crisis requiring individuals to make a decision between rebelling in sin or accepting the grace of God. This saving grace can only be received by faith in an encounter with the Word revealed. Salvation doctrine varies from Reformation norms. There is no such thing as inherited sin or a sin nature in people. People sin by choice, not by nature. Sin is described as self-centeredness, social injustice, fear and dread. All humanity are elect in Christ. Salvation is a commitment to God in encounter with the Word revealed. A leap of faith in an occasion of crisis.
Judgment	Eternal punishment and hell are not realities.

§11-202. Dialectic method.—This method assumes the qualitative difference between God and Humanity. This means that truth is posed in a series of apparently paradoxical statements. Out of

these paradoxes, comes truth about God and ourselves. Truth about God is paradoxical; opposite aspects of truth are held in dynamic tension. God is transcendent and yet immanent and self-disclosing; Christ is both divine and human and yet one person; faith is a gift and yet an act; humanity is sinful yet free and full of possibility; eternity enters time and is time's ground and destination.

§11-203. God: the Wholly Other.—Karl Barth once said “You cannot speak about God by speaking about man in a loud voice.” God is the wholly other, absolutely transcendent. Barth goes so far as to deny any point of contact within the created order. Revelation comes only at divine discretion.

§11-204. Revelation and encounter.—Neo-Orthodoxy rejects the doctrine of the verbal plenary inspiration of the Scripture. Scripture is the locus of divine revelation, not revelation itself. The Bible serves as a witness to revelation. Neo-Orthodox dons do not think that revelation is propositional. God revealed Himself to the authors of Scripture, who then recorded their encounters with Him. Reading the recorded encounter can and often does serve as an occasion for the reader's own encounter with God. This is the way the Bible becomes the Word of God to people. The Neo-Orthodox idea of revelation is quite close to the traditional Protestant idea of the illumination of Scripture. While Neo-Orthodox embraced biblical critical studies, they did not think that critical study of the provenance of the text destroyed the possibility of encounter and of divine witness.

Neo-Orthodox thinkers deny that the Bible is inerrant. They assert that to believe in inerrancy leads one to fall prey to docetism, that is in denying the essential humanity of the Scripture. The Bible is a human product and as such prone to error. God condescends to speak through the text of a human fallible document. The Bible is God's Word only to the extent that God causes it to be His Word. He does that when He speaks through it in personal encounter. The Neo-Orthodox understanding of the Scripture was an attempt to steer a course between the liberal view of the text of a human account of humanity's evolving religious consciousness and the view of Scripture that sees it as God-breathed and without error in the original manuscripts.

§11-205. Natural theology rejected.—The transcendence of God as wholly other and absolutely free, along with the understanding of revelation as redemptive, made the idea of natural theology taboo to Neo-Orthodox thinkers. Later in life, Barth would allow that there were “lesser lights” within the created order that pointed to God, but he refused to describe these “lesser lights” as revelation.

§11-206. Christology.—Here, Neo-Orthodoxy falls within the bounds of historic orthodoxy. Jesus is the God-man, fully divine and fully human. Barth affirmed the virgin birth and maintained that the atoning death of Christ was objective, so objective that it contained the seeds of universalism. By His death, Christ secured the reconciliation of all humanity to God. Did Barth believe in a physical resurrection of Christ? Was it an actual historical event (*historie*) or did it just carry meaning and significance of the renewal of humanity (*geschichte*)? These are questions historians have discussed.

§11-207. Biblical realism.—This is the Neo-Orthodox rejection of the liberal denial of the sinfulness of humanity. The early Neo-orthodox theologians thoroughly learned the lessons of World War I. There was a reassertion of the radical sinfulness of humanity in individual lives and in societal structures.

§11-208. Revelation in history.—Neo-orthodoxy saw revelation as history in the sense of encounter

with God. Revelation was not propositional (as recorded in the Bible) but was an existential encounter (often occasioned by the Bible but not because of propositional content). They saw the historical-grammatical exegetical approach as inadequate to study the Bible for it set up “an iron curtain between the past and the present”.

C. Contemporary setting—

§11-301. In general.—The breadth of the term *neo-orthodox* has led to its abandonment as a useful classification, especially after new emphases in mainline Protestant theology appeared during the 1960s. These included the Death of God movement, which attacked the linguistic and cultural foundations of all previous theology, and a renewal of interest among Biblical scholars in the historical Jesus, something Neo-orthodox theologians dismissed as irrelevant to serious Christian faith. Still, the movement's thought and worldview did inform such later movements as liberation theology during the 1970s and 1980s and post-liberal thought during the 1990s and 2000s despite theological and ethical differences.

§11-302. Relation to fundamentalism.—Neo-orthodoxy has been scathingly critical of liberal theology, which would seem to make it a natural ally of fundamentalism and conservative evangelism. However, from its inception, Neo-orthodoxy was unacceptable to Protestant fundamentalism since it accepts biblical criticism and has remained mostly silent on the perceived conflicts caused by evolutionary science.

