

9-1-1956

## The Authority of Scripture

Norman Nagel

*Concordia Seminary, St. Louis*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm>



Part of the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Nagel, Norman (1956) "The Authority of Scripture," *Concordia Theological Monthly*: Vol. 27, Article 50.  
Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol27/iss1/50>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Print Publications at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Concordia Theological Monthly by an authorized editor of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact [seitzw@csl.edu](mailto:seitzw@csl.edu).

# The Authority of Scripture

By **NORMAN NAGEL**

(This paper was read at the annual conference sponsored by the Lutheran Council of Great Britain, May 28—31. "The Doctrine of Scripture" was the subject of the conference, at which the Lutheran groups concerned about doctrinal unity among Lutherans were represented.)

**T**HE way Scripture understands itself is presented elsewhere in the theses sent out by the Council. That presentation has its greatest strength in bringing Scripture into close and integral relationship with Christ. Faith's primary apprehension is Christ; the consequent apprehension is Scripture. To apprehend Christ is to be placed under Scripture. The recognition of this is the basis of how we listen to what Scripture says. Scripture has spoken Christ to us, and therefore, when Scripture speaks, we receive and accept whatever it says, for whatever it says is heard in relationship to Christ.

What we have called the first and second apprehensions (of Christ and of the Scripture) are not to be seen as antithetical or exclusive but much rather as mutually inclusive. The authority of Scripture is not an independent authority. It has a derived authority, but not a different authority from that of Him whom it speaks to us.

It is the first apprehension which saves and not the second. A man is saved by Christ and not by the Scriptures, though to talk in this way may be to fall into the error of speaking as if there were some disharmony between them. Yet we may perhaps permit ourselves that statement in order to underline the Christ-aloneness of our salvation. Where there is the inconsistency of a man's confessing Christ but depreciating Scripture, we must say that his faith will save him. However, if we love that man, we will do what we can to free him of that disease, which, if it spreads, will rob him of Christ. If we love Christ, we shall not consent to giving Him less than the honor which is due Him as He is revealed in the Scriptures.

The primary task is to preach Christ and Him crucified. In doing this we are of course preaching nothing else but Scripture. We do not, however, first strive to bring men to acknowledge Scripture and then from this go on to point to Christ. Our preaching points



to Christ, and when He is acknowledged, then have Christ and Scripture achieved their single purpose. This acknowledgment contains the recognition that God has dealt with a man and that He has dealt with him through Scripture. Scripture is seen as the tool of God's action. What it says is the fact of the matter. Its authority is God's authority.

The consideration of Scripture's authority takes us from the realm of apologetics into the church and the realm of systematics. While the church is occupied only in proclamation, this is not a step that it is necessary explicitly to take. So long as Christ is being proclaimed, Scripture is performing its function. When men are attentive to Christ, they are attentive to Scripture. Among those, however, who are attentive to Scripture there is naturally discussion of Scripture; and when "another gospel" is taught, then Christians are forced to reject this as contrary to Christ, and they can show it to be so only from Scripture, for there is no other Christ for us than the Christ of Scripture. Of this there is abundant evidence in the history of the church. When the proclamation has been challenged, the church has had to examine what she is saying and to clarify and fortify her stand. This is the task of systematic theology and always means recourse to Scripture. The task is to clarify "the faith once given to the saints" — not to amputate or invent. The church did not begin proclaiming the true deity of Christ after the Council of Nicaea, nor the doctrine of the Trinity after 381. The precise statements were called forth by the challenge of denial. So long as there was no denial, there was no necessity for precise clarification in defense against it.

This paper, in the first part, would offer evidence that within the church the authority of Scripture was universally acknowledged. The recent episode of negative criticism growing out of the Enlightenment presented the challenge that called for precise clarification in defense against its attacks on what had always been acknowledged in the church. We are still historically not sufficiently removed from this episode to view it as we do, e. g., Montanism. Its effects are still too much with us, and its challenge, though growing less acute as liberalism decays, must be faced by us. We must face it honestly and with the confidence that in the providence of God here is a challenge and a situation which He would use



to build us up so that our loyalty to Him is clearer and stronger and our usefulness to Him more humble and vigorous.

