

THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES

Historical Theology

Annotated

Louis Berkhof



Ligature

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CONTENTS

Publisher's Preface	1
Text and Editorial Method	3
Preface	5
Prolegomena	7
I. The Subject-Matter of the History of Dogma	9
1. THE MEANING OF THE WORD "DOGMA".	9
2. THE ORIGIN AND CHARACTER OF DOGMAS.	10
II. The Task of the History of Dogma	13
1. ITS PRESUPPOSITIONS.	13
2. ITS SUBJECT MATTER.	15
III. Method and Divisions of the History of Dogma	17
1. DIVISIONS OF THE HISTORY OF DOGMA.	17
2. METHOD OF TREATMENT.	17
IV. History of the History of Dogma	21
1. FACTORS THAT GAVE RISE TO THE HISTORY OF DOGMA AS A SEPARATE DISCIPLINE.	21
2. EARLIER WORKS ON THE HISTORY OF DOGMA.	22
3. LATER WORKS ON THE HISTORY OF DOGMA.	23
Questions for Further Study	25
Preparatory Doctrinal Development	27
I. The Apostolic Fathers and Their Doctrinal Views	29
1. THEIR REPUTED WRITINGS.	29
2. FORMAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THEIR TEACHINGS.	30
3. MATERIAL CONTENTS OF THEIR TEACHINGS.	31
Questions for Further Study	32
II. Perversions of the Gospel	33
1. JEWISH PERVERSIONS.	33
2. GENTILE PERVERSIONS: GENTILE-CHRISTIAN GNOSIS.	34
Questions for Further Study	39
III. Reform Movements in the Church	41
1. MARCION AND HIS MOVEMENT OF REFORM	41

2. THE MONTANIST REFORMATION:	42
Questions for Further Study	43
IV. The Apologists and the Beginnings of the Church's Theology	45
1. THE TASK OF THE APOLOGISTS.	45
2. THEIR POSITIVE CONSTRUCTION OF THE TRUTH.	46
3. THEIR SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE HISTORY OF DOGMA.	47
Questions for Further Study	48
V. The Anti-Gnostic Fathers	49
1. THE ANTI-GNOSTIC FATHERS.	49
2. THEIR DOCTRINE OF GOD, MAN, AND THE HISTORY OF REDEMPTION.	50
3. THEIR DOCTRINE OF THE PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST.	51
4. THEIR DOCTRINE OF SALVATION, OF THE CHURCH, AND OF THE LAST THINGS.	53
Questions for Further Study	54
VI. The Alexandrian Fathers	55
1. THE ALEXANDRIAN FATHERS.	55
2. THEIR DOCTRINE OF GOD AND OF MAN.	56
3. THEIR DOCTRINE OF THE PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST.	57
4. THEIR DOCTRINE OF SALVATION, OF THE CHURCH, AND OF THE LAST THINGS.	58
Questions for Further Study	59
VII. Monarchianism	61
1. DYNAMIC MONARCHIANISM.	61
2. MODALISTIC MONARCHIANISM.	62
Questions for Further Study	63
The Doctrine Of The Trinity	65
I. The Trinitarian Controversy	67
1. THE BACKGROUND	67
2. THE NATURE OF THE CONTROVERSY	68
3. THE COUNCIL OF NICEA.	69
4. THE AFTERMATH	70
Questions for Further Study	74

II. The Doctrine of the Trinity in Later Theology	75
1. THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY IN LATIN THEOLOGY	75
2. THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY IN THE PERIOD OF THE REFORMATION.	75
3. THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY AFTER THE PERIOD OF REFORMATION	77
Questions for Further Study	78
The Doctrine Of Christ	79
I. The Christological Controversies	81
1. FIRST STAGE OF THE CONTROVERSY	82
2. SECOND STAGE OF THE CONTROVERSY	86
Questions for Further Study	90
II. Later Christological Discussions	91
1. IN THE MIDDLE AGES.	91
2. DURING THE REFORMATION.	91
3. IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.	93
Questions for Further Study	98
The Doctrine Of Sin And Grace And Related Doctrines	99
I. The Anthropology of the Patristic Period	101
1. THE IMPORTANCE OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL PROBLEMS	101
2. THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF THE GREEK FATHERS.	101
3. THE GRADUAL EMERGENCE OF ANOTHER VIEW IN THE WEST.	102
Questions for Further Study	103
II. The Pelagian and Augustinian Doctrines of Sin and Grace	105
1. AUGUSTINE AND PELAGIUS	105
2. THE PELAGIAN VIEW OF SIN AND GRACE	106
3. THE AUGUSTINIAN VIEW OF SIN AND GRACE.	107
4. PELAGIAN AND SEMI-PELAGIAN CONTROVERSIES.	109
Questions for Further Study	111
III. The Anthropology of the Middle Ages	113
1. THE VIEWS OF GREGORY THE GREAT.	113
2. THE GOTTSCHALKIAN CONTROVERSY.	113
3. THE CONTRIBUTION OF ANSELM	115

