CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

50th Anniversary

SHIRLEY C. GUTHRIE

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Contents

Foreword

It is rare—perhaps unique!—that a book on Christian doctrine, published as part of a church school curriculum series for a Presbyterian church body in 1968 and revised in 1994, should still be selling a thousand copies a year or more—fifty years later! This is the story of this special book, Shirley Guthrie's *Christian Doctrine.*[1]

Shirley C. Guthrie Jr. (1927–2004) was the son and brother of ministers of the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS). This denomination merged with the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America in 1983 to form the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PCUSA).

Guthrie graduated from Austin College and Princeton Theological Seminary. While at Princeton, he became interested in the Swiss theologian Karl Barth and went to Basel to study for his doctoral degree with Barth. When Barth visited the United States in 1961, he asked Guthrie to translate for him.

Shirley Guthrie was always a church theologian. He served as a pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Rusk, Texas, and began teaching at Columbia Theological Seminary in 1957. In 1972, he married Vivian Hays, and in 1974 their son, Thomas, was born. Guthrie's long tenure as Professor of Theology at Columbia Seminary endeared him to generations of students and to churches where he so often preached and led adult education classes. He retired in 2001 and died in 2004.

It was in this seminary context that *Christian Doctrine* was first written. Guthrie was in Germany on a sabbatical leave when the

request came for him to write this book, to be part of the church's Covenant Life curriculum.[2] The designated writer became ill and couldn't complete the assignment. Guthrie took up the project, with a publishing deadline fast approaching. He wrote the book in a short space of time so that it became part of the church's educational curriculum in 1968. This was a full-length book of 413 pages.

Christian Doctrine took its place in the church's educational life but went on to become used by seminary students and pastors who wanted clear descriptions of what the church has believed and has expressed in its theological doctrines. In a memorial tribute, Kimberly Clayton, one of Guthrie's students, wrote: "His book, *Christian Doctrine*, written as an Adult Sunday School Book in the old PCUS Covenant Life Curriculum, also helped many a seminarian through the Ordination Exams. Guthrie used to tell us, however, that he would not be overly impressed if we quoted his book on exams for his class because, he claimed, the book had been written on a 10th grade level!"[3] Adults of every age—laity and clergy—were to find Guthrie's descriptions of the church's theology accessible and helpful!

The reach of *Christian Doctrine* into varieties of places in the church's life was acknowledged by Shirley Guthrie in the "Preface to the Revised Edition" of the book in 1994. He wrote:

> The first edition of this book was published in 1968 as part of a church school curriculum for use in adult study groups, primarily in Presbyterian and Reformed churches. I expected that it would be used for a few years until it was replaced by other Christian education resources. But it is still being used as an introduction to theology not only in churches but also in some colleges and seminaries in Presbyterian-Reformed and other denominations—an indication of the hunger of lay church members and beginning theological students for instruction in the Christian faith written in a way that is accessible to them.[4]

This combination of writing about something of great importance, "instruction in the Christian faith," and writing in "a way that is accessible" is what Guthrie's longtime colleague, New Testament scholar Charles B. Cousar, described as "what is so significant about Guthrie's stance as a theologian." Cousar noted that Guthrie, who did not write a large number of books or develop his own school of theology, instead "sought to understand what the church

has always believed and to interpret the contemporary relevance of the truth to others in the church, whether clergy or ordinary layfolk."[5] While Guthrie's work reflected the approaches and insights of his teacher, Karl Barth, Guthrie did not try to perpetuate a "Barthian" school, and, said Cousar, he did not "even like being referred to as a 'Barthian.'"[6] Shirley Guthrie was focused on the bigger picture: conveying the church's beliefs, with all their important implications for contemporary life, in an accessible manner.

When two of Guthrie's colleagues at Columbia Seminary, Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann and theologian George Stroup, edited a collection of scholarly essays in Guthrie's honor, they acknowledged the influence of Karl Barth on Guthrie's *Christian Doctrine*. They wrote: "The genius of the book is that it makes accessible to people with little or no formal theological education the most important insights from the work of Karl Barth, 'translates' theology into human experience, and makes theology, in the best sense of the word, 'practical.'"[7] His colleagues went on to indicate the importance of the book when they wrote that "it would be difficult to exaggerate the significance of *Christian Doctrine*. Almost singlehandedly, it enabled large numbers of adult Christians to interpret the gospel in a theological idiom more compatible with their experience and convictions than the categories and seventeenth-century language of the Westminster Confession of Faith."[8]

REVISIONS TO *CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE*

After twenty-five years of its continuing use, Guthrie was still listening to those who used the book. He acknowledged that "many of those who still find the book helpful have said that if it is to continue to be so, it must be updated to indicate how I would say things differently and how my mind has changed in light of developments in the thought and life of the church and in the world since 1968."[9] This quarter century had been a particularly yeasty time in American culture, for American churches, and in academic theology. So updates and modifications for *Christian Doctrine* were certainly appropriate. As always, Guthrie grounded this conviction in the deep soil of the Reformed tradition. "That tradition itself," he wrote "demands the constant 'updating' (reformation)

of our always inadequate, time- and situation-bound attempts to understand the Christian gospel. This revised edition of the book, then, is not just an attempt to be up to date, but is an attempt to be faithful to the 'always to be reformed' tradition that informs its understanding of the task of theology."[10]

Guthrie maintained the book's basic structure and outline. But he indicated four kinds of changes that distinguished the revised edition from the original edition.

There are changes to try to say more clearly what Guthrie wanted to say in the first edition. He clarified and expanded on particular questions and issues. While these changes occurred throughout the book, he noted, they are especially found "in chapters dealing with the authority and interpretation of scripture, predestination, providence and evil, and Christian hope for the future."[11] Guthrie, the listener, saw these changes as a result of his many conversations with groups of church people and seminary students. So he clarified and expanded on these issues.

Second, Guthrie expanded his conversations with a wider Reformed tradition. In 1968, his chief dialogue partners were John Calvin, the Reformed Confessions, and Karl Barth. Now insights from other Reformed voices are present: confessional statements including the Declaration of Faith (1976) and the Brief Statement of Faith (1991) and theologians Jürgen Moltmann, Eberhard Jüngel, and Hendrikus Berkhof. Guthrie's understandings of the doctrine of the Trinity, creation, and the person and work of the Holy Spirit were affected.

