

Protestant Christian Traditions

RVS Notes
(Part 1)

National Presbyterian Church
Adult Nurture
Fall, 2021

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Welcome

Welcome to this survey course on Protestant Christian Traditions. This course is part of the Adult Nurture ministry of National Presbyterian Church (NPC) designed to help you grow in your knowledge of the Christian faith and in your personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

This survey course is one of two courses that attempt to give our fellow pilgrims at NPC a helpful overview of Protestant traditions. These courses seek to clarify the significant similarities and differences between these traditions and to examine both what unifies and differentiates us. We hope to adopt a spirit of theological generosity in this journey through various Protestant traditions and to recognize and encourage the better angels of our Christian identity.

Taking This Class

This class can be taken in at least three different ways:

- As a regular Sunday School class where advance preparation by class members is not expected. The course notebook provides the content for each lesson. While advance preparation would be helpful to understand the content of each lesson, it is not necessary.
- As a class with some advance preparation. The syllabus that follows enables you to prepare for each class by reading the class notes and referring to the supporting text as appropriate. This preparation is not burdensome. The normal weekly reading load will be 4-5 pages of class notes.
- As a class akin to our Guided Tour of the Bible classes. The syllabus details assignments in the notebook as well as a related text:
 - W. David Buschart, *Exploring Protestant Traditions*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006.

This book is available on Amazon.com, or through a book distributor like the Christian Book Distributors (1-800-247-4784).

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Protestant Christian Traditions—Part 1

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 in their footsteps by reforming by dividing.

In some ways, 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 reforming zeal in that period can be seen in the consecutive founding of such religious orders as the Benedictines, then the Cisterians, then the Carthusians, then the Franciscans and Dominicans, then the Jesuits and so on. 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 one another in the emphases that various traditions focus on? How are these various traditions faring in our highly fragmentary age? How can Protestants truly be the church in a age that desperately needs the church to be the church, even when the age is in full throttle denial of that need? How can we, in these various traditions, take seriously the Lord's high priestly prayer for unity in His followers in John 17? Hopefully, we will touch on these and other questions as we study.

§1-102. Shared commitments.—Before we begin examining Protestant distinctives, we would do well the consider the significant 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 obligated 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 common 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.

One is also struck with how often the task of theology and the substance of the beliefs held were intimately tied to the reality of the relevant 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, such statements were intended to be useful in preaching and in instructing catechumens. The two most extensively used formulations were Apostle's Creed and the Nicene Creed. The Apostle's Creed was in general use by the 3rd century and perhaps in its present form by 7th century. The Nicene Creed was formulated and revised by the end of the 4th century. As a general rule of thumb, in the age of the Church Fathers, the Latin West generally 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 some essential beliefs that must not be compromised. Creeds help to focus us on what is essential and what isn't 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 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: brief 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, | God is all-powerful, but also described as a personal and loving father. |
| Maker of heaven and earth, | 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 was brought about by the Spirit in a manner that in no way compromised His full humanity. This belief is often attacked by moderns and seen as something a rational person cannot accept. However, Jesus as the God-man goes to the heart of the historic Christian faith. |
| Suffered under Pontius Pilate | Pilate is mentioned but not as a way to place the blame for Jesus' death on the Romans, but rather to date a definite 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. They were not staged or made up by the fearful apostles who later died for their visions/hallucinations. Jesus' death was an horrific necessity for our sins. |
| He descended into hell; | A reference to an event cited in 1 Pt. 3:18-19? The meaning of this phrase is debated. |
| On the third day He arose from the dead; | Jesus' Resurrection is asserted to be a foundational belief. It points to the fulfillment of God's gracious activity for humanity and a hope for all believers to be likewise 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 actually did rise. He conquered death, the first-fruits of those of us, His brethren, who will rise again and by grace are destined for a glory we will share with Him. |
| He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the | 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. |