D. Observations and concluding thoughts—

§11-401. Contributions.—

- Reassertion of the transcendence of God.
- Reassertion of the reality and depth of sin.
- Reassertion of the centrality of Christ—Liberalism viewed Christ as the perfectly God-conscious man, without any hint of ontological deity. Neo-Orthodoxy reasserted the historic Christian understanding of Jesus Christ as fully God and fully human.

§11-402. Critique.—

- Radical transcendence—In his denial of natural revelation, Barth went beyond the biblical witness. It has been quipped that, for Barth, God got lost in outer space!
- Truncated understanding of revelation—Neo-Orthodoxy rejected the traditional Protestant understanding of revelation as propositional and opted for an existential understanding of revelation as encounter. Personal or propositional is a false dichotomy. It is ironic that Barth, arguing vociferously for a fallible Bible, would fill volumes of his *Church Dogmatics* with exegetical study treating the Scripture as if it were propositionally true.
- An implicit universalism based on the radically objective idea of the atonement runs through Neo-Orthodox thinking, at least that of Barth.
- Neo-Orthodox is heavily contextualized in existentialism. It arose in the portion of the 20th century that was existentialism's heyday and it, as a theological school, reflects that reality.

XII. Liberation Theology

A. Historical background—

§12-101. Orthodoxy versus Orthopraxis.—The second half of the 20th century saw the rise of an approach to theology that was more sociological than theological, more centered on right practice (orthopraxis) than on right belief (orthodoxy). The *praxis* (i.e. how the gospel is lived in the world) of the church was all the rage in the theological journals of the day. It was an approach that focused on divine immanence (if it focused on divinity at all) in reaction to Barth and was, at the same time, a response to all forms of human oppression. The emphasis was on rectifying the realities of oppression rather than on human sin and redemption. Theology's task was to overthrow oppressive structures, by violent revolution if necessary. They wanted to create a theology that was vitally involved in the historical process, especially in the concrete experience of the downtrodden and oppressed. Two presuppositions are vital to point out:

- All theology is historically and socially conditioned. This presupposition played out leads to a cognitive relativism that locks a person inexorably into his or her framework as is common fare in postmodern thought.
- Sin is more than personal, it is primarily structural and institutional.

§12-102. Moltmann's theology of hope.—Moltmann's theology of hope was the inspiration for a host of politically-oriented contextual theologies (liberation, black, and feminist theologies). The theme of hope came out of Moltmann's experience as a German prisoner of war in British prisoner camps in World War II. He came to see hope as essential for life itself. This hope is grounded not so much in the past as in the future, in the establishment of God's kingdom in glory. Moltmann combined this orientation to a human driven to overcome an inherent sense of alienation in human situations and to achieve a future made possible by the resurrection of Christ. Out of this matrix of understanding came the groundwork for liberation theology, with political praxis as the starting point for theological reflection.

§12-103. Dehumanizing structures in society.—Basic to liberation thought is that unjust structures and societal oppression have a dehumanizing effect contrary to God's design. In this fallen world, God has been seen for centuries as aligned with the church in supporting these dehumanizing structures. In reality, God is for the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized. The route to a recovery from this dehumanization is the overthrow of these sinful structures and agencies, by violent political revolution if necessary.

§12-104. —Latin American context.—Liberation theology took root in the Latin American context of Roman Catholicism. The Spanish and Portuguese conquests in Latin American and the subjugation of the Indigenous peoples took place with the tacit approval and full cooperation of the Roman Catholic Church. In this, the Church became an agent of oppression. Since the colonial days, the political system in Latin America has been one of a large, economically and politically oppressed minority held in subjugation by a small and incredibly wealthy minority.

Over the centuries, the oppression and injustice in Latin America grew systemic and pervasive. The very structures of society were designed to keep the poor in poverty and in their place. Anecdotes abound in liberation accounts of people in desperate economic situations. People dying of hunger with

opulent luxury right nearby. The stories reflected the deadly realities in Latin America that called for holy anger and revolutionary resolve.

Who are poor in this thought framework? Liberationists identify two groups:

- Socioeconomically poor, consisting of those lacking the necessities of life, those unjustly poor because of the exploitation of labor, and those discriminated against on the basis of race, gender, and culture.
- Evangelically poor, consisting of those who have seen and identify with the suffering of the socioeconomically poor.