Third, Guthrie acknowledged the changed social and historical context of his revised edition. The 1990s brought with them a host of social and cultural issues including subtle racism in church and society, wars in the names of religious faith, the continuing gap between rich and poor, and issues of sexuality.

Finally, both Roman Catholic and Protestant liberation theologians were influential for Guthrie. Their instructive writings also revealed to Guthrie that he had read and interpreted Scripture "from the perspective of a white, middle-class, 'Euro-American' male who learned my theology from others like me."[12] Liberation theologians had helped Guthrie "learn from the Word of God some things I did not know in 1968 and could not have learned without them."[13]

Of course, inclusive language became a mark of the revised edition. For Guthrie this was not only for using language about

humanity but also for "learning to use feminine as well as masculine images to speak of God."[14]

A CHURCH THEOLOGIAN

Shirley Guthrie's *Christian Doctrine: Revised Edition* continues to meet a need among church laypersons, clergy, and seminary students who want a clear and accessible introduction to what the church believes from a wise and humble Reformed theologian. Guthrie's wisdom and humility were clear to all of us who served with him on Presbyteries' Cooperative Committee, where we wrote theology ordination exams for the Presbyterian Church. His insights helped us through many a thicket where we were trying to orient a question or find the right language.

Guthrie was a church theologian known for his humor and love of laughter. His colleagues said that he had "spoken so often on the topic 'What Presbyterians Believe' that it is rumored he has given the lecture in his sleep!"[15] From *Christian Doctrine* throughout all his labors, Guthrie was dedicated to the church and its theological task. To generations of his students, Shirley Guthrie was a beloved teacher. As one put it: "I am one of hundreds of students who were privileged to learn from him during those years. Many of us have memories of Shirley teaching while poised, flamingo-like on one leg, the other propped up on the table before him and jingling the change in his pocket. We remember his mix of humility and kindness, balanced by occasional pauses of grace-filled exasperation, as he taught theology year after year after year to new students."[16]

When faced with his impending death, Cousar said that friends found Guthrie "talking often about God's forgiveness and about the future of God's people (including his own future). As he had taught us about living, so he taught us about dying."[17] Brueggemann and Stroup put it well: "Although Guthrie shares his mentor's [Barth's] suspicion of any theology that makes too much of human experience, God will surely forgive Guthrie's many friends who believe they have experienced in his large heart and keen intellect a witness to the grace and love of God."[18]

Donald K. McKim
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NOTES

1. Shirley C. Guthrie, *Christian Doctrine* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1968), 413 pgs.; Shirley C. Guthrie, *Christian Doctrine*, rev. ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 434 pgs.

2. For a time the Covenant Life Curriculum was the authorized curriculum of five U.S. denominations: the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, the Moravian Church in America, the Presbyterian Church in the United States, and the Reformed Church in America. See "The Covenant Life Curriculum [of The Presbyterian Church in the United States]" at http://www.pcahistory.org/findingaids/pcus/covenantlife.html.

3. Kimberly Clayton Richter, "A Memorial Tribute to Shirley C. Guthrie," November 7, 2004, Covenant Network of Presbyterians, at https://covnetpres.org/2004/11/a-memorial-tribute-to-shirley-c-guthrie/.

4. Guthrie, *Christian Doctrine*, rev. ed., ix.

5. Charles B. Cousar, "Tribute to Shirley C. Guthrie Jr.," in Shirley C. Guthrie Jr., *Always Being Reformed: Faith for a Fragmented World*, 2nd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), x.

6. Ibid.

7. Walter Brueggemann and George W. Stroup, eds., *Many Voices: One God: Being Faithful in a Pluralistic World: In Honor of Shirley Guthrie* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 2.

8. Brueggemann and Stroup, eds., *Many Voices: One God*, 2–3.

9. Guthrie, *Christian Doctrine*, rev. ed., ix.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., x.

12. Ibid., xii.

13. Ibid., xiii.

14. Ibid.

15. Brueggemann and Stroup, eds., *Many Voices: One God*, 2.

16. Richter, "A Memorial Tribute to Shirley C. Guthrie."

17. Cousar, "Tribute," xv.

18. Brueggemann and Stroup, eds., *Many Voices: One God*, 4.

Preface to the Revised Edition

The first edition of this book was published in 1968 as part of a church school curriculum for use in adult study groups, primarily in Presbyterian and Reformed churches. I expected that it would be used for a few years until it was replaced by other Christian education resources. But it is still being used as an introduction to theology not only in churches but also in some colleges and seminaries in Presbyterian-Reformed and other denominations—an indication of the hunger of lay church members and beginning theological students for instruction in the Christian faith written in a way that is accessible to them.

Many of those who still find the book helpful have said that if it is to continue to be so, it must be updated to indicate how I would say things differently and how my mind has changed in light of developments in the thought and life of the church and in the world since 1968.

It is not all that important or interesting to talk about changes in "my" theology, but such an update is necessary if the book is to continue to serve the purpose for which it was written—to interpret ecumenical Christian faith as summarized in the Apostles' Creed from the perspective of the Reformed tradition. That tradition itself demands the constant "updating" (reformation) of our always inadequate, time- and situation-bound attempts to understand the Christian gospel. This revised edition of the book, then, is not just an attempt to be up to date, but is an attempt to be faithful to the "always to be reformed" tradition that informs its understanding of the task of theology.

The basic structure and outline of the book have not changed: Christians still confess their faith with the ancient Apostles' Creed. But

four kinds of changes make the revised edition different from the first. In this preface I want to identify them and at the same time acknowledge and express appreciation for the help of those who have influenced me to make them.

First, there are changes that are simply attempts to say more clearly what I wanted to say in the first edition, changes not in substance but in expression. Some of them are attempts to clarify by saying the same thing in a more precise and understandable way. Some are attempts to clarify by expanding the discussion of particular questions or issues. Such changes occur throughout the book but especially in chapters dealing with the authority and interpretation of scripture, predestination, providence and evil, and Christian hope for the future (chapters that have provoked the most heated or perplexed reactions). Changes of this kind are mostly the result of many conversations with groups of church people and seminary students who have studied the book. Their questions, objections, requests for "more"—and uncanny ability to spot weaknesses, ambiguities, and sometimes contradictions—have forced and helped me to be more careful in what I say and the way I say it.