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|---|--|
| Father | |
| 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 | This is the called out people of God. It is a set apart people from the whole 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's 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 the vast majority 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: brief summary of meaning and significance.—

| <i>Creed statement</i> | <i>Meaning/significance</i> |
|---|---|
| I believe in one God the Father Almighty; Maker | God is one, unique, personal, all-powerful, and the |

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| of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. | creator who is distinct from His creation. |
| 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; | Note the affirmations of Jesus' person: * 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 again 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 final 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 6 th 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 to 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 some 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 basically 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.
- Particular 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'll 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 the salvation through spiritual regeneration, regardless of the individual's cooperation. In order 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 many describe 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. Many Calvinists of that day and this equate the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith with monergism and equate 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 constantly 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 being 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.

Arminianism was condemned at the Synod of Dordt (1618-1619). 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 not persevere to the end.

Arminianism was politically 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 needed to be consummated by a reformation of life. What was neglected by confessional Lutheranism was the experiential side of Christian initiation into 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 reacted to this and 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, irenic Christianity. The early Pietists were fed up with harsh polemics and theological heresy hunting into which Lutheran orthodoxy had fallen. Their rallying call was “in necessary things, truth, in things not necessary, unity, in all things, love”.
- The third hallmark was visible Christianity. The 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 could not help but 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.

Pietism was opposed by Lutheran confessionals as fanatical and even heretical. To some, it connoted subjectivism, individualism, and other-worldliness. But slowly Pietism penetrated major Protestant denominations. Its greatest impact was in North American Protestantism where some would say it became the main form of Protestantism, completely overshadowing sacramentalism, confessionals, and liturgical traditionalism. Perhaps its most concrete legacy has been 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 in many ways 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” and because of 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 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 very 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 can be seen in what has been 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 in light of 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 in light of 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 the 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. In addition, they share a number of characteristics:

- They agree that theology is not about an universally applicable salvation nor can it be socially and political neutral. Theology must be contextualized in each and every socio-cultural situation (me/mine or we/our concerns) 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 (some would assert consists of) 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 to some extent 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 to an endeavor beginning and ending with the particular 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 to 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. This course is an attempt to examine our calling as the Church of Christ in a calmer and more generous intellectual environment. We believe that there is a prior perspective that needs to be applied to put our divisions and differences in their proper context.

E. Course sequence

§1-501. In general.—In this course, we will examine the various Protestant traditions basically 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 some observations and general comments.

§1-502. Helpful charts.—Throughout the assigned text (Buschart, *Exploring Protestant Traditions*), the author provides very helpful charts of the various traditions we will be examining. I recommend that you purchase the text and make use of these visuals. I find these visuals very helpful in keeping track of the vicissitudes of these traditions. For an overall visual, see **Streams of Protestant Traditions Chart—Buschart, p. 19.**

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 don’t nail anything to the doors this time.” Clearly, the reference was to Martin Luther’s posting the 95 Theses to the door of the Cathedral Church at Wittenberg, perhaps 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, his 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 over the decade following Luther’s excommunication culminated in two catechisms Luther 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, in a very real sense, 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 ultimately 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 (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 testified 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, who 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 Chemitz (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 should be regarded as essential to salvation and what should not be (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 Osainder'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 far 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 Chemitz) addressed the issues raised in these controversies and some others. 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 a number of other works penned by Luther and Melancthon.

§2-105. 17th century: Rationalism and Pietism.—What followed in the 17th century was a period of Lutheran scholasticism. Chemnitz responded in great detail to the 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 pointed out.