§12-105. —20th century activist response.—The birth of Liberation theology is seen as emerging from the 1968 gathering of Roman Catholic bishops at Medellin, Colombia. The conference condemned the church's traditional alliance with the Latin American political powers, describing the socioeconomic scene as “institutionalized violence.” The primary text for Liberation theology, Gustavo Gutierrez's *A Theology of Liberation* followed in 1971. It seeks to bring the harsh realities of life into critical dialogue with the biblical text, often questioning the received interpretative tradition (the so-called *hermeneutic of suspicion*). This allows the community to discover Biblical texts and stories that provide answers arising out of the historical praxis of the community. The apologetic for this “new way of doing theology” is multi-pronged:

- Scripture portrays God as the giver and sustainer of life. By opting for the poor, the church imitates the Heavenly Father.
- Christ's example, who made the poor and the outcast the chief recipients of His message, is invoked.
- A twofold apostolic motivation is invoked, both the early practice of holding all things in common and the concern throughout the gospel to remember the poor.

§12-106. Black theology; origins.—The black spiritual experience born out of slavery and the economic oppression that followed gave rise to a tradition that expressed its faith in themes that included the equality of all individuals, the reality of divine justice, and the ultimate triumph of the cause of the black community despite the experience of injustice and oppression. Jesus is the one who stands beside and with His people. He Himself suffered and therefore can enter into their suffering and lead them to freedom. Interestingly, a Neo-Orthodox thinker played a role in the emergence of black theology. A resurgence in the thought of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and his resistance to injustice in so-called Christian Germany provided both guidance and motivation. He demonstrated how the Christian concept of God could be relevant to the black community, which also was oppressed at the hands of those calling themselves Christians.

Black theology is traced to the non-violent civil rights movement of the 1960s and the black power movement that arose beside it but advocated violent means to achieve its goals. It is a theology contextualized for the black community experience.

§12-107.—Radicalization.—Black theology radicalized with James Cone. Cone held that black theology put black identity in a theological context, allegedly showing that black power is not only consistent with the gospel of Jesus Christ but is the the gospel of Jesus Christ. With Cone, race was elevated to a theological category and made the defining characteristic of black theology, indeed of the gospel itself. Many, even within the black community, question whether this can be viewed as

Christian at all. While it is startling to hear of Jesus as “black” (we all thought he was born and raised a Jew), what is meant is that black people find in the gospel of Jesus Christ a message of liberation. black theology is an alternative framework of interpretation of Jesus' message which rejects the “white gospel” that blacks have experienced as dehumanizing. Cone argues that the core of theology is the assertion of the blackness of God, that is that God is involved in the struggle for justice wherever there is oppression. He goes on far as to say that the very nature of God is to be found in liberation. Likewise, the image of God as found in humanity is found in the liberation struggle against structures of oppression. Cone heavily emphasized the socio-political aspects of the gospel and was scathing in his analysis of white racism.

Black theology has its strident voice and its advocates of violence in securing change. But it also has had more moderate voices. Following the direction pointed out by Martin Luther King, a number of black theologians place Christian love front and center in the implementation of God's liberating actions for His people. "Blackness" is associated with humanity, not with God, and with black people taking their rightful place as human beings. It is associated with human completeness.

§12-108. Feminist theology.—Feminist theology is a contextual theology born in the 1960s with the feminist movement, seeking to bring to women the rights and freedoms enjoyed by men in every area of life. Its intent was to actualize Paul's pronouncement in Galatians 3:26-28, that in Christ there are no class, ethnic, or gender distinctions at all. All are one in Christ. It looked at the perceptions of women in the Bible and in Christian traditions and heritage and discerned a threefold ideology:

- Women were seen as property in the Bible and in the earliest Christian sources.;
- Later theologians saw women as polluting, sexually dangerous, and carnal.
- A romantic and idealized view of women later developed that viewed them as morally superior to men but in need of protection and therefore relegated to the private realm. They were excluded from full participation in the image of God and in participation in church leadership.

§12-109. Critiquing the staus quo—Hermeneutics.—The starting point is the critique of the status quo--the androcentrism and misogyny of patriarchal theology. Several methods are suggested to overcome this:

- Liberationist—Following the mode of liberation theology, some argue for a “prophetic liberating tradition of biblical faith” found in certain biblical texts. These function as a norm for elevating other texts. In other words, they are setting up a canon within the canon.
- Re-examination of forgotten or overlooked texts is a method suggested. These are neglected or twisted by patriarchal hermeneutics.
- Rejecting the canon—The Bible itself is a result of patriarchy, filled with illegitimate ideas of female inferiority and subordination. The demand is for a new beginning, in which women are no longer at the margins, but at the center.

§12-110. —Christology and anthropology.—The historic maleness of Jesus is at issue here. Jesus' gender has been used historically to assert the maleness of God. Feminists want to refocus away from Jesus' gender to the radical inclusiveness of the marginalized elements of society in all aspects of His life and ministry. An area of diverse understanding among feminists is the nature of humanity itself. Some hold that, apart from biological differences, women and men are the same and the differences attributed to the sexes are culturally constructs that lead to the subjugation of women. Others assert that women and men are indeed different and stress the importance of understanding physical existence

and embodiment. Women's physical embodiment provides insight into humanity that has been overlooked and needs to be taken seriously in theological and ethical thought.