Second, there are changes that are the result of my continued study of the Reformed tradition. The first edition was based on a conversation primarily with John Calvin, the confessional documents of Reformed churches, Karl Barth's update of the classical Reformed tradition, and others who stand generally in this theological line. In this revised edition they continue to be fundamental resources for me, but my ongoing conversation with them has resulted both in new learning from them and at some points new critical evaluation of them. I have also learned from confessional statements produced since 1968 (the Declaration of Faith of 1976 and the Brief Statement of Faith of 1991) and from other twentieth-century Reformed theologians. Jürgen Moltmann's work on the doctrine of the Trinity in conversation with the Eastern Orthodox doctrine (along with the work of Eberhard Jüngel and liberation theologians I will mention presently) led to important changes in my own doctrine of the Trinity—and consequently in my understanding of the whole of Christian doctrine based on faith in the triune God. Moltmann's work on the doctrine of creation led me to consider some interesting possibilities for reinterpreting that doctrine for our time. My study of Hendrikus Berkhof's and Moltmann's work on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit resulted in substantial changes in my own discussion of the Spirit's person and work. In this revised edition I continue to write with lay people and beginning theological students in mind and have

kept conversation with academic theologians for the most part in the background or in footnotes, but I am happy to acknowledge my indebtedness to them here.

Third, this revised edition is different because it was written in a changed social and historical context. From the time of the Reformation, to be a Reformed theologian has always meant to ask what the living God we come to know in the Bible is saying and doing, and therefore what faithful Christians have to say and do in thankful and obedient response to this living God, in every new time, place, and situation.

In the 1960s that meant for me, as for others, that any faithful and relevant interpretation of Christian doctrine must both speak and respond to: the civil rights movement in the United States; the cold war between the "free" West and the communist East; the real and imagined threat of communist ideology in our own country as well as abroad; the growing gap between the few rich and the many poor in our own country and around the world; the bitter battle between "hawks" and "doves" over the tragic involvement of the United States in Vietnam; the sexual revolution; the chaos that led to the murder of political and spiritual leaders who stood for justice and reconciliation.

In the 1990s we still confront the same fundamental problems but in new, more complex, and more urgent ways. The open racism of the 1960s has been replaced by more subtle, and in some ways more dangerous, forms of racism in church and society, and even those who sincerely oppose it no longer agree on solutions to it. (Now it is often *conservatives* who argue for "integration" and *liberals* who support some form of "separate but equal.") The great cold war has ended only to be replaced by many "little" wars that threaten to become global (and nuclear) wars—surprisingly enough, in our supposedly secularized world—between groups and nations that slaughter each other in the name of Christian, Jewish, Muslim, or Hindu religious commitment. Angry ideological debates in churches, schools, and government about "the communist threat" have been replaced by equally angry debates about the politically correct solution to the conflict between men and women, and between people of different races, classes, and cultural traditions. The gap between the rich and the poor has become even more visible as thousands of homeless people wander the streets of our cities, and even more urgent as we have learned that the economic welfare of every country in the world is inseparable from that of every other country. On the sexual battleground in church and society, the debate is no longer only about sexual freedom and whether "living together" is

acceptable for unmarried couples; now it is about AIDS, abortion, the status of women, and homosexuality. We have become aware as never before of the interdependence of all kinds of people that makes an inclusive national and international human community *necessary*, and of the racial, cultural, and religious pluralism that seems to make the achievement of such a community *impossible.* At the same time we are also more aware of the interdependence of human beings and their natural environment, and of the fact that the survival of all life on our planet depends on ecological responsibility we have not yet begun to take with real seriousness. Such is the context in which Christian doctrine must be written today, the context that always lies in the background and often appears in the foreground of this revised edition.

Finally, this edition is different because I have been listening to some new voices in theology: the voices of black theologians such as American James Cone and South African Allan Boesak; feminist and "womanist" theologians such as Rosemary Ruether, Sallie McFague, Letty Russell, and Jacquelyn Grant; and Latin American theologians such as Gustavo Gutiérrez, Jon Sobrino, Leonardo Boff, and Juan Luis Segundo.

These "liberation" theologians, many of them Roman Catholics and representatives of Protestant traditions other than my own, have confirmed and strengthened two convictions I already had and repeatedly emphasized in the first edition of this book (influenced especially by Karl Barth): (1) If scripture is to be for us the normative authority we Reformation Christians confess it to be, we cannot read it only to confirm our own personal, social, and theological biases; we must gladly listen to and be corrected by what fellow Christians who are different from us have learned from it. (2) The God of the Bible is a God whose justice and compassion are exercised especially for the sake of powerless, "marginalized" people who are ignored, excluded, or oppressed by the rich and powerful, and by all who defend any given social, political, and religious status quo.

Liberation theologians have also made me aware of ways I have been unable to hear some of the radical promises and demands of the God of scripture because I have read and interpreted it from the perspective of a white, middle-class, "Euro-American" male who learned my theology from others like me. Of course, those who interpret scripture from other perspectives can and must be criticized for the limited insight, one-sidedness, and biases of their particular race, sex, class, and cultural and religious environment. But this is a different book (and I believe one

more faithful to authentic Reformed tradition) because they have helped me learn from the Word of God some things I did not know in 1968 and could not have learned without them. As is the case with other theologians I have mentioned, my conversation with liberation theologians is more often implicit than explicit; but even when I do not mention them, they too have always been with me as I revised this book.

Perhaps the most obvious difference between the first and second editions is the result of what I have learned from the feminist expression of liberation theology. Gone is all talk about "man," "men," and "mankind," and all references to individual human beings in general as "he." Gone too, I hope, are all stereotypes of masculine and feminine characteristics and roles. Gone is all talk about God as "he," and gone is the exclusive and unqualified use of masculine imagery to talk about God. *Of course,* those of us who once used such language to talk about human beings intended to include women. But many women have felt and actually have been excluded by such talk. *Of course,* we did not think of God literally as a big Man up in the sky. But the contemporary debate about appropriate "God-talk" has exposed the fact that some people (including theologians) actually have thought of God as the great heavenly Male made in the image of human males. The task of theology for today is much, much more than learning to use inclusive language to speak of human beings and learning to use feminine as well as masculine images to speak of God. But we cannot get to that much, much more until we get rid of sexist language (and the presuppositions behind it) in speaking about human beings and God.

