



Our Theological Perspective

Northeastern Seminary welcomes students who seek to ground their thinking and practice in the Holy Scriptures, to understand the rich learning and nurture of classic Christian teaching and to enter into significant conversation with the best of all Christian traditions, including those other than their own.

This is consistent with our own heritage that can be traced to John Wesley, the founder of Methodism. Wesley provides an exceptional model of theological method. He was immersed in the Holy Scriptures, acknowledged them as the supreme authority and profusely used them in his writings with striking aptness. Likewise, Wesley's viewpoint was deeply rooted in classical Christianity. He loved the insights of the early Christian writers. Further, Wesley drew widely from the rich resources of the entire Christian family, such as the late medieval saints and the Protestant reformers. Finally, we note Wesley's pastoral passion: his vision sought embodiment in a holistic Christian life that included personal piety and social action as well as sound doctrine.

This is the theological perspective Northeastern Seminary seeks to emulate. We acknowledge the centrality and authority of the Holy Scriptures. These works convey the revelation of God in an utterly unique way. Moses, the prophets and the apostles, though ancient, speak an enduring and timely message. We aspire to know the text of the Bible—both in its breadth and depth, and to discover the meaning and application of its message to our own day. We believe our theological discourse, our worship—both corporate and private—our professional work and our personal conduct are to be shaped by God's Word.

We also embrace those understandings of the Scriptures that have always been treasured by the church. The central teachings of such historic documents as the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds and, to a lesser degree, the Augsburg Confession, the Thirty-Nine Articles of Church of England, and the Articles of Religion of the Free Methodist Church provide indispensable guidance. So also do the great pastors and teachers of the historic church, such as Augustine, Aquinas, the Protestant reformers and Wesley.

Finally, we apply the rule often attributed to Augustine, "in essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity." Thus, we heartily welcome students who come from various traditions. The vigorous, stimulating and instructive discussion that takes place at Northeastern enables us to clarify, adjust and think through our own understandings of theological issues, as we measure them against the teachings of the Holy Scriptures.

The following statements, which echo the language of the Scriptures and the affirmations of the church, identify those doctrines we believe of central importance.

There is but one living and true God, spiritual in nature and infinite in power, wisdom and goodness; and in this Godhead there are three Persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

God is the Creator and Preserver of all things, both visible and invisible.

The only begotten Son of God, by whom all things were made, for us and for our salvation was made flesh in Jesus of Nazareth by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. Truly God, of one substance with the Father, and truly man, like us in all respects, yet without sin, our Lord Jesus Christ suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried, was raised on the third day, ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father; he shall come again to judge the living and the dead.

The Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, is the Lord and Giver of life, who rules over human affairs and brings us to salvation by convicting, persuading, renewing, sanctifying, comforting and, at the end of time, raising us from the dead as our Lord Jesus Christ was raised, and who together with the Father and the Son is to be worshipped and glorified.

The thirty-nine books of the Old Testament, the Hebrew Scriptures, and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament belong to the universally recognized Christian canon, of which there was never significant doubt. These Scriptures, inspired by the Holy Spirit, contain the teachings of Moses, the prophets, the apostles and especially our Lord Jesus Christ. They are true and reliable and instruct us authoritatively about God, human nature, the way of salvation and the life of faith. They contain all things necessary to our salvation so that whatever cannot be read in them or proved by them should not be required as an article of faith.

The church was established by our Lord Jesus Christ through his ministry and his apostles, and he continues this ministry where there is a congregation of faithful persons in which the scriptures, the Word of God, are rightly preached and the sacraments, the means of grace, are duly administered. Through its obedience to the Great Commission, our Lord constantly brings new persons into the church and nurtures them in the life of faith. Though presently divided, the church transcends these divisions and is composed of the faithful on earth, the saints who are in the presence of Christ and the heavenly hosts. Through the Holy Spirit, our Lord Jesus Christ constantly renews the church as one, holy, catholic and apostolic; at the end of time, he will present the church unblemished to the Father.

Though humankind was created in the image of God and endowed with spiritual life, after the fall of Adam we have all been born in sin, rebelled against God and are very far gone from original righteousness. By ourselves we cannot turn and obey God; the Spirit of God must prepare us to seek

forgiveness and spiritual renewal by awakening us from sin, calling us to repentance and faith and graciously enabling us to do so.

By the merit of our Lord Jesus Christ, those who acknowledge their sinfulness, genuinely repent of their sins and trust in Christ are undeservedly forgiven and put in a right relationship with God.

Through the work of the Holy Spirit, those who yield themselves to God and become obedient from the heart are transformed into the image of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Last Adam.

We are to follow the instruction of the Scriptures that guide our conduct, the moral commandments of the Old Testament, particularly the Ten Commandments, the admonitions of the apostles and especially the commandments of Christ. All of these are contained in the Great Commandments to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and our neighbors as ourselves.