B. Distinctive beliefs—

§12-201. In general.—Liberation theology inverts the traditional order of theological endeavor and sees action as preceding reflection. Theology is the critical reflection on praxis (how the gospel is to be lived in the world) in the light of the Word of God. It articulates the action of faith (our action) rather than the abstract understanding of God and His actions. God is not explained through doctrine or proposition, but by entering obediently to God's own project in history with the poor. Commitment must precede understanding. There is no knowledge except in action itself, in the process of transforming the world through activist participation.

The Bible is the normative record of God's liberating activity for His people, albeit revelation is broader than that. The “deposit of faith” (in the Roman Catholic backdrop, normally a reference to the Bible and the authoritative tradition) lives in the church community and rouses commitments in accordance with God's will (and His agenda for the poor) as well as providing criteria for judging that commitment.

In addition, liberation theologians have adopted a Marxist interpretation of history as a tool for social analysis. Capitalism is inherently evil and socialism is the ideal form for economics. The goal is the overthrow (violent if necessary) of the unjust existing economic order and the establishment of a just society. Liberationists reject gradual reform. The goal is a social revolution, not merely better living conditions. As to their favored economic system, one wonders if this would indeed be the same if liberation's environment had arisen in Eastern Europe rather than in Latin America.

Key themes include—

- Living and true faith must include the activist practice of liberation;
- God sides with the poor and the oppressed;
- God's kingdom project is in history and eternity;
- Jesus Christ took on oppression to set us free;
- The Holy Spirit, “the Father of the poor,” is present in the struggles of the oppressed;
- Mary is the prophetic and liberating woman of the people;
- The church is the sign and the instrument of liberation;
- The rights of the poor are God's rights.

Liberation's agenda is all-encompassing activism, professional, pastoral, and popular. You must get your message out there in every way possible and stay on message.

§12-202. Central themes.—Liberation theology is seen as the “liberation of theology.” It is not a system of doctrines about God, but a way to initiate social change for oppressed people. This is an endeavor by liberal theologians to wrestle with the social, political, and economic inequalities in a “Christian” expression no longer based on a biblical worldview. This is not a theology concerned with such matters as the nature of God and human people, of how one can know God, how people are saved, the nature of the church, matters pertaining to End Times, and the like. Liberation theology is concerned with this world and how to change it for the poor and oppressed by social and

political action. It is not a unified viewpoint, but closely related alternatives springing from common concerns. In its economic outlook, it tends to make the unlikely combination of Christianity and Marxism, particularly in its Latin American manifestation.

Black theology is a form of liberation theology, whose central theme is the oppression of the black race by the white race. James Cone describes the endeavor as the “need for black people to define the scope and meaning of black existence in a white racist society.” It claims to speak to the issues that black people must contend on a daily basis.

§12-203. God.—God is socially active, always taking the side of the poor and oppressed and against their oppressors. God is immanent and totally concerned with the concerns of oppressed people. Liberation theologians are utterly silent about God's transcendence, His nature (other than being on the side of the poor and oppressed), His attributes (other than His passion for social justice), His eternal program, and the like. Theology is about the concerns of the poor and oppressed and how God relates to changing those conditions.

Black theology emphatically insists that Christian concepts of the “white man's God” should be disregarded or ignored. God's person, the Trinity, His supreme power and authority, and other theological ideas do not relate, or are even antagonistic, to the black experience. All these so-called truths are subtle indications of God's white maleness. For black theology, the dominant perspective on God is God in action, delivering the oppressed because of His righteousness. His immanence is stressed and, as a result, God is seen to be in flux, always changing.

§12-204. Christ.—Jesus is something of a political Messiah. He is God entering the struggle for social justice. He is not the Savior in the traditional sense. He did not die as a substitutionary atonement for human sin. Divine wrath does not exist against sin in general, but only against the oppression of the poor. The atonement, when even mentioned, is one of moral influence on human beings.

For black theology, Jesus is God, but in the sense of being God's visible expression of concern and of social deliverance. Christ is the One who works for social deliverance. He is the liberator, whose work for the emancipation of the poor and oppressed and His rejection by society, is parallel to the black quest for liberation. Christ's essential message is one of empowerment, in this context, of black power. Christ's essential nature and spiritual activity receives little or no attention. His atoning sacrifice for the world's sins and His provision of eternal life is denied in some circles. Black theology is about tangible deliverance from social oppression now, not from spiritual oppression by and by.

§12-205. Holy Spirit.—The Holy Spirit is virtually absent in Liberation thought. When mentioned, he is the “father of the poor”, a thumbs up guy in favor of social action. But the Spirit does not seem to have a role in human-centered political action.

§12-206. Revelation.—The Bible is not a book of eternal truths or a revelation from God. It is the story of people in a series of often inaccurate accounts. However, some of these texts, particularly from the Exodus account of the deliverance of Israel from their oppression by the Egyptians, are useful to support this theology of the liberation of oppressed peoples. These texts provide an ethical exhortation to achieve the social and political ends of the liberation movement.