No Christian theology can claim to speak the last word about God and God's relation to human beings and the world. Every theology is at best a limited, fallible, provisional attempt to speak of the living God of scripture whose truth, justice, and compassion are beyond the very highest and best we can imagine. But I hope the changes I have made in this revised edition will make it for a few more years a theology that is a helpful witness to this living God.

As I have rethought and reworked what I wrote twenty-five years ago, my ongoing conversation and vigorous debates with my colleagues Walter Brueggemann, Will Coleman, Charles B. Cousar, C. Benton Kline, and George Stroup have encouraged and enabled me to keep growing in my theological understanding and commitment. I could not have had a more careful and helpful editor than Harold L. Twiss at Westminster/John Knox Press. Mr. Twiss's work and my own work were

made easier because of Ann Titshaw's requests for clarification and suggestions for improvement as she patiently and cheerfully typed the manuscript. My friend, pastor-theologian Richard I. Deibert, generously volunteered to prepare the index.

Shirley C. Guthrie

Columbia Theological Seminary
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PART 1

THE METHOD AND TASK OF THEOLOGY

Sex, politics, and theology—these are the only things worth talking about. This old saying is an exaggeration, perhaps, but it is an attempt to express a deep truth. Sex forces the question, Who am I? Politics asks, How can we learn to live together? Theology, which means literally "a word about God," asks questions like these: What is your only comfort in life and in death? What is the chief end of human life? What are we by nature? In whom do you believe?[1] To risk carrying the exaggeration even further, of the three topics mentioned, theology is the most important and most interesting because it *includes* the questions raised by sex and politics! No theology is interested only in God. *The study of theology is by definition the quest for the ultimate truth about God, about ourselves, and about the world we live in.* What else is there to talk about?

So you should not be awed to hear that you are about to begin a study of theology. Theology is not just an impractical, otherworldly subject for a few dreamy scholars who retire to ivory towers to devote themselves to such irrelevant, hairsplitting questions as, How many angels can dance on the head of a pin? It is the discipline that wrestles with the basic issues and decisions we all face every day, whoever we are, whatever we do. Whether you know it or not, you are already a practicing theologian even before you begin this formal study of theology. The purpose here is to articulate and seek some answers to questions you have been consciously or unconsciously struggling with all your life.

Before we can get to the content of the truth about God, human beings and the world, we have to ask how we should go about discovering this truth. That is the problem we will tackle in the first two chapters.

In the first chapter we will study the method and task of theology and consider the title question, "Who Is a Theologian?" In the second we will ask, "Who Says So?" This will involve a consideration of significant creeds and confessions of the Christian church and their authority over us as church members.

1

Who Is a Theologian?

This first chapter is actually the last. It is written after all the rest of this book has been finished. Its purpose is to tell you what to expect and to give you some guidelines to help you know how to go about your study. We will begin not by talking about the content of the book as such, but by talking about *us*—you and me, the readers and the writer. Theology, of course, does have to do with ideas, truths, and doctrines (doctrine means simply "teaching"). But these ideas, truths, and doctrines themselves point to a living Person who confronts us as persons. So we go straight to the heart of theology when we get personal from the very beginning. As we become clear about who we theologians are, we will also understand our task as theologians and the purpose of this book.

As you read this chapter, make a list of what you need to keep in mind in order to go about your study as a good theologian.

WHO ARE YOU?

Most of you who will study this book are church members, and you probably will be working through it with other members of the church. However, you will never understand Christian theology if you think of yourself and the others only as such.

Your Personal and Social Background

You are not only a Christian; you are either a *male* or a *female* whose life, in fact if not in theory, is as much determined by your sexual as by your religious needs and desires, thoughts, and instincts.

The Christian community is not the only community you belong to. You are a member of a *family* community; you are husband or wife, father or mother, son or daughter, brother or sister. And much more of your life is spent (or should be) concentrating on the success or failure, happiness or misery of your family relationships (or lack of them) than on church activities.

You are a member of one *race* or another, one *economic class* or another; and more than likely even the particular congregation you belong to has been brought together far more obviously on the basis of common racial and class ties than on the basis of common theological convictions.

You are deeply involved not only in the Christian way of life but also in the American way of life, which is something quite different. Not all Christians are Americans, and not all Americans are Christians. But your understanding of the Christian faith is inevitably influenced by your American culture as well as by your reading of the Bible and study of church doctrine.

You are the citizens of a particular nation as well as "citizens of heaven," and your liberal or conservative politics affects your theology as much as your liberal or conservative theology affects your politics.

In short, part of your life is colored by what goes on in the church, but much of it is also colored by what goes on in the home, bank, supermarket, courthouse, and movie and television studios. Even when you leave the "world" to go to church, you take your worldly life with you. Insofar as *you* are in the church, the world is there too. Even when you put aside the newspaper and other secular literature to read the Bible and this book about theology, you bring to your religious studies all your secular problems, desires, and opinions—whether you want to or not.

This means that if Christian theology is to be more than an intellectual game, if it is to deal with you personally, it has to bring the word about God to bear not just on your church life but on your life in the world. At every point in this book, therefore, you will find that I have tried to relate Christian theology not just to purely religious questions and problems but also to family and social and political and economic questions and problems. Christian theology deals with people where they really live because the God we must talk about is a God who is at work to judge and help in every area of our lives.

It follows, then, that as you study the doctrines discussed in this book, your task is to ask at every point what they have to say about your social as well as your individual life, your everyday work and play as well as

your private and public worship, your life here and now as well as your life in the "world to come." Only when you do that will you fulfill the task of a good theologian—one who thinks and speaks about both the true God and real human beings in the real world.

I have tried to help you fulfill this task throughout the book, but you will find specific and concrete help especially in the section "For Further Reflection and Study" at the end of each chapter. You might find it helpful to glance first at this section every time you begin a new chapter.

Your Religious Background

You begin your study of theology not only with the whole personal and social background that makes you the particular kind of person you are. You begin also with some sort of religious background. Some of you who read this book are already deeply committed Christians. Some of you have serious doubts about the truth and meaning of the Christian faith. Some of you probably belong to the church because it's the thing to do, without either deep commitment or serious thought one way or the other. Some of you already know a lot about the Bible and the doctrines of your church. Others of you know practically nothing. For some of you, the assertion "The Bible says . . ." or "Our church teaches . . ." carries great weight. Others of you are not impressed with such statements and won't buy anything until you are shown its truth and relevance.