In the later part of the 17th century, Pietism emerged in reaction to this very 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, a number of 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 well as 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 often 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, genuine piety was found almost solely in small Pietist conventicles or small groups. However, some of the 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 this. 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 experiences. 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.—With the immigration to America, many Lutherans 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 followed ethnic lines as immigrants poured into America. 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 cannot 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 hermeneutics:

- **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 understood as 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 of the four solas listed above: *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, and (implicitly) *solus Christus*. *Sola gratia*—Sinners 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*). Sinners 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 very 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 puffed up 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 rightly 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 callings 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 thought and 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 led 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. Lutheran polity trends in a geographically predictable manner in Europe. In Scandinavia, it became the state churches of those countries. 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, also with synodical governance, 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 the means by which the grace of faith is initiated. The Eucharist or the Lord's Supper is the means by which 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 is understood as actually saving its recipient. In baptism, God grants forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation (John 3:5). It is understood as 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 isn't 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. In addition, it is an ordination into the priesthood of the believer.

§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 really 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 has been described 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 having 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 was very 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) with referencing God.
- **Providence**—God works out His purpose in all things. He directs and guides all 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 totally 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, on the basis of 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 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 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; helpful chart.—Most Lutheran churches I've visited have a strongly liturgical bent. The liturgy is very 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.

Lutheran Tradition Chart—see *Buschart, p. 41*—shows Pietism veering off from traditional Lutheran confessionalism. Actually, dating from the 19th century, European Lutheranism has three manifestations—traditional confessionalism, Pietism, and a modernism born of classical liberalism.

§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. In the late 20th century, it has been rocked by controversies over 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 formal 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 reliable 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, but most of the laity did not accept this rationalist position. In the 19th century, many scholarly Lutherans accepted the “sure findings” of Biblical criticism even while a confessional revival or sorts 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 30% of Lutherans surveyed believed that the Bible was the Word of God and was to be taken literally word for word. 40% 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. 23% of those surveyed said the Bible was written by men and not the Word of God, while 7% 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 keep and defend it. It is celebrated every Lord's Day and on other days when the Eucharist is made 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. In particular, 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 intensely experienced in the German church.

§2-403. Baptismal regeneration and justification by faith.—Even some Lutheran theologians have questioned the historic Lutheran position on infant baptism. It seems that the sacrament in and of itself effects 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 “under, with, and in” the elements seems a mere half-step away from the 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 the 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 identified Anabaptists almost exclusively 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 viewed as 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. They 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.—Historians have suggested that there are 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 with denying the Lenten fast rules, challenging the mandatory payment of tithes to the Roman Church, disrupting the celebration of Mass, and “purifying” Church sanctuaries. Some (notably 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 wasn't 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 is to 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 some of 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 came into contact with the increasing social and civil unrest among peasants. In 1525, when attempts at dialogue and evangelical moderation failed, violence erupted and was fiercely repressed at the battle of Franckhausen and in so-called Anabaptist cities like Waldshut. Around the same time, faced with increasing opposition from civil authorities, a number of 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 many 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 a number of 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 our 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 origins lie 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, as they were 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 Melchiorite 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 identified as the New Jerusalem and became the destination for large numbers of Anabaptists. An internal rift developed between Lutheran and Zwinglian factions 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 Anabaptist 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 soon besieged by forces led by a Catholic archbishop. The siege eventually wore down and crushed the trapped inhabitants of the town. Most of them 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 held to 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, ideas which Menno claimed to derive 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 strongly 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 and 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 end of the 16th century, the major Anabaptist groups in Europe were divided and frequently hostile to one other. 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.

§8-109. Quiet of the land.—The Swiss Anabaptists had a period of peace in the latter part of the 16th century, but were violently persecuted throughout much of the 17th and 18th centuries, largely 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 largely 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 revivalism 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 all of these things. In 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.—Doctrine is de-emphasized; faithful living is emphasized over correct articulation of theological beliefs. This theological de-emphasis has contributed to doctrinal drift in some quarters of Anabaptism. Many Quaker churches have imbibed liberal theological beliefs with a social rather than an individual salvation focus. In addition, some 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 very little else in terms of theological development. They were distrustful of traditional theology and highly formalized theologizing for two reasons:

- They were the target of persecution, often led by theological types;
- The circumstances led them naturally to more practical concerns, giving much 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 a number of Anabaptist confessions (some have counted as many as 25-30) 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 seen as the key to a true understanding of God's truth.