For black theology, the literal sense of the Bible is not binding. Revelation is used in a pragmatic way. The experience of black oppression and deliverance from that oppression is the authoritative standard for thinking and action.

§12-207. Salvation.—Salvation is societal social change where justice for the poor and oppressed is established. Any method of achieving this, even violence and revolution, is acceptable. Evangelism, if the word is even used, is the effort to create awareness to prepare people for social and political action.

In black theological thinking, salvation is freedom from oppression and pertains to the black experience in this life. The political and social aspects of salvation or deliverance is what matters. Salvation is physical liberation from white oppression rather than freedom from humanity's sinful nature and one's own sinful culpability. Black theology is not interested in heaven. That other worldly concern is seen as an attempt to dissuade black people from real liberation now.

§12-208. Church.—The Church is an agency to provide the means for changing society. The pastoral activity of the Church does not flow from theological premises, but is an endeavor to be part of the social and political change through which the world is transformed.

The black church is the focus of social expression in the black community where black people can express freedom and equality. Church and politics are a cohesive whole, expressing the desire and drive for social freedom.

C. Contemporary setting—

§12-301. In general.—The practical outworking of liberationist thought is in social activism. It has a socialist and Marxist orientation. If there is a church association, it is not the kind of connection one normally associates with ecclesial organization. Below is a list of movements associated with liberation thinking:

- Catholic Workers Movement;
- Christians for Socialism;
- Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front in El Salvador;
- FSLN in Nicaragua—FSLN is Spanish for Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (e.g. Sandinista National Liberation Front);
- Landless Workers Movement (Brazil);
- Lavalas (Haiti);
- Liberationist Methodist Connexion;
- Movement of Priests for the Third World (Argentina).

§12-302. Critique.—

- Many have found the Marxist association of liberation thought as compromising the Christian identity of the tradition and as having a socio-political (and potentially violent revolutionary) life of its own.
- Liberation theologies, in all forms, presents a profound hermeneutical question. Scripture becomes a tool to advance a cause rather than the Word of God with a coherent and encompassing message addressed to humanity.

- Liberation thought is so weighted to structural social issues that one wonders what place there is for personal repentance and faith.
- How can Orthopraxis precede orthodoxy? The truth is that there is an a priori to this call for action and it is an ideologically driven one, rather than a biblically driven one.

D. Observations and concluding thoughts—

§12-401. In general.—Liberationists, by emphasizing context in which theology is done, operate from a perspective quite different than that of traditional theologians. Many argue that it devolves into non-theology. It is really not about God at all, but about people's immediate social and economic concerns, be that in fulfillment or survival mode. Others assert that liberationists' concern to take biblical themes of justice and righteousness seriously has made them important forces in Christian practice.

§12-402. Hermeneutics.—Liberation theologies, in all forms, present a profound hermeneutical question. Bringing one's burning issues to the table and engaging in a dialogue with Scripture is indeed legitimate but there is danger here. First, the burning issue can become an all-defining filter, and all biblical texts not addressing the issue are cut off and left aside. Scripture becomes a tool to advance a cause rather than the Word of God with a coherent and encompassing message addressed to humanity. Liberation theologies of all stripes look for Scriptural texts and stories that mesh with their agenda. In so doing, they establish a canon within the canon, which becomes the controlling factor in their theology. The theologians choose to hear what they want to hear rather than being confronted with the "whole counsel of God".

§12-403. The place Marxism plays in liberation thought.—Liberation theologians have concluded that capitalism is inherently evil and Marxist socialism good. A key tenet of Marxist analysis is that of economic alienation, which is tied to Marx's view of the person as a self-creation through his or her work, rather than the creation of God. The tools used in the theological reflection often have a way of directing the conclusion. Many have found the Marxist association of liberation thought as compromising the Christian identity of the tradition and as having a socio-political (and potentially violent revolutionary) life of its own.

§12-404. Practice precedes reflection in liberation thought.—How can one have the right practice or action if one does not have a prior view of what is in fact right? Human ideology rather than Scripture becomes the ultimate norm. Right praxis depends on right thinking. If orthodoxy does not precede orthopraxis, then all we'll doing is substituting our own ideology for bibliology. The basis for action is whatever the group says it is, rather than what God says it is. Indeed, the group punts on hearing a coherent word from God altogether.

§12-405. Structural social issues predominant.—One wonders if God does indeed exist outside of the historical now, if sin is anything more than oppressive structures, and if salvation has dimensions beyond participation in liberation. Is salvation anything other than social action on behalf of the socioeconomic benefit of the poor?

§12-406. Black theology; elevation of the black experience to being the final norm.—We noted the problem of ethnocentricity above. In addition, there is the elevation of the black experience to being the

final norm. Classical liberation had a similar problem of making human experience the ultimate norm. But with black theology, universal human experience is replaced with a much narrower one, the black experience of oppression.