I have been troubled throughout the book about this wide divergence among you. How can I speak relevantly to all of you at once? If you are studying this book in a class with other people, you will soon be confronted with the same problem: How can you discuss theology meaningfully with people whose religious background and faith are different? There is no easy solution to the problem. But as I have written this book, there are two rules I have tried to follow to include all of you in the conversation. I suggest that you keep them in mind as you study the book, and especially as you discuss it with other people. They are general rules for being a good theologian, for "doing theology."

1. *Be honest!* Be honest with yourself and with other people—and above all with God. Don't apologize for, or try to hide, what you believe, whether it is right or wrong in the eyes of others. And don't apologize for, or try to hide, what you cannot believe or have a hard time believing. Growth in understanding and growth in faith are possible only when there is neither self-deception nor an attempt to fool God and other people. An honest doubter is closer to the truth than a superficial or

dishonest believer. To quote the words of the great Christian theologian, P. T. Forsyth, "A live heresy is better than a dead orthodoxy."

2. *Recognize your own limitations.* Theology deals with a God whose thoughts are not our thoughts and whose ways are not our ways (Isa. 55:8). Theologians who are sure that they have all the answers to all questions and that their task is simply to convince others that this is so are bad theologians. They only prove that they know nothing at all of the majesty and mystery of the God who cannot be captured and mastered by any human system of thought. Sometimes it is more believing to say "I just don't know" than to be too smugly sure. Sometimes it is better to leave some questions open until we have more light. It is often the case that sincere, serious Christians disagree even on very important questions, so that it simply cannot be said that this or that is *the* Christian position. In other words, we will be good theologians when we are modest theologians, acknowledging our own limitations, recognizing that we may be wrong at this or that point, knowing that we need to be open to let ourselves be helped by as well as to help, to be changed by as well as to change, those who think differently from us.

I have tried to follow these rules myself. I have tried to be honest about what I think myself, yet to invite you to examine and criticize the positions I have taken. Instead of trying to give one right solution to every problem, I have often described several possible solutions, suggesting the arguments for and against each and leaving it up to you to decide. Sometimes I have only raised questions, suggesting some factors that have to be taken into consideration in searching for answers, without giving any answers as such.

You will be fortunate if different members of your study group choose different alternatives and different answers, and if you are willing to give them the same freedom to be honest about their faith and doubts that you want for yourself. You will learn far more from genuine open debate than from total agreement.

All this means that when you have finished your study, you will not have a nicely wrapped-up system of theology with every question answered and every problem solved. You will not have "arrived" in your understanding of the Christian faith; you will only be a little further along the way. Moreover, you will be better theologians just because you have learned that our faith must be in the God who is beyond all that any of us can ask or think, and not in our simple or complicated, liberal or conservative, orthodox or heretical theology.

WHO IS THE AUTHOR?

Your task as theologians is clarified not only by reflection about who you are, but also by some things you ought to remember about the theologian who wrote the book you are studying. One of the things you ought to keep in mind about me is that I am an ordained minister and professional theologian. This carries with it some advantages and disadvantages.

Professional Limitations

On the one hand, it means that I am at least supposed to have more competence than most of you in understanding and explaining the teachings of the Bible and the church. But on the other hand, it means that most of my time and work are spent in an ecclesiastical and academic environment. If, as we have said, theology has to do with the truth of God in relation to every aspect of life *in the world,* then many of you know more about that side of the theological task than I do. I have done my best not to write from an ivory tower, but I have been very much aware of the limitations of my profession. You should keep this in mind also. And you can help counterbalance my limitations by carefully examining what I have written in the light of your own experience and by listening seriously to those who have competence in other fields. What are the reactions of a homemaker, a medical doctor, a public official, a business leader, a sales clerk, a scientist, to what you read in this book? You will study the book as good theologians, not when you study it as if it had nothing to do with what people in such "worldly" vocations know, but when you constantly invite criticism and additional information from them. Good theology is a two-way conversation between preachers and lay people, church and world, professional theologians and experts in other areas. So take advantage of whatever help is available to you from both sides.

The Problem of Language

Part of my job is to interpret the language of the Bible and the technical terminology of the church. I have tried to do that in this book. You will find such words as *justification, sanctification, sin, grace, salvation,* and *eschatology* throughout the book. I have used such religious language deliberately. Just as you have to learn the vocabulary of psychology or physics or sociology if you are going to study those sciences, so you have

to understand the vocabulary of the Bible and the church if you are to understand the science of theology.

On the other hand, you must watch us professional theologians very carefully! Sometimes *we* know what we are talking about when we use the language of our profession, but do not explain it so that other people can understand it. And sometimes we unconsciously use technical jargon to avoid difficult problems, or to hide from ourselves and others the fact that we ourselves do not know what we are talking about. I have done my best to avoid both faults, but may not always have been successful. So read this book very critically. Keep asking all the way through: Does it make sense? What is the meaning of this biblical or technical word? Has the author explained it adequately? Is it my fault or his that I do not understand? And be just as hard on other members of your study group. Don't let anyone get by with meaningless or ambiguous jargon. Keep asking for definitions and explanations—even of the most basic words, such as *God* or *Christ* or *Spirit* or *sin.* Theology that is only intellectual or pious or undefined biblical jargon is always *bad* theology. It is not enough to say "The Bible says . . ." or "The church teaches . . ." or "Theologians say . . ." The job is not done until the meaning of such statements is clear.

The Problem of Personal Bias

No matter how seriously theologians try to put aside their personal wishes, feelings, and opinions in order to understand the truth about God and God's ways with the world, their understanding of the truth is always distorted because they see or hear from the perspective of their particular race, sex, economic class, religious and national heritage. That is also true of the white, male, middle-class, North American Presbyterian who wrote this book. Even when I have left questions open and have presented several alternative solutions, you will probably see what my own personal preferences are. Even when I have quoted scripture or the teachings of the church or the writings of other theologians, what comes out is inevitably *my* interpretation of them. I have tried to be fair in describing the position of those with whom I differ and to recognize the limitations and difficulties of my own position. I have tried not to twist what others have written to suit my own taste and fancy. Many of the changes in this revised edition are the result of my trying to listen especially to the voices of people who are different from me: women, members of racial and ethnic minorities, the poor and oppressed, and theologians of the third world. But still my

biases and limitations will show through—more clearly to those of you who are different from me than to me.