While our Confessions do not face this challenge — the authority of Scripture is there everywhere implicitly acknowledged — the second part of this paper will attempt to show what sort of answer would be in harmony with them by an exercise of the *analogia fidei* kind.

## I

Since there is always the danger that those engaged in a particular discussion or struggle will tend to exaggerate its magnitude, it may be useful to see our problem in the perspective of the centuries of the church. For as long as we know of the church, the authority of Scripture has been implicitly or explicitly acknowledged. The apostles themselves claimed to teach on the authority of the Scripture, which for them was the Old Testament. In the subapostolic age we find the same, and here the recorded words of the apostles were as Scripture authoritative.

Polycarp declares that "neither he nor any like him is able to attain to the wisdom of the blessed and glorious Paul." "He is the first-born of Satan whoever perverts the *logia* of the Lord." *Logia* is used of quotations from the old and new Scriptures.

Frequent in Barnabas are such phrases as "the Lord saith in the prophet," and "the Spirit of the Lord prophesieth." He says, "The prophets received their gift from Christ and spoke of Him."

In Clement of Rome there continually appear "for Scripture saith," "by the testimony of Scripture," and "the Holy Spirit saith." He exhorts "to look carefully into the Scriptures, which are the true utterances of the Holy Spirit." "The blessed Paul wrote by inspiration [*πνευματικῶς*] to the Corinthians."

Among the Apologists Justin Martyr declares:

Christians believe on the voice of God which has been expressed to them by the Apostles of Christ and proclaimed by the Prophets.

Their work is to announce that which the Holy Spirit, descending upon them, purposes through them to teach those who wish to learn the true religion.

For neither by nature nor human thought can men recognize such great and divine truths, but by the gift which came down from above upon the holy men, who needed no art of words nor



skill in captious and contentious speaking, but only to offer themselves in purity to the operation of the Divine Spirit, in order that the divine power of itself might reveal to us the knowledge of divine and heavenly things acting on just men as a plectrum on a harp or lyre.

There are allegorizings, but the literal sense is not called in question. Athanagoras is almost free of allegorizing, but for him Inspiration is mantic and mechanical.

When we come to Irenaeus, we find the tendency to find secondary meanings more fully developed. Yet Christ "was the hidden Treasure in the field of Scripture." The apostles are beyond all falsehood. Their writings reflect their individuality. "No small punishment will be his who adds to, or takes from, the Scriptures." "Nothing is empty or without meaning in the dealings of God." We may be perplexed by it, yet "all Scripture, as it has been given to us by God, will be found to be harmonious."

From Hippolytus:

As the divine Scriptures proclaimed the truth, so let us view it; all they teach let us acknowledge by the growth of faith; as the Father pleases to be believed, let us believe Him; as the Son pleases to be glorified, let us glorify Him; as the Holy Spirit pleases to be given, let us receive Him; not according to our own choice, or our own mind, forcing to our own tastes that which has been given by God, but as He chose to show the truth through the Holy Scriptures, so let us view it.

For Cyprian the books of the Old and New Testaments are "the foundation of our hope, the bulwark of our faith, the support of our hearts, the guide of our path, the safeguard of our salvation." In preparing men for martyrdom he rejects "the intricacies of human speech" and "sets down those things which God says and by which Christ exhorts His servants."

From Alexandria Clement declares that the foundations of our faith are sure, "for we have received them from God through the Scriptures." In him there is a great concern for the inner meaning, which we may not belittle when it is "the interpretation of the Scriptures which has been made clear by Christ"; but when it leads him to fanciful constructions, we can only recognize in it a tendency which has been a plague to the church and, as a desire to evade the



plain meaning in favor of a word behind the word, is banefully still with us.

Origen is a prime example of this, though even he is not eager to surrender the literal meaning. He does not hesitate to say that Christians receive the words of Paul as the words of God. "We cannot say of the writings of the Holy Spirit that anything in them is otiose or superfluous, even if they seem to some obscure." "When you have been unable to find the reason for that which is written, do not blame the holy letters; lay the blame on yourself alone."

"The remarkable unanimity of the early Fathers in their views on Holy Scripture" is Westcott's verdict.<sup>1</sup>

Other authorities came to be recognized. Tradition and bishops received acknowledgment, and philosophy was used in the demonstration of the validity of what Scripture said. However, despite the roles played by these, Scripture was acknowledged as prime authority and assertions of doctrine required the support of Scripture.