§3-202. A-systemic; characteristic beliefs.—Anabaptist have generally resisted the credal 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 to be exercised 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 and involved a heavy dose of communal disciplinary enforcement. Some of the reformers, notably Martin Bucer in Strasbourg and John Calvin in Geneva, followed in this emphasis.
- Congregationalism – Decision-making authority rested with the local congregation.
- Communion was only to be offered to 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 also 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 generally affirm the Protestant principle of *sola scriptura*. Most view Scripture as the inspired means for knowing and following Jesus, but not infallible. Jesus is the living Word; Scripture is the written Word that points to Him. In interpreting the authoritative Biblical text, they have a number of common characteristics:

- Biblical interpretation is best carried in the context of Christian community. This seeks to ward off the tyranny of individualistic interpretation.
- The interpretative community must be characterized by obedience to God.
- Spirit direction—Bible reading and study is enabled, both individually and corporately, by the same Spirit who inspired the writing.

All 66 books of the Bible are inspired, but the 27 New Testament books are given priority over the 39 Old Testament books. The New Testament itself is best understood from its central Christocentricity. 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 characterized by holiness, love, service, a simple lifestyle, and peacemaking. 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 system of church government is recognized. Leadership is to be characterized by humble service and is primarily local in orientation.

§3-205. Separation from the world.—Following Jesus is synonymous with obedience in a community setting. This obedience will lead to a separation from the world. The world is seen as 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). Some 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 understood 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 the vast majority of 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 viewed as memorial rites. Baptism and the Lord's Supper do not impart grace to the participant, 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; helpful chart.—Over four million Anabaptists live in the world today with adherents scattered across all inhabited continents. In addition to a number of minor Anabaptist groups, the most numerous include 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.

Today, 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 many provinces in Canada. The Mennonites, in particular, 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 linking up 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*.

See the *Anabaptist Tradition Chart—Buschart, p. 69*—for a helpful overview of Anabaptist groups emerging out of the Reformation and into our day.

§3-302. Four branches from the three Reformation streams.—Four general lines of Anabaptists emerged from the 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 some similarities with the early General Baptists, but overall 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 and were inspired by central European Anabaptists. Upon moving to the United States, they associated with the Mennonites and the Quakers.

The term *Neo-Anabaptist* has been used to describe 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 desire for a distinctive lifestyle has been vigorously pursued. This is a challenge to Christians generally. 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. In their origins, the Anabaptists proved 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,

the 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 some 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 Christocentricity 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 birthed practices of banning and shunning and an insistence on lockstep community obedience that led to many 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 roughly 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 the 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 numerous 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 was killed at the battle of Kappel in 1531 and Bullinger succeeded him. He was more diplomatic in his leadership style and also 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 a number of 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 side—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 be known, humanity doesn't really desire righteousness.

- **Salvation**—Due to the debilitating effects of sin, humans are incapable of coming to God in 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 gives 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 on the basis of 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, would place discussion of predestination first in their considerations and ignore Calvin's advice on the subject. His 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, authored by Ursinus (1534-1583) and Olivianus (1536-1587), was published which became, by some estimates, the most popular and enduring Reformed confession of faith. The movement spread to Holland and became very 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 and was influenced there by Martin Bucer, who spent his last years in England. In addition, a Reformed pastor John 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 significant 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 often described as Protestant scholasticism. They vigorously debated among themselves and produced very detailed works of theology that had wide influence. Francois Turretin (1623-1687) was one who published a comprehensive theology from 1679 to 1685, which proved very influential at places like Princeton into the 19th century. William Ames (1576-1633) published the *Marrow of Theology*, that also was widely read. 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 in a way similar to 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. Some scholars have identified four tendencies of scholasticism:

- It employs a deductive form of reasoning rather than an inductive form;
- Reason is elevated and sometimes seems to assist the Scriptures so much in coming to a conclusion on a matter 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 generally avoided or made short work of.