§12-407. Feminist theology roots authority in feminist consciousness.—Here, authority is rooted in feminist consciousness. Feminism is critical of the culture but has no vehicle for self-criticism. One commentator observes: “When a theology becomes consciously ideological, as in some forms of feminist and liberation theologies, it is bound to lose sight of the transcendent divine criterion, the living Word of God, by which a theology can determine the validity of its social valuations.” Feminist theologians use the term “Christian” to mean whatever liberates women. That use leads straight to a relativism determined by one's own notions of what promotes the self-determined agenda. In addition, feminism has a proclivity to assume that hierarchy is patriarchy and inherently evil. Thus, referring to God as Father or as “he” becomes something of a critical issue sometimes leading feminists to identify God or the goddess with the created order. Worshipers of the mother goddess are worshiping creation and themselves, rather than God.

XIII. Concluding Observations

A. Fragmentation and the quest for theological coherence

§13-101. In general.—At the dawn of the 20th century, liberal Protestant theology was triumphantly proclaiming itself a new kind of Christian theology for the new century announcing itself in works like von Harnack's *What is Christianity*. The two basic tenets of liberal theology were:

- the necessity of reconstructing Christian thought considering modern culture, philosophy, and science; and
- the necessity of discovering Christianity's true essence apart from layers of traditional dogma that were either no longer relevant or believable considering modern thought.

Reactions to this came from fundamentalism and neo-orthodoxy. The fundamentalists were committed to an intense form of orthodox traditionalism that strongly opposed modernism. They placed a strong emphasis on the inerrancy and literal truth of the biblical record and the falseness of modern skepticism, evolutionary science, and modern philosophy.

Neo-orthodoxy also opposed classical liberalism. They were willing to adjust some aspects of Christianity to modern thought, but they believed that liberalism had accommodated modernity too radically. H. Richard Niebuhr famously characterized this too radical accommodation: “A God without wrath brought [people] without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of Christ without a cross.” In the final decades of the 20th century, new “special interest theologies” sprang up. Various contextual, liberation theologies populate the landscape of the late 20th century: black theology, feminist theology, Latin theology among others.

§13-102. Watersheds among Protestants.—One way of reading Protestant traditions after the Reformation is to delineate two great watersheds:

- Monergism and synergism (Calvinism vs. Arminianism). Most scholastic types remained monergists in the Augustinian-Calvinist mold. Protestant synergists protest this monergist exclusiveness. The divide was well-illustrated by the split between John Wesley and George Whitefield over predestination;
- The second divide is over the proper authority for Christian belief. For centuries, Protestants affirmed the principle of *sola scriptura* while using tradition and experience as tools of biblical interpretation. With the Enlightenment came the religious rationalists, claiming to be Protestant Christians of a “higher order.” Modernity or the spirit of the age (*zeitgeist*) became the touchstone of truth, alongside, if not superior to, Scripture and tradition. Some developed as alternatives outside Protestantism. Unitarianism and Transcendentalism are examples. Many remained within the Protestant mainstream while becoming thoroughly modern and acknowledging the claims of modernity in attempting to transform Protestantism by reconstructing theology from the assumptions of modernity. This was the project of classical Liberalism.

§13-103. Contemporary theology struggles with diversity.—The tremendous diversity in contemporary Christian thinking draws different reactions. Some demand theology to be unified in order to be authentically Christian. They tend to forget that for a millennium and more, Christian theology was unified by coercion. Others relish the diversity and seem to think that it represents, in and

of itself, a positive development. They resist attempts to discover or even encourage unity as a new totalitarianism. For them, all meta-narratives (their term for overarching, integrating storylines) are necessarily totalizing. These meta-narratives silence the stories of the weak and marginalized and impose those of the strong and powerful. Perhaps these folks need to be reminded that anything that is consistent with everything is rather meaningless.

B. Candidates for coherence

§13-111. In general.—In this cacophony of voices, a number of Protestant Christian theologies or movements have emerged claiming kinship with the gospel of Jesus Christ, the apostolic witness to Him in the New Testament, and great Christian tradition through the ages. We will conclude by discussing four candidates for theological coherence jousting for popular hearing.

§13-112. Evangelical theology.—*Evangelical* has been used in various ways since the Reformation. It simply means “of the good news” or “gospel based.” The early Reformers used it as a synonym for “Protestant” as opposed to Roman Catholic. In our time, it is used in church or denominational names as a signal that the group means to base their teachings on an historically orthodox approach to the gospel. In various denominational settings, the term takes on a particular hue. For example, in the Church of England, *evangelical* came to mean those who wanted to emphasize the Protestant aspects of the via media of Anglicanism. In addition, they tended to oppose certain teachings, like baptismal regeneration and support other activities like revivalism. Another use of the term arose across denominational lines is opposition to liberalism. Early fundamentalists were occasionally called evangelicals.