4. PECULIARITIES OF ROMAN CATHOLIC ANTHROPOLOGY.	116
Questions for Further Study	118
IV. The Anthropology of the Period of the Reformation	119
1. THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF THE REFORMERS.	119
2. THE SOCINIAN POSITION.	120
3. ARMINIAN ANTHROPOLOGY.	121
4. THE POSITION OF THE SYNOD OF DORT.	122
5. THE POSITION OF THE SCHOOL OF SAUMUR.	124
Questions for Further Study	124
V. Anthropological Views of Post-Reformation Times	125
1. DIVERGENT VIEWS.	125
2. SOME MODERN THEORIES OF SIN	127
Questions for Further Study	129
The Doctrine Of The Atonement Or Of The Work Of Christ	131
I. The Doctrine of the Atonement Before Anselm	133
1. IN GREEK PATRISTIC THEOLOGY.	133
2. IN LATIN PATRISTIC THEOLOGY.	135
Questions for Further Study	137
II. The Doctrine of the Atonement from Anselm to the Reformation	139
1. THE DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT IN ANSELM.	139
2. ABELARD'S THEORY OF THE ATONEMENT.	141
3. REACTION TO ABELARD IN BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX.	142
4. SYNCRETISTIC VIEWS OF THE ATONEMENT.	143
5. DUNS SCOTUS ON THE ATONEMENT.	145
Questions for Further Study	146
III. The Doctrine of the Atonement in the Period of the Reformation	147
1. THE REFORMERS IMPROVING ON THE DOCTRINE OF ANSELM.	147
2. THE SOCINIAN CONCEPTION OF THE ATONEMENT.	148
3. THE GROTIAN THEORY OF THE ATONEMENT.	150
4. THE ARMINIAN VIEW OF THE ATONEMENT.	151
5. THE COMPROMISE OF THE SCHOOL OF SAUMUR.	153
Questions for Further Study	153
IV. The Doctrine of the Atonement After the Reformation	155

1. THE MARROW CONTROVERSY IN SCOTLAND.	155
2. SCHLEIERMACHER AND RITSCHL ON THE ATONEMENT	156
3. SOME OF THE MORE RECENT THEORIES OF THE ATONEMENT.	157
Questions for Further Study	160
The Doctrine Of The Application And Appropriation Of Divine Grace	161
I. The Soteriology of the Patristic Period	163
1. THE SOTERIOLOGY OF THE FIRST THREE CENTURIES.	163
2. THE SOTERIOLOGY OF THE REMAINING CENTURIES OF THE PATRISTIC PERIOD.	165
Questions for Further Study	168
II. The Soteriology of the Scholastic Period	169
1. THE SCHOLASTIC CONCEPTION OF GRACE.	169
2. THE SCHOLASTIC CONCEPTION OF FAITH.	170
3. THE SCHOLASTIC CONCEPTION OF JUSTIFICATION AND MERIT. .	170
Questions for Further Study	173
III. Reformation and Post-Reformation Soteriology	175
1. THE LUTHERAN ORDER OF SALVATION	175
2. THE REFORMED ORDER OF SALVATION.	177
3. THE ARMINIAN ORDER OF SALVATION.	178
4. MINOR CONCEPTIONS OF THE ORDER OF SALVATION	179
Questions for Further Study	180
The Doctrine Of The Church And The Sacraments	181
I. The Doctrine of the Church	183
1. IN THE PATRISTIC PERIOD.	183
2. IN THE MIDDLE AGES.	187
3. DURING AND AFTER THE REFORMATION.	190
Questions for Further Study	194
II. The Doctrine of the Sacraments	195
1. THE SACRAMENTS IN GENERAL	195
2. BAPTISM	199
3. THE LORD'S SUPPER	202
Questions for Further Study	206
The Doctrine Of The Last Things	207