Beza moved the discussion of predestination from the doctrine of salvation, where it acted 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 was understood to come 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 seemed to make God 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 intended to redeem 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. The limited atonement can be drawn from some of Calvin's premises, but Calvin himself, in his inductive exegesis, seemed hesitant to draw that conclusion. The whole 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 for a number of years and during that time began to question some of the conclusions of Reformed scholasticism. He thought that making the doctrine of predestination so preeminent seemed not only to make God distant and arbitrary but also the author of sin and damnation. A number of his followers, called Arminians after Arminius, 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 totally unable to save themselves because they are wholly 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, it's redeeming benefits are designed only for the elect. |
| 4. I rresistible 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 |

§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 again 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 has been described as 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 didn't 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 very 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 doing nothing to bring it about.

Strict Sabbath adherence was much more a Puritan thing than it was a continental Reformed emphasis. The Puritan practice flew in the face of many 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 good idea and practice. He recommended that Christians should try to take one day in seven as a day of rest. However, he stopped far 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 largely 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, perhaps 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), very much influenced by Dutch Calvinism, particularly the thought of Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) and Herman Bavinck (1854-1921). His was stout defense 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 its 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 (1772-1851), Charles Hodge (1797-1878), 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 in particular 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, basically 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;
- 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 indeed 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 and 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 right reason and conformed to objective evidence. They also saw revelation as being 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 the area of 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 could come 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 many 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 was a very significant deviation from traditional Reformed thinking. We will elaborate on Neo-Orthodoxy and its substantial influence in the 20th century in a separate part of this course.

B. Distinctive beliefs

§4-201. In general.—Reformed theology is constructed around the central theme of the sovereignty of God. The whole of reality falls under the supreme rule of God. God is sovereign. 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 seeks to be centered on God, submitted to Scripture, living and serving in 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' 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 fundamentally 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, need

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 being modified, 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 and 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 necessarily 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 brings us and is efficacious because it unerringly saves us.

§4-203. Bible.—Reformed biblical interpretation utilizes the principle of the analogy of faith, that is that Scripture is used 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 an hermeneutic key. Since the era of Protestant scholasticism in the 17th century, the biblical theme of covenant has served as an interpretative key for many Reformed thinkers. In this sense, 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 a number of fallen creatures to be reconciled to Himself. In due 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 has been summarized in high Calvinistic Reformed circles by the acrostic T-U-L-I-P:

- Total depravity;
- Unconditional election;
- Limited atonement;
- Irresistible grace;
- Perseverance of the saints.

§4-205. 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. |

§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.

In order 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 affirmed as 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 must be grounded in doctrinal agreement.

§4-207. Worship practices.—The regulative principle of worship is a teaching shared by some 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. On the basis of 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, many 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 worship music styles with such elements such as worship 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 as a whole is sometimes called "covenant theology". The sixteenth and seventeenth-century theologians developed a particular theological system called covenant theology or federal theology which many 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 were banished from the garden. This sin was passed down to all mankind 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, is said to have been 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 retains the substance of being free of a requirement of perfect obedience.

Through the influence of Karl Barth, many 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 has been called "mono-covenantal" as opposed to the "bi-covenantal" scheme of classical federal theology.

C. Contemporary setting

§4-301. In general; helpful chart.—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 largely 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 75 million adherents.

See the *Reformed Tradition Chart—Buschart p. 97*—for a helpful overview of the emergence of the Reformed tradition.

§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*, which were adopted in Zurich and Heidelberg, respectively. 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 largely grew out of the Reformed tradition as it emerged from England and Scotland. Representative Presbyterian denominations include our own (PCUSA) and more conservative groups such as the 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 graciously 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 isn't as apparent, or rather, who isn't 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. It seems that He is a part of the exegetical process and that process alone.