In Augustine we find the statement that he would not believe the Scriptures if they had not been given him by the church, and after the Dark Ages philosophy assumed a dominant role which finds its climax in Aquinas.

Nevertheless whoever contradicts Scripture is a heretic, and the heretics themselves claimed Scripture. This universal acknowledgment of Scripture we may call catholic. It is also Protestant as that word was defined at the Diet of Spires in 1529.

There is, we affirm, no sure preaching or doctrine but that which abides by the Word of God. According to God's command no other doctrine should be preached. Each text of the divine Scriptures should be elucidated and explained by other texts. This Holy Book is in all things necessary for the Christian; it shines clearly in its own light, and is found to enlighten the darkness. We are determined by God's grace and aid to abide by God's Word alone, the Holy Gospel contained in the Biblical books of the Old and New Testaments. This Word alone shall be preached, and nothing that is contrary to it. It is the only truth. It is the sure rule of all Christian doctrine and conduct. It can never fail or deceive us.

---

<sup>1</sup> Almost all the quotations from the Fathers are to be found in Appendix B of Westcott's *An Introduction to the Study of the Gospels* (London & Cambridge: Macmillan, 1867).



Whoso builds and abides on this foundation shall stand against all the gates of hell, while all human additions and vanities set up against it must fall before the presence of God.

Popes and councils may err but not Scripture. Scripture is the source and norm of doctrine. When Scripture was restored to its position of supreme authority, the props of other authorities were set aside. The whole weight rested on Scripture. One word of Scripture was more valid than all the thoughts and formulations of men. No other doctrine should be preached than that of Scripture.

Yet when the Pope and all the heretics claim to be preaching Scripturally, whose teaching has the authority of Scripture? The Lutheran answer does not evade this question, nor does it resort to secondary authorities. It holds high Scripture in such a way that Scripture has no other than its own authority and wins conviction by no other power than that which inheres in it. "It shines in its own light." *Scriptura Scripturae interpret.* The light of Scripture is Christ. He is the focal point. All the parts have their meaning and validity in relationship with Him. He is the Key. First a man must know Christ, and then he will understand Scripture. Hence the right distinction of Law and Gospel. Where this is ignored, Christ is not honored as Scripture presents Him, but He is made another Lawgiver, and then the full Gospel is denied and Scripture darkened.

The Lutheran Reformation opened Scripture not so much by translations, Erasmus could have done that, but by clearly showing Christ to be what the Scriptures say of Him, i. e., He through whom we are justified by grace through faith. Other reformations which called for a reformation according to the Scriptures but where Christ was not fully recognized as He through whom alone the sinner is justified, where Law and Gospel were not rightly divided, missed the mark, and the Gospel was made the equal or the servant of the Law. This meant synergism in the doctrine of salvation, and also the validity of Scripture was somehow made to depend on man's effort and response. Scripture was the Word of God because of man's acceptance or because of its effects on man. When salvation is not entirely *extra nos*, so also Scripture's authority is not *extra nos*. This can be discerned in Calvin's use of the *testi-*



*monium Spiritus Sancti internum.* This is also a taint of which Melanchthon was not innocent, and Melanchthon has not been without progeny in the Lutheran Church.

Here the authority of Scripture is sabotaged, for its authority is made dependent on something in man. That something in man was among the enthusiasts experience, in the Enlightenment the correspondence with reason, among the Pietists feeling, and among the liberals the moral effects. When these are part of the grounds of faith, it is little wonder that the attacks on Scripture were so successful.

The Enlightenment continued the Renaissance's rebellion against authority. The authority of the church was overthrown. Next the authority of Scripture was undermined by making it dependent on man's reason, and in the glorification of the individual private judgment was enthroned. For a while there was the double-mindedness of formal acknowledgment of Scripture and of the supremacy of reason. As reason encroached, Scripture was forced to retreat. When Scripture was attacked, there was no compelling call to defend it, for the real foundation had been moved from Scripture to reason.