As fundamentalists grew ever more narrow and combative, many conservative Protestants wanted to distance themselves from that movement yet remain orthodox Protestants. These new evangelicals agreed with fundamentalists on the supernatural inspiration of the Bible, on the doctrinal particulars articulated in creeds like the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed, on the need for conversion, an earnest piety, and the rejection of baptismal regeneration and universalism. However, they parted company with fundamentalists for their divisiveness over relatively minor doctrinal and church practice issues, over opposition to evolution in all forms, over litmus tests like verbal plenary inspiration, biblical inerrancy, premillennial eschatology, and various practices of separation. These new or post-fundamental evangelicals tended to blend pietism and orthodoxy with a dash of revivalism for good measure.

In our day, the evangelical coalition, if I can call it that, has at least two wings. One emphasizes Protestant orthodoxy, and tends to be suspicious and even critical of evangelism, revivalism, and pietistic spirituality. The other is their more experiential kin, who tend to be critical of their orthodox partners for an allegedly one-sided emphasis on the doctrinal content of the faith to the neglect of the rich spiritual experience and practical Christian living. The focus of the first group is the correct statement of the faith as the enduring essence of evangelical Christianity. The focus of the second group is authentic experience, including regeneration and sanctified living as the touchstone of evangelicalism. Their emphases may be different, but these groupings have much in common:

- Belief in God's transcendence and supernatural activity;
- Jesus Christ as the crucified Savior and Lord of all;
- Divinely inspired Bible as the norm for faith and practice;

- Conversion as the only authentic initiation into salvation;
- the necessity of taking the gospel to all people.

A major concern is whether Pentecostalism will be integrated into evangelicalism. Pentecostalism is exploding in the Global South. Will this movement settle contentedly in the experiential side of evangelicalism or veer off in another direction (e.g. liberation thought, or in an ever growing cacophony of “prophetic” voices).

§13-113. Process thought.—Classical liberalism used philosophy as a valued and equal partner to revelation in the theological endeavor. Process theology follows in that vein. It is an attempt to reconstruct the doctrine of God and all theology to be more in tune to modern beliefs about the nature of the world. They found this in the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947). Modern thought about being is not static, but focused on everything being related to something else. Process thought replaces ancient philosophy's concern for being and chains of being with becoming and understanding reality as occasions of experience. Reality is a series of happenings rather than a great chain of being. Process theologians think that Christian thought needs to shed its outdated metaphysic of timeless and changeless perfection (of God) and reconstruct its understanding in a way that is viable in the modern world that places becoming above being.

God is understood as a great cosmic organizing principle. He is neither omnipotent nor timeless. He contains the world and is contained in it. He evolves with the world and is under its influence. God is bipolar. In His primordial pole, God's character consists of continuing ideals yet to be achieved. In this pole, He is abstract and potential rather than concrete and actual. In God's consequent pole, His actual lived experience is constantly changing. Here, the condition of the world affects Him and even constitutes His concrete existence. Likewise, God affects the world, feeding into it the ideals of His primordial nature, luring the world's actual occasions of experience to achieve the ideals of God's primordial nature to enhance harmony, beauty, and enjoyment.

Process thought attempts to move Christian theology from classical Christian theism.

- Instead of God's transcendence, they emphasize His immanence in the world. Instead of His absoluteness, they stress His personal nature.
- They reject monergism and any depiction of God's work in the world as coercive. God never forces anything; He persuades and influences. While traditional theology asserts that people propose, but God disposes, process thinkers argue that God proposes and people dispose.
- They are naturalistic. Process thinking rejects the idea that there are supernatural interventions by divine power in the natural order.

Process theology is a uniquely 20th century version of liberal Protestant theology. It has been articulated by people like Charles Hartshorne and John Cobb. The United Methodist related Claremont School of Theology in California has become a center of process thought. Some of its appeal is its answer to the problem of evil. God is “the fellow sufferer who understands”. He is the one who never coerces. He cannot coerce actual entities (meaning people) or societies of them to do good rather than evil.

The God of process thought would seem incapable of most of things proclaimed by classical Christian theology, including His creative and redemptive activity. The Process God did not create the world out

of nothing. The world is God's body and He is its soul or mind. The two are always inseparable and interdependent. As for Christian eschatology, in process thought, God will never overcome the resistance to His vision of good. His activity is persuasive only.

§13-114. Liberation thought.—In the 1970s, groups of people in North and South America, seeing themselves as socially, economically, or politically oppressed, began to develop theologies of liberation. In North America, black theologians focused on the problem of racism and interpreted salvation as including or perhaps equivalent to the liberation of African Americans from racial prejudice and exclusion. In addition, in the 1970s and 1980s, North American feminist theologians focused on the problem of sexism and patriarchy in both church and society. In Latin America, both Catholic and Protestant theologians began reflecting on extreme poverty and economic injustice. They increasingly interpreted salvation as abolishing structural poverty and unjust political orders.