In addition, Reformed people tend to 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. I've heard the phrase “doing things decently and in order” almost immediately in any response to a discussion of the Spirit's manifestation in the believing community. It's almost as if the Spirit and spirited 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. Almost all 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 second fiddle 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. One is hard put to sustain the idea that Calvin was a full-fledged five-pointer. In addition, the Institutes goes well

beyond the the narrow array of theological propositions covered by T-U-L-I-P. Calvin's 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 had been 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. Many, rigidly committed 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”. More and more 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". Some of the 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 a number of humanists had critiqued 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 as well and served as a predecessor to Martin Luther, John Hus, and others.

The governmental actions that led to the break between England and Rome began in the 1530s, in particular the Supremacy Act of 1534. These reforms in the Church of England were understood by those most responsible for them as navigating a middle way between Catholicism and Protestantism and by others as navigating a middle way between two of the emerging Protestant traditions, namely 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. Many look to Richard Hooker's *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* in 1594 as providing a more definitive stamp.

§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 first two editions of the *Book of Common Prayer* (1549, 1552). Clergy were allowed to marry and many reform-minded bishops appointed. Mary I (1553-1558) attempted a full return to Roman Catholicism and martyred many, including Thomas Cranmer, Hugh Latimer, and Nicholas Ridley, who were instrumental in Edward's reforms. 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 corrupting.

§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*, which was again revised 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 twofold basis of Scripture and ancient tradition.

§5-104. 18th and 19th centuries: Anglicanism in America and beyond.—In America, Anglicanism rooted in the southern colonies and, initially, was very much 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 many changes 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 very much 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 and following as 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 many 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. A conference convened by the Archbishop of Canterbury, it aimed at Anglican unity and mutual encouragement and cooperation among Anglican churches. These Lambeth conferences met every 10 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 significant influence in Anglicanism as did Neo-Orthodoxy in the middle of the 20th century. As the century progressed, more and 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 – 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.—A character in a Thomas Hardy novel makes the observation: “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 often is conceived primarily in terms of 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 doctrines, many Anglican theologians 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 for the time being at least, what appears to be error.
- 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.

Key here 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 various Latin rites used in different parts of England with a single compact volume in the language of the people. Suppressed under Queen Mary I, it was revised under Elizabeth I in 1559, and then 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 usually 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 must be 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. Rather 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 (in understanding the Scriptures) and in practice. They often appeal to the rule of faith (the Scripture) and various standards of faith (sources that constitute the documentary tradition—sources like the Creeds, the Book of Common Prayer, the Thirty-Nine Articles, the catechisms, the "standard divines", and official decision so councils like the Lambeth Conference of Bishops). In this confluence of Scripture and tradition, reason is not only not to be feared, but to be extensively used. However, how Scripture, tradition, and reason are to relate to one another is not clear and indeed does vary 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 increasingly portrayed as the founding father of Anglicanism. Hooker's description of Anglican authority as being derived primarily from Scripture, informed by reason (the intellect and the experience of God) and tradition (the practices and beliefs of the historical church), 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 often incorrectly attributed to Hooker. Rather, Hooker's description is a hierarchy of authority, with Scripture as foundational and reason and tradition as vitally important, but secondary, authorities.

General principles that shape the reading and understanding of Scripture can be discerned:

- Scripture is seen as 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 fulfiller, and 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. There are four ways in which apostolic succession is conceived in Anglican thought:

- Bishops being viewed as in continuity of life with Christ's apostles;
- Bishops as having the same mission as the apostles;
- Bishops maintaining the faith taught by the apostles; and
- Bishops possessing 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.

§5-205. 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 understood as 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 didn't explain it, so the Anglicans don't try to.

C. Contemporary setting

§5-301. In general; helpful chart.—Anglicanism represents one of the largest Christian communion in the world. By one count, the number of Anglicans in the world is over 85 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.

See the *Anglican Tradition Chart—Buschart, p. 127*—for a helpful overview of the emergence of the Anglican tradition.