To the Enlightenment God was transcendent, but was not allowed to interfere with the regulations of reason. The next step was to make God immanent. What had been thought of as coming from outside, or at least that to which revelation had been reduced, was now discerned within. Instead of projecting the findings of reason upon a transcendent screen and thus portraying God, men turned within and, in accordance with the findings there, God was refashioned. However, a god that cannot stand on His own feet is a god that comes tumbling down when the props are knocked away. In the interests of apologetics some, seeking contact with their contemporaries, tied their message in with the thought of the day. This proved to be a short-term investment that ends in bankruptcy when there is a swing in the market. When reason slumps, the god tied up with reason finds no buyers; when feeling is at a discount, the god tied up with feeling is a dead loss.

Kant demolished reason's capacity to know God. Spinoza put God inside. Goethe dispensed the poison, and Schleiermacher gave



it a Christian label. Hegel put God through his paces in history, and this harsh century has seen the debunking of romanticism.

Now in England, where pious mothers tell their little children that bad German philosophies, when they die, go to Oxford, the movement away from Scripture was slower. Coleridge and Carlyle were the heralds of immanentism, and Wordsworth gave it poetic expression.

A man's conception of revelation depends on his conception of God. Those who thought of God as immanent could not accept a revelation coming from God outside the world. "An authoritative revelation implies the incompetence of human reason either to discover or to criticize its contents."<sup>2</sup> Such a confession of incompetence the immanentists could not make, and synergism plays a sinister role in this land, which gave the world Pelagius. Revelation as the act of God dishonors man; therefore the emphasis shifted from God's disclosure to man's discovery. With the help of Hegel and Darwin the Scripture became an account of man's progressive discovery of God. The Scripture might help a man in his discovery, but it is nothing like indispensable. When the Scripture was attacked, there was no full-scale resistance, for it was not the citadel. The Oxford Movement retreated to a position whose defenses were the church, tradition, and the apostolic succession. Newman found better defenses of this kind in Rome.

I have deliberately not discussed the items raised by higher criticism and science, for I would suggest that since they are capable of being received without necessitating the undermining of Scripture, the way in which they were, in fact, generally received was determined not by the compulsion in themselves but by philosophical and other considerations.

## II

A consideration that has already transpired in this paper is the assertion of man's capacity in spiritual things, the damnable *aliquid in homine*. This *aliquid in homine* was faced by our Confessions in soteriology but not explicitly in the matter of Scripture. We face it and, I suggest, the Lutheran answer is the same in both cases.

In the doctrine of justification we proclaim the grace of God.

---

<sup>2</sup> John Caird, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (Glasgow: James Maclehose, 1904), p. 6.



His is the initiative and the achievement. Our salvation is sure because it is *extra nos*. Similarly the statement of God's dealing with men, His will and grace, is His in initiative and achievement. Its validity does not depend on something in man. Its certainty is *extra nos*. As works undermine justification, the insertion into our use of Scripture of human achievement undermines the authority of Scripture. As Christ must be taken entire as He is and not just a part that should make up the deficiency of our efforts, so the Scripture is to be taken entire and not just the parts we select as necessary to be then rounded out with the addition of what we feel to be required. In that also there is bondage to the weak and beggarly elements of which St. Paul speaks.

In the doctrine of conversion we confess "that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ." It is not by our decision that we are converted. It is by the action of the Holy Ghost through the Gospel. Similarly no part of Scripture is true because I decide that it is true. I am brought to the acknowledgment of the Scriptures by the Holy Ghost, who is active in them.

In the doctrine of the Lord's Supper we confess the Sacrament to be what the enscriptured words of Christ declare and make it. The *manducatio indignorum* makes quite clear that the Sacrament does not depend on anything in man. Should the pastor and all the communicants believe otherwise than the words of Christ declare, it would still be the Sacrament, for Christ's words make it what it is. Similarly, should all men deny part or all of the Scripture, it does not by that become false.