All these liberation thinkers asserted that God is on the side of the oppressed and the downtrodden and that people seeking salvation cannot remain neutral in the situation of racial, sexual, or economic oppression.

- They also agree that theology is not universally applicable nor socially and political neutral. Theology must be contextualized in each socio-cultural situation and made concrete in reforms that show forth justice in specific situations. Theology is not so much concerned with orthodoxy (right doctrine) but orthoproxy (right action). They tend to think of theology in historical and social ways and not individually. In this, they have a strong kinship with yesteryear's social gospel movement.
- Secondly, they agree that God is on the side of the oppressed and that the oppressed have special insight into God's will (the epistemological privilege of the poor).
- Third, they agree that Christian mission includes or consists of participation by churches in political activism in liberation causes, whether from racism, sexism, or economic, social, and political oppression.

Primary liberation thinkers include James Cone (1939-2018), often considered the father of black theology, Gustavo Gutierrez (1928-), considered the seminal thinker of Latin liberation thought, and Rosemary Reuther (1936-), a leading voice in feminist theology. Liberation theology has sparked considerable controversy. Critics reject their political activism and accuse them of dividing the church between men and women, rich and poor, and whites and blacks, and of short-sheeting the theological endeavor to their own situation. Liberationists are seen as summoning God (and limiting Him) to their situation and their political, social, and economic beck and call.

These theologies vary widely, but have common characteristics:

- They reject classical liberalism, seeing it as an expression of a particular time, culture, and social situation. But isn't that exactly what they're doing?
- There is a strong eschatological element (end times where their social agenda is completed) in these theologies.
- The thought is radically incarnational. They see in Jesus Christ the heart of the Christian faith, but also draw on the doctrine of the incarnation to grapple with the nature of God's action in the world.
- There is a strong ecumenical emphasis.

- They attempt to reconstruct the entirety of theology from the perspective of their situation (social justice, Christianity and culture, women's rights, etc.).

§13-115. Eschatological hope.—Jurgen Moltmann and Christian Pannenberg stimulated a new interest in and appreciation for eschatological realism in mainstream Christian theology. For much of the 19th and 20th centuries, belief in the coming kingdom of God on earth was relegated to mythology by liberal and neo-orthodox thinkers. When liberals spoke of the kingdom of God they meant a human social order rather than a literal return of Jesus Christ and the inauguration of His future reign. To speak of Christ's return smacked of a fundamentalist obsession that was dismissed by erudite moderns. Moltmann and Pannenberg sought to recover realistic eschatology apart from fundamentalist speculation. Moltmann placed the kingdom of God at the center of his theological reflections and avoided identifying it with liberal notions of the perfection of human society. For Moltmann, history must end in God and Jesus Christ's resurrection is the guarantee of that.

For Pannenberg, God exists fully in and for Himself in all eternity, but for the world God exists in the future and presently only as the power of His lordship breaking into history. God actualizes Himself in and through world history without becoming dependent on it. In our finite, human experience, God appears to be “not yet” in that His lordship is future.

Eschatological theology is a new paradigm for thinking about God-world relationship. Once God created the world and given it freedom, He must work with it without dominating it. Evil, like the Holocaust, happen because the world is not yet God's kingdom. God gives human history its own freedom and struggles with it and in it from His own powerful, futurity in the lure of love. God sends Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit into the world from the future to demonstrate His love and release spiritual forces of anticipation into human history. In the end, God will come to the world and cancel out all sin and evil and make it His own.

C. Cacophony or Choir?

§13-116. In general.—Some see the pluralism of the contemporary theological scene and celebrate it. The margins are moving to the center or at least on the page. Others see the vacuousness of “radical” theologies and think that they can hardly be considered “Christian” at all. Missing from the scene is an overarching theme (or meta-narrative in postmodern terms) which could serve to reunify contemporary theology. Is it a cacophony which some celebrate as a joyful noise while others cover their eyes and wince? Or will it prove to be a conceptual blending, bringing a chorus out of the cacophony and a blended choir out of the confusion?

Bibliography

- Buschart, W. David. *Exploring Protestant Traditions*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press: 2006.
- Cary, Philip. *The History of Christian Theology*. Chantilly, VA.: The Teaching Company, 2008.
- Elwell, Walter, Ed. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1984.
- Erickson, Millard. *Christian Theology*. 2d edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998.
- Ferguson, Sinclair and Wright, David. *New Dictionary of Theology*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1988.
- Gonzalez, Justo. *A History of Christian Thought*. Revised edition. Vols. 1-3. Nashville: Abingdon, 1987.
- Gruden, Wayne. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994.
- House, H. Wayne. *Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992.
- Olson, Roger. *The Story of Christian Theology*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999.
- Rose Publishing. *What Christians Believe at a Glance*. Torrance, CA.: Rose Publishing, 2010.
- Sawyer, M. James. *Survivor's Guide to Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006.