§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 really 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 a number of Anglican denominations. In America, the Episcopal Church is the largest communion. There are a number of 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 emphasizes 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 and are more taken with theological temper and method than with 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 largely 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 (some would say too much). 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, almost a studied ambiguity, to be disconcerting. Beyond the conservative groups in the Anglican tradition, one senses almost 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. Many also prize the Anglican aesthetic in Christian spirituality and in worship environments.

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 generally subscribe to a belief in soul competency (the responsibility and accountability of every person before God), salvation by faith alone, hold to 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 persons 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 baptist practice 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. Perhaps the most influential Baptist confession is the Second London Confession of 1677. It was largely 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 center-piece 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). This and other early Baptist churches experienced struggles or 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 a most influential spokesman for religious freedom. The Baptist emphasis on autonomous congregations meant a freedom in worship and congregational practices that appealed to many slaves or former slaves. The first black 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 this 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 more of an 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 particularly allowed them active roles in congregations. By the mid-19th century, northern Baptists grew in their opposition to slavery. As tensions increased, in 1844 the Baptist Home Mission Society refused to appoint a slaveholder as a missionary who had been proposed by 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. Blacks set up some independent Baptist congregations in the South before the Civil War with white Baptist associations exercising some oversight of these churches. In the postwar years, blacks 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, some 45% 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 as a result of this conflict. The Northern Baptist Convention in the United States had internal conflict over modernism in the early 20th century, ultimately 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 issues 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 so 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 a number 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 viewed as authoritative, unalterable, final, and binding statements of faith and are seen as usurping the authority of the Bible. Confessions are not binding, final, and unalterable. Commitments to confessions are voluntary and express a Baptist consensus of opinion 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. In the long run, 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 particular doctrines:

- 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 Calvinistic Baptists (dominant in the Southern Baptist Convention) and Arminian Baptists (dominant in the mainline Baptist groups and the Free Will Baptist).

§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 Mt 16:18; 1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13; Eph. 1:22; 3:10, 21; Phil 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 mainly 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 particular 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 called on to be 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 persons. Regenerate will be manifest 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 only. 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 being 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; helpful chart.—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 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.

See the *Baptist Tradition Charts*—*Buschart, pp. 156-157*—for a helpful overview of the emergence of the Baptist tradition.

§6-302. Plethora of Baptist groups.—According to a denomination census released in 2020, there are 241 Baptist denominations 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 have wrestled 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 confessional or ritualistic.—Baptist emphasis on a personal relationship with Christ in contrast to some 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, I have sometimes heard the criticism that Baptist preaching overemphasizes evangelistic invitations. In my visits to Baptist churches, I've observed a strong emphasis on teaching in Sunday School and other traditional formats. Those formats focus 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 can easily see enough of ecclesiastical politics to 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 carried out 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, today claiming, by some estimates, approximately 80 million adherents worldwide. The movement adopted Arminian doctrine and was the seedbed of the Holiness movement of the 19th century. That 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 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 not present in Calvin's writings. This began an age of theological system building, where the goal seemed to be the building of an all-encompassing systematic articulation of truth. Justification by faith was eclipsed by an emphasis on God's sovereignty, by the logical ordering of His decrees as if the scholastic theologians were sitting at God's elbow taking notes while He founded the world and implemented His purposes.

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 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 and that death yielded prevenient gracious benefits for all humanity, 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 ultimately 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 freely choose to be saved. 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 the more flexible side. The scholastics won and the result was the articulation of 5-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; influence on Wesley.—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, most Anglican clergy held Arminian views of the atonement, election, and justification by the 18th century.

§7-106. Later developments.—In later developments, many English and Dutch Arminians developed rationalizing tendencies. In England, in particular, 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; before 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 central members of the Holy Club there at Oxford in the early 1730s. They were mocked for their methodical piety from which the term “Methodist” came into being. In 1736, John traveled to the Georgia colony with an Anglican missions society and was a complete failure 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. He was also sensitized to the inner working of the Holy Spirit and the importance of fervent personal religious experience by his Moravian connections. 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 criminals 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.