In the doctrine of the Lord's Supper Lutherans have been careful to venerate and not probe the mystery. When Zwingli probed at Marburg, Luther rebuked him for his mathematics. We are bound by a single word of Scripture whether we can understand it or not. Ours is not to explain but to worship. We are told the fact. How such a thing can be we cannot grasp. We may not suggest how we think it can be and then alter the fact to fit our suggestion. Transubstantiation and symbolic or spiritual presence we reject with horror, not so much because they are wrong as rather because of their insolence in probing the mystery and prescribing to God. Impanation we reject as such another unpermissible attempt. When the Lutheran doctrine has been characterized as con-



substantiation, we have rejected the term. We cannot divide the host and say, "This is body" and "This is bread." The Lutheran usage "in, with, and under" contains the confession that both we and our words are inadequate to grasp the mystery. We know the  $\delta\tau\iota$  but not the  $\pi\acute{\omega}\varsigma$ .

It is similar with Scripture. In, with, and under Scripture God reveals Himself to us. The mystery of revelation we cannot probe. We may not suggest how and then alter the fact to fit the suggestion. In this some of our orthodox dogmaticians would seem to have been less circumspect than they might. Not content with stating the fact, they attempted some explanation and so weakened the position they were set to uphold. The *extra usum* seems also to be going too far—as if the unsaid words of institution could constitute a Sacrament—though the term can be justified in the light of that against which it was directed. We are not called upon to explain the *how* of Scripture. Any attempt to do so is by analogy out of harmony with our Confessions.

On the one hand the Lutheran confessors had to defend the integrity of the bread and, on the other, the integrity of the body. In defense of Scripture we are similarly called on to fight on two fronts. If the Scripture is transubstantiated, then God's gracious coming all the way to us through an earthly thing, the verbal medium, is denied. A scorning of the genuine earthly medium with the considerations of setting and personality impoverishes our understanding of what is said and diminishes the grace of God. God was born of Mary a genuine man. When Jesus of Nazareth spoke, a man was speaking, and God was speaking, and this not only when *ex cathedra* or "of the relationship of God to man" but also when at table He asked them to pass the fish or when He said, "Tomorrow we go to Jerusalem." To take geography and history out of the words of Jesus is to make a docetic Christ who is not our Brother or our Savior. Similarly we may not docetize the bread or the Scriptures. God deals with us through bread and human words. Human words are things of time and place. Hence to reject the geography and history of Scripture is to reject the genuineness of the earthly means and to diminish the incredible condescension and grace of God.

When we are told not to bother whether the first chapters of



Genesis or the Virgin Birth ever happened or not but to take hold only of what they mean for the relationship of God to man, we are being invited to spiritualize the earthly means. When God speaks to us, He uses our language. We may not be more "spiritual" or clever than that. We may not say to God: "You really need not have treated us as being quite so simple. We can operate on a level higher than that. The spiritual truths would suffice without all that tiresome Israelitish history. We can grasp the truth of the Virgin Birth without its having to happen; and so long as we know of triumph over death, we can even dispense with the resurrection."

God, however, does not seem to have agreed with this line of thought. He did not give us just basic axioms, and we may not behave as if He did by dispensing with the illustrative embellishments and apprehending merely the theorems of divine geometry.

We do not apprehend. We are apprehended. We are apprehended as His creatures, and He takes hold of us with the media of our creatureliness, humanity, water, bread, wine, and words. Our rescue does not undo the Creation. Men, body and soul and our kin of creation, are redeemed. Our consummation is in being what God designed us to be. A denial of this lurks in every attempt "to be like God," to know as God knows, to be on the spiritual level of His language and not our own, in every rebellion against our creatureliness, in every assertion that God does not have to come quite so far to us, and in every embarrassment at the irrepressible living God, who acts in the utmost corners of our lives and world. His deeds are contrary to human prescription. Nothing is too low to be appropriated to His use and mercy, whether it be the womb of the lowly Virgin or the mouth of a donkey. We may not apologize for God and try to help Him to a more intellectually respectable procedure by lifting Him out of His humbling Himself to us so utterly. If He does not have to come so far to save us, then of course some of the distance is our achievement, and then is our salvation shaken. In God's humbling Himself to us is our salvation, and therefore we shall not wish to diminish it or spiritualize it away. And there is a yet greater reason, for therein is God's honor.<sup>3</sup> It is of His honor that He graciously humbles Himself, that He speaks our language with all that that entails. The untidiness of Scrip-

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Dr. Luther, WA XXIII, 156 and XIX, 486.



ture and its recalcitrance to our notions and logic are the measure of God's outreach to us. It is of a piece with us and our world. Through this creatureliness and muddle God comes to us. What a God!