I. The Intermediate State	209
II. The Second Advent and the Millennial Hope	213
III. The Resurrection	217
IV. The Last Judgment and the Final Awards	219
Questions for Further Study	220
Division Study Guides	221
Prolegomena Study Guide	222
Preparatory Doctrinal Development Study Guide	224
The Doctrine of the Trinity Study Guide	226
The Doctrine of Christ Study Guide	228
Sin and Grace Study Guide	230
The Atonement Study Guide	232
The Application of Divine Grace Study Guide	234
The Church and the Sacraments Study Guide	236
The Last Things Study Guide	238
Timeline of Doctrinal Development	241
Scripture Index	243
General Index	245
References and Further Reading	249
Louis Berkhof	259

PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

Louis Berkhof (1873–1957) was a pastor, professor, seminary president, and one of the most influential Reformed teachers of the twentieth century. His textbooks gave ministers and students a clear map of Christian doctrine and its historical development.

The *History of Christian Doctrines* traces the chief doctrinal debates from the early church through the modern period. Berkhof gives special attention to the Trinity, Christ, sin and grace, salvation, the church, the sacraments, and the last things. His compact account shows how controversy shaped the church's language and teaching.

This edition preserves Berkhof's argument and historical judgments. Ligature corrected verified transcription faults and clear printer errors. It did not modernize his doctrine or revise his conclusions.

Ligature prepared nine division study guides. They summarize each major part, define key terms, direct readers to Scripture, and provide questions and exercises. Berkhof's own chapter questions remain in the text. His short literature lists appear in one references section. Ligature also added a timeline, Scripture index, general index, and short biography.

These additions help readers follow the book's periods, people, and arguments. They remain separate from Berkhof's original text.

—The Editors
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TEXT AND EDITORIAL METHOD

Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company first published this text in Grand Rapids in 1937 as the historical volume of Reformed Dogmatics. Berkhof retitled the volume *The History of Christian Doctrines* for the 1949 second printing.

The protected Ligature manuscript derives from a complete transcription of a later printing. Ligature checked the book's identity, extent, divisions, chapters, and bibliography against the 1937 edition. A University of Iowa copy settled targeted doubtful readings. A later *Banner of Truth* printing served as a comparison witness.

The 1937 body has not received a complete line-by-line proof. This review edition does not claim that proof. Its evidence and limits appear in the title's source record and proof log.

Ligature preserves Berkhof's wording, paragraph sequence, questions, and historical judgments. The publication copy repairs merged headings that arose during transcription. It also corrects clear transcription faults and logged printer errors. These repairs do not change Berkhof's argument.

The available transcription does not preserve every original italic distinction. Ligature does not reconstruct emphasis without page evidence.

Berkhof placed short literature lists after many chapters and supplied a final bibliography. This edition gathers those lists in one section. Inclusion records Berkhof's sources and recommendations. It does not state Ligature's agreement with every work.

The original index was not present in the available transcription. Ligature created a new general index from the live edition. The Scripture index also uses the live pagination.

PREFACE

Some works on Dogmatics contain a great deal of historical material of the utmost importance for a proper understanding and appreciation of the doctrinal teachings of the Church. My "Reformed Dogmatics," however, contains little more of this than would seem to be absolutely essential. It did not seem desirable to burden the work with such an amount of historical data as would make it too cumbersome to be used as a textbook. Moreover, this could not have been done without a great amount of additional work and considerable delay in its publication. Since Dogmatics and the History of Dogma have always been taught as separate courses at our Seminary, it would have entailed nothing less than the re-writing of both courses, in order to secure the proper integration of all the material.

These considerations led to the omission. However, in view of the great value of the historical approach in the study of Dogmatics, it now seems best to compensate for what is lacking by the publication of the historical material used in the course on the History of Dogma. This will at the same time provide a manual for future use. The book now offered to the public does not pretend to be a complete History of Dogma, but only seeks to supply the material that will promote a proper understanding of the historical origin and growth of the main doctrines of the Church.

The author is deeply grateful for the kind reception of the previous volumes in Reformed circles, and can only hope that this modest addition may be of some service to others, and especially to those who possess and use his Dogmatics.

L. Berkhof.
Grand Rapids, Michigan,
July 8, 1937.

PROLEGOMENA