American Methodism was particularly influenced and shaped by Francis Asbury (1745-1816) and Thomas Coke (1747-1814). Coke served as the first bishop of the American Methodist Episcopal Church. The fundamental teaching of Methodism were communicated to the American movement through Wesley's *Standard Sermons (Sermons)* and his *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament (Notes)*. For much of 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 was formally recognized as a denomination in 1816. The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church was organized 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) came to be widely used in Methodist circles. Early Wesleyan theology emphasized salvation, moral responsibility, and the practical results of heart-felt faith. This became more and more 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. These were originally intended to supplement the ministry of the 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 very 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. This liberal movement was resisted by Holiness Methodists. 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, while focusing much effort in addressing social issues. The latter group is marked by the rise of self-conscious caucuses designed to promote the interests of various minority groups.

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 subsequent to conversion and an emphasis on Christian perfection. Perhaps 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 Methodist Holiness circles in the later 19th century, the theological developments in Methodism were seen as a departure from traditional Wesleyan thought. They were particularly concerned 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 in the course of 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 a particularly 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. Some holiness thinkers attempted to resolve this tension by suggesting a distinction between sanctification and maturity. Entire sanctification is instantaneous and purifies people, while maturity is 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 largely untrue of many early Holiness groups. Evangelical Arminianism holds a view similar to 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 grace is only extended 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”, and 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, which was evidenced by speaking in tongues, became the hallmark of many, if not most, Pentecostal groups.

B. Distinctive beliefs

§7-201. In general.—Methodism has been described as “non-theological”, instead being “practical and evangelical”. There is a concern for “practical divinity”. Wesley himself has been 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 see 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, human free will and responsibility, and universal (common) enabling grace. Wesleyan thought is essentially 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 intends to be 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 fleeing 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 seen as 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 able to 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 (overall, not individually), if it were really truth. Experience is not to be understood as emotion or feeling, but as a medium for receiving reality, for participating in the real world.

§7-203. Anthropology.—The Wesleyan-Arminian tradition can be most easily understood in its distinctives over and against 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 understood as 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 described 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 people free and responsible. People are fallen and corrupt in their nature and therefore morally helpless of 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, subsequent to 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 on in the 19th century, Holiness teaching specifically associated this second blessing with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, often 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; helpful chart.—By some counts, approximately 70 to 80 million people are 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.

See the *Wesleyan Tradition Charts*—*Buschart, pp. 184-185*—for an overview of the emergence of the Wesleyan-Arminian tradition.

§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 generally less ritualistic, while American Methodism is more so, the United Methodists in particular. Methodism is known for its rich musical tradition, and Charles Wesley was instrumental in writing much of the hymnody of Methodism.

With respect to public worship, Methodism was endowed by the Wesley brothers 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, by law, solely on the *Book of Common Prayer* and worship in the nonconformist churches was almost exclusively that of preaching services, with the Eucharist being observed infrequently. John Wesley's influence meant that, in Methodism, the two practices were combined, a situation which remains characteristic of the denomination. The Lovefeast, traditionally practiced quarterly, was another practice that characterized early Methodism as John Wesley taught that it was an apostolic ordinance.

§7-303. Various Methodist churches and Methodist-like groupings.—There is much 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.—Many 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 was born in reaction to Reformed scholasticism and as a movement drifted in many ways into Socinianism, unitarianism, and legalistic moralism. Arminius emphasis on inductive exegesis was not continued by his successors in a full-orbed way. They drank deep of the rationalism of the Enlightenment and progressively abandoned the supranaturalism of Christianity. There was a constant flirtation with Pelagianism. Today, 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 consistently 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 a number of entries at various times in his life where he appeared to doubt the reality of his own salvation. At times, he seemed to reflect 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 generally. It has also tended to lead them to a reductionism, where the gospel was reduced to people's immediate socials 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.