This means that you must study this book with a critical eye. Your task is not to learn just what I think, but what the truth is. But how can you distinguish between the truth itself and my biased interpretation of it? You must be careful here, because the temptation is to judge what the book says by *your* personal biases. If you do that, you still will not discover the truth, but only the confirmation of your own likes and dislikes. You will finish exactly where you began, having learned nothing. What are the criteria, then, by which you can at least honestly try to get past both my *and* your own prejudices? There are some. They are the criteria by which both what I have written and your study of it should be guided—criteria that define the task of Christian theology as such.

THE TASK OF THEOLOGY

What we have to do and the way we should go about it comes into focus as soon as we say that what we are concerned with is not just theology in general but *Christian* theology. Our task is to try to understand a particular view of God, human beings, and the world, the content and nature of which is no more a matter of personal opinion than is the content and nature of Marxist communism or Freudian psychology. As with the teachings of Marx or Freud, so with the religion identified with the name of Christ—we may like or dislike what we are told. We may believe it or not, accept it or not. We may and should criticize any particular interpretation of it. But when we are asked to say what Marxism or Freudianism or Christianity is, we are neither asked nor allowed simply to express our own likes, dislikes, wishes, opinions, or prejudices about politics, psychology, or religion. We have to try to understand a way of thinking and living that is identifiable quite apart from our own personal preferences and ideas.

In the case of Christian theology, there are three objective factors that have to be taken into consideration. They are the criteria that have guided me as I have tried to say what the Christian faith is. And they are the criteria that can help you evaluate both what I have written and your own reactions. My purpose in writing and your task in studying this book is to understand the truth about God, human beings, and the world as it is made known, believed, and experienced in Jesus Christ, the Bible, and the church.

Jesus Christ

The name *Christ* is by definition the clue to what Christian faith is. If you want to know what God is like, Christian theology says—look at Christ. If you want to know what real humanity is and how you can live a genuinely human life—look at Christ. If you want to know what God is doing in the world and in your individual lives—look at Christ. For Christian theology, the person and work of Christ is the key to *all* truth about God, ourselves, and the world we live in.

To say this does not mean that all questions are automatically answered, all problems automatically solved by repeating the magic words *Jesus Christ*. Christ is himself the question and problem of Christian theology, the mystery we must try to understand. But to say that he stands at the center of all Christian theology does mean that at every point we must let all our own ideas, feelings, and experiences be examined, measured, judged, and interpreted by the problem, question, and mystery of who he is and what he does.

Again, the claim that for Christian theologians everything turns around the truth to be discovered in Christ does not imply the arrogant claim that only we Christians know anything about God, human beings, and the world, and that we have nothing to learn from anyone else. We learn from scripture itself that the whole world is God's world and that there is no place where God is not at work creating, reconciling, and renewing—even among people who do not know or believe in God. Therefore, in this book we will also listen to and be open to learn from the natural sciences, psychology, political science, secular novels and plays, and even other religions. Consistent with our Christian standpoint, we will do so in the light of the truth about God, human beings, and the world given in Christ. But as we listen to these "outsiders," it will be vital not to confuse Christian truth with our own biased interpretation of it.

This, then, is the first objective reference point for our theological work. Recognizing that it is the problem as well as the answer of Christian theology, being wide open for the insights of other points of view, everything we do must be done with reference to the truth that is *in Christ Jesus* about God, about ourselves, and about the world.

The Bible

In the Bible we come to know the Person who stands at the center of the Christian faith. The whole of the Old Testament looks forward to him

and is fulfilled in him. The whole of the New Testament is an expression of the faith that in him is hid the secret of the past, present, and future not only of Christian individuals but of the whole world. Christian theology is different from theology in general in that of all books this particular book is the source and norm of its attempt to understand the truth about God, human beings, and the world. The fact of the Bible means that we are not left alone to talk about a God who is only the projection of our own desires and fears, a humanity that is only the result of our wishful thinking about ourselves, or a world that is only the reflection of our own pessimistic or optimistic view of life. If we want to know what Christians believe, we cannot look only to our own minds and hearts and personal experiences; we have to go to the Bible.

You will find, therefore, that Bible study is an essential part of the theological work ahead of you. Take the trouble to look up the passages mentioned and to do the Bible study suggested. Use the various Bible dictionaries and word study books at your disposal. That will give you a constant way of checking my biases and presuppositions as well as your own and of exposing both of our subjective interpretations of Christian truth to the source and norm of that truth.

But Bible study in itself is no automatic guarantee of good theology—for two reasons that have to do not so much with the *authority* of scripture as with the more difficult problem of the right *interpretation* of scripture.

First, there is always the danger that we will find *in* the Bible only what we take with us *to* it—that we will use it to confirm what we already think and will hear only what we want to hear. Because they already hated Jews before they read the Bible, some German Christians once found in the Bible justification for slaughtering millions of Jews. Because they wanted to keep their human property, some American Christians once argued from the Bible that it is right to buy and sell human beings as if they were animals. Mean people usually find a mean God in the Bible, and superficial people usually find a superficial God. Comfortable, powerful people usually find that the Bible supports social and political conservatism; poor, exploited people usually find that it supports social and political reform or revolution. What is to keep us from simply using the Bible to give authority to our own religious, social, political, and economic prejudices? What is to prevent us from using the study of this ancient book as a pious excuse for refusing to face the radical claims of the living God on every area of our lives, here and now?

But the difficulty of faithful biblical interpretation lies not just with us; it lies in the Bible itself. It is not one book but a collection of writings composed by and for ancient Near Eastern people over a long period of time. It bears witness not to general, timeless truths about God, but to the way different people and groups, using different ways of speaking and thought forms, discerned the word and work of God in their particular time, place, and situation. All of them lived with a prescientific, preindustrial worldview, in a patriarchal-hierarchical society that generally treated women as inferior, accepted slavery as normal, and did not even dream of all the complex problems and needs of the kind of modern technological society we live in. How are we to discern in this ancient book what the living God is saying and doing in our quite different time and place? How are we to distinguish within scripture what is the will of God in all times and places from what was God's specific will for particular people in one or another of the particular historical situations we read about in the Bible?

Both these problems raise very difficult questions about how scripture is rightly interpreted. But the confessions of the Reformed tradition (which we will discuss presently) give us some widely accepted rules of interpretation that can help as you evaluate the way I have used the Bible and the way you use it.[1]

1. *Scripture is to be interpreted in light of its own purpose.* All Reformed confessions agree with the Westminster Confession (1.2) that scripture is "given by the inspiration of God to be *the rule of faith and life*." We read the Bible rightly when we read it to learn who God is and how we may live faithfully in the presence of God. We do not read it properly when we read it as if it were a textbook of scientific information about the structure of the world and human life in it, or a book about world history in general. Therefore we should be neither surprised nor offended when we encounter in this ancient book a prescientific or unscientific worldview and understanding of history. It tells us about the ultimate origin, meaning, and goal of human life that lie beyond the scope of modern scientific and historical disciplines.

2. *Scripture interprets itself.* "When there is a question about the true and full sense of any scripture, it may be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly" (Westminster Confession, 1.9). When we encounter passages that are hard to understand, we can look at other passages that throw a different light or more light on the question at hand. This rule also means that we must listen to the *total* witness of

scripture, not just to selected passages that support what we already think and want to hear. When anyone argues that "the Bible says" this or that, it is always important to ask, "Is that *all* the Bible says, or have you picked only passages that support your own ideas and preferences? What other passages might give us a better and fuller understanding of the biblical message?"

3. *The christological principle.* Jesus Christ is the clearest revelation of who God is and what God promises and wills for faithful Christian life. Therefore all scripture is to be interpreted in light of "what Christ Jesus himself did and commanded" (Scots Confession, 18), "in the light of its witness to God's work of reconciliation in Christ" (Confession of 1967, I.C.2). "When we encounter apparent tensions and conflicts in what Scripture teaches us to believe and do, the final appeal must be to the authority of Christ" (Declaration of Faith, 6.3). This christological principle of interpretation can help us with many questions. For instance, would it help to read some Old Testament texts that seem to point to the brutality of God in dealing with God's enemies in light of the New Testament witness to God's love in Christ for sinners and Christ's command that we are to love our enemies? Does the way Jesus dealt with women help us interpret texts in both the Old and New Testaments that suggest the inferior status of women?

4. *The rule of faith.* Referring to such central Protestant convictions as confession of the unique authority of scripture and salvation by God's grace alone, the Scots Confession (chap. 18) says, "We dare not receive or admit any interpretation which is contrary to any point of our faith." The Declaration of Faith says more generally, "listening with respect to fellow believers past and present, we anticipate that the Holy Spirit will enable us to interpret faithfully God's Word for our time and place" (chap. 6.3). We interpret scripture rightly when we do not try to interpret it by ourselves, as if we were the first ever to ask what it means. Seeking the guidance of God's Spirit, faithful Christians before us and other faithful Christians in the church around us have also struggled to understand and be led by it, and we are to listen to them "with respect." In our time we have learned the importance of listening also to fellow Christians, past and present, who are different from us in gender, race, class, cultural background, and national origin. They help us avoid confusing biblical truth with our own limited perspective on it.

5. *The rule of love.* "We hold that interpretation of scripture to be orthodox and genuine which agrees with . . . the rule of faith and *love*"

(Second Helvetic Confession, chap. 2). An often forgotten rule, this one is based on the fact that the fundamental expression of God's will is the twofold commandment to love God and neighbor. Any interpretation of scripture is wrong that shows indifference toward or contempt for any individual or group inside or outside the church. All right interpretations reflect the love of God and the love of God's people for all kinds of people everywhere, everyone included and no one excluded.

6. *The study of scripture in its literary and historical context.* Already the classical confessions of the sixteenth century knew that it was important to interpret the scripture "from the nature of the language in which they were written, likewise according to the circumstances in which they were set down" (Second Helvetic Confession, chap. 2). But it is especially contemporary confessions that recognize the importance of the literary and historical investigation of scripture:

> The Scriptures, given under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, are nevertheless the words of men, conditioned by the language, thought forms and literary fashions of the places and times at which they were written. They reflect views of life, history, and the cosmos which were then current. The church, therefore, has an obligation to approach the Scriptures with literary and historical understanding. As God has spoken his word in these diverse cultural situations, the church is confident that he will continue to speak through the Scriptures in a changing world and in every form of human culture. (Confession of 1967, I.C.2)

> God has chosen to address his inspired Word to us through diverse and varied human writings. Therefore we use the best available methods to understand them in their historical and cultural setting and in the literary forms in which they were cast. (Declaration of Faith, 6.3)

We need not be afraid to learn from scholars who are skilled in investigating scripture in its original literary and historical context. They help us to understand that God spoke to our ancestors (Heb. 1:1), and they help us to discern what the God who spoke and acted "back then" is saying and doing here and now.

I have tried in this book to follow these rules of interpretation, and you will be on your way toward becoming honest and faithful biblical theologians as you use them to evaluate and correct my, your own, and others' interpretation of scripture.

Our discussion of scripture as a second criterion of faithful Christian theology has underlined what we said about God's self-revelation in Christ as the first criterion, and it has already anticipated what we now have to say about a third criterion.

The Church

As soon as we say *Christian* theology we also say *church* theology. To be a follower of Christ has meant from the very beginning to join the community of disciples he draws together around himself. Christ himself promised to make himself known especially where people were gathered together in his name. The Bible was not written for and about isolated individuals; it was written for and about a *community* of people—Israel in the Old Testament, the church in the New Testament. You cannot be a Christian by yourself; you can only be a Christian together with other Christians who serve God in the world. It follows, then, that you cannot be a Christian theologian by reflecting on the meaning of Christ and studying the Bible only by yourself, to suit yourself. You can be a Christian theologian only as you do your work in conversation with other Christians in the Christian community, as together with them you seek to learn what God is doing and what God also has for you to do in the world outside the church.

There are several ways in which this book seeks to be church theology—and invites you to be theologians of the church. First, I have tried—and invite you to try—to listen to and learn from fellow Christians in the church, including especially those who are different from us in all the ways that set people against each other in contemporary secular society. Second, I have constantly depended on the work of the great theologians of the church, both past and present. Whether I have interpreted them correctly is always open to question. But the fact that they are there is at least a check on my and your ignorance, narrowness, and personal prejudices. Finally, this is church theology in that it constantly depends on the creeds and confessions that are the official statements of what the church believes. This is still another way in which my own and your private opinions will be subject to examination and correction.

THE REFORMED TRADITION

I acknowledge that it is especially the creeds and confessions of the Reformed-Presbyterian churches that will guide us. Does this mean that we have been trying to overcome personal theological biases only in order to substitute a narrow denominational bias? Several things need to be said from the very beginning about the particular place we will stand to do our church theology.

Christians Among Fellow Christians

All Christian theologians work from some one concrete part of the one "holy catholic church." They may be Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, Anglican-Episcopalian, Baptist, or some other "brand" of Christian, but none of us can belong to *the* church without belonging to *a* church. If we do our work from a particular perspective, this does not mean to claim that we are the real Christians whereas those others are false Christians, or that we have a monopoly on the truth. We can and we will learn also from the thinkers and creeds and confessions of other parts of the church. Even when our tradition differs from theirs, we will not question the fact that they are truly and sincerely Christian, too. But genuine and helpful conversation within the whole church is possible only where the individual partners in the conversation do not try to hide who they are and where they come from. In this book, we will enter the conversation honestly and openly identifying our perspective as Presbyterian-Reformed—the tradition springing especially from John Calvin and guided by the creeds and confessions of the Calvinistic branch of the church.

An Ecumenical Tradition

At the heart of the Reformed tradition stands the one confession of faith that nearly all Christian churches everywhere have in common—the Apostles' Creed. The articles of this creed form the main outline of this book. This means that although you may expect some typically Reformed emphases in this book (for instance, the free sovereign grace of God, our total dependence on God, the claim of God on every area of our life in the world), nevertheless you are not beginning a narrow denominational study. In following the Apostles' Creed, I have tried to write not just Reformed theology, but ecumenical (worldwide) *Christian* theology—from a Reformed point of view.

The Reformed Family

The word *Reformed* itself excludes narrowness and one-sidedness. There is no such thing as *the* Reformed position; there is only a generally recognizable Reformed "perspective" or "orientation" or, perhaps best of all, "family."

All Reformed Christians recognize especially John Calvin as their father. But Calvin can be understood in different ways, and, as is the case in any family, his children feel different degrees of dependence

upon him. So, for instance, the American Reformed theologians Charles Hodge (died 1878) and Benjamin Warfield (died 1921) stuck closer to home than have Karl Barth and Jürgen Moltmann, two twentieth-century Reformed theologians. But there is no doubt that Barth and Moltmann are legitimate children and still belong to the family.

Moreover, there is no one authoritative statement of faith to which all Reformed churches subscribe. There are many different statements. They all bear a common family resemblance, but they differ from each other in emphasis, in the spirit in which they are written, and sometimes in theological content. We will consider all of them, recognizing all as genuinely Reformed, honestly acknowledging their differences, refusing to let any one statement become the standard by which the others are judged. There is plenty of room in the Reformed family, in other words, for individual differences and freedom of movement.

Finally, strictly speaking, "Reformed" is a theological, not a denominational, title. It is a mistake to limit it to any one denomination. More than a hundred churches around the world belong to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, representing millions of Christians who identify themselves as Reformed Christians. "Reformed" is a doctrinal-theological description that cuts across all linguistic, national, racial, class, political, and cultural distinctions.

In other words, when we say that we will be doing Christian theology from a Reformed perspective, we do not mean that we will be talking about just "me and my denomination, and those within it who think and live exactly like me." The Reformed perspective aims not at setting up but at breaking down barriers between Christians.

This brings us to a last point, which summarizes everything I have been trying to say about the task of theology in this whole chapter.

Reformed and Always Being Reformed

The heading echoes an old slogan of the Reformed tradition. To say that this book is Christian theology from a Reformed point of view does not mean that our task is to try to master an already fixed system of theology that Reformed Christians believe has once and for all captured the truth about God, human beings, and the world. According to the Reformed faith, no system of theology can ever do that. *The* truth is the truth about God, human life, and the world in Jesus Christ as we know him in the Bible. All theology, whether that of an individual or of the whole church, is at best an inadequate, fallible, human attempt to understand that

truth. According to the Reformed churches, therefore, there always has been and always will be the right and responsibility to question any individual's, any denomination's, any creedal document's grasp of the truth—not for the sake of our freedom to think anything we please, but for the sake of the freedom of biblical truth from every human attempt to capture and tame it.

To work at Christian theology from the Reformed perspective, then, does not mean that we are asked to hold the fort and defend what Calvin and his followers thought three or four hundred years ago. Being loyal to them means that we do not simply repeat what they said, but that we take seriously what they themselves taught us about the superiority of the Word of God over every human word—including theirs! It means to ask the question they themselves taught us to ask: "What is the living God we know in Christ and in the Bible doing and saying in *our* time, *here* and *now,* where *we* have to think and live as Christians?" And that means that we will be faithful to the Reformed tradition when we continue the reformation begun in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and are willing when necessary to say things differently in the twentieth century.

Reformed means *always being reformed.* That is the task—and the freedom—to which you are invited as you study in this book *Christian* theology from a *Reformed* point of view.

But what is the relation between the authority of Christ, the authority of the Bible, the authority of the church, and the authority of our individual attempts to measure the teachings of the church by the truth given in Christ and in the Bible? That is the problem we have to wrestle with in the next chapter.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION AND STUDY

1. In light of what you have read in this chapter, evaluate the following statements:
   a. Religion is just a matter of personal opinion. It doesn't really matter what you believe so long as you are sincere.
   b. All religions are basically the same.
   c. Christ is the answer.
   d. The church ought to stick to spiritual concerns and not meddle in social, political, and economic problems.
   e. "My reading is very limited and yet very extended; it begins with Moses and ends with John. The Bible and the Bible alone I read

and study. . . . For it does not matter to me to learn how Ursin or Luther or Anselm or Augustine or Irenaeus [that is, great theologians in the history of the church] thought about the matter and formulated and determined it—they and their decisions are too new. I want that which is old, original and solely authentic: Holy Scripture itself" (G. Menken, nineteenth-century theologian).[2]

2. What should your attitude be toward someone whose theological beliefs are different from yours?
3. What should be the attitude of Christian theology toward such secular disciplines as science and psychology? Toward other religions?
4. What is the difference between "Reformed" and "Presbyterian"?
5. Is "Always reforming and being reformed" a dangerous slogan?
6. Would "I believe; help my unbelief" be a good motto as you study Christian theology?