Such an acceptance of Scripture can scarcely be charged with rationalism and with the charge of "making it easy." This charge must surely rebound on the heads of those who make it, for it is the excisions which are prompted by a desire to remove some difficulty that does not fit with rationalistic notions that are imposed upon Scripture.

No more than we can divide the Person of Christ or the sacramental host can we divide the Scriptures and say, "This is of God" and "This is of man." The very assertion "This is of God" carries in it the confession of our inability to say such a thing of ourselves. If we could explain what divine revelation is, and how it is possible, what we explained would be precisely not divine revelation. We may not pretend to usurp the function of the Holy Ghost. To speak of the Word of God when all that is meant is the words of men raised to the nth degree, is an abuse of language. If the Word of God is the Word of *God*, how can it be authenticated by any but God Himself? We can and must testify that Scripture is the Word of God, but nothing we can do or say can authenticate it. To seek to prove here is only to disprove.

The Lutheran understanding of the church and the means of grace also throws light. The church is there where the means of grace are. We hold to nothing less and nothing more. These are *extra nos* and therefore sure. We may not tamper or add. We cannot permit the certainty to be undermined by the insistence on something of man whether it be polity of Popes, bishops, or presbyters, a discipline or a degree of sanctification.

The means of grace are not within our judgment and control. If we exhort any man to be or become a Lutheran, it can only be with our conviction of the supremacy and inviolability of the means of grace. If Holy Baptism or selected passages of Scripture are set aside, we damage the church. Tampering with the means of grace is treason to the church. Only when the means of grace are solid *extra nos*, requiring no human validation, is our faith in the church unassailable. Unless we have certainty here, we have no right to



separate existence in this country but should then close our churches and join the established churches.

Fundamentalism is thought by some to provide the necessary certainty. From Fundamentalism Lutherans are safeguarded by the distinction of Law and Gospel and the *opus alienum*. The Law is indeed the Word of God but not a word that may infiltrate and blur the Gospel. They are both true, but the Gospel supersedes the Law, which is the schoolmaster to lead to Christ. However, just as the Law may not be allowed to infiltrate the Gospel, so the Gospel may not be allowed to infiltrate the Law. If the Gospel is isolated out of Scripture and the Law is neglected, there is complacency and laziness. A man stays at home with his ever-gracious Jesus and digs the garden on Sunday. The church is neglected, and the statistics of attendance at the Holy Communion fall appallingly low. The danger on the side opposite to Fundamentalism is this isolation of the Gospel. Instead of the whole Scripture a kerygma is extracted and the forgiveness of sins is diligently assured to men for whom the word "sin" has lost its meaning and crushing terror. Or a Gospel is proclaimed which is some piece of man's wisdom dressed in Scriptural terms that can be pressed into service while the rest of Scripture is ignored or suppressed.

We may not select for ourselves a kerygma and dispense with the rest. People who go through Scripture selectively, declaring "This is kerygma" and "This is not kerygma," are no longer "unter der Schrift," as Dr. Luther admonished, but are making magisterial use of their judgment, and their findings are no more reliable than their own judgment. *Extra nos* is eliminated. This cannot be defended with the principle that Christ is the Sum and Center of Scripture. That He certainly is, and He is the Christ who acknowledged Scripture, used it as authoritative, fulfilled it, spoke of jot and tittle, and declared "Scripture cannot be broken." Nor is there defense in Luther's dictum *soweit sie Christum treibet*, for, as the late Dr. Kramm pointed out, this is a principle of interpretation and not of selection.<sup>4</sup>

In conclusion, then, if we would speak of Scripture in harmony with the Confessions, we must avoid all synergism, all human

<sup>4</sup> H. H. Kramm, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (London: James Clarke, 1947), p. 113.



authentication, we must maintain the *extra nos*, state the  $\delta\tau\iota$  and not probe the  $\pi\omega\varsigma$ , defend the integrity of the earthly element, rightly distinguish Law and Gospel and not set up magisterial reason in selecting and discarding. We must let God do things the way He has chosen to do them. The Scripture is His doing. When the Scripture speaks, that is it.

---

Books on the history of doctrine sometimes give the impression that when Schleiermacher arose, everybody began preaching the Gospel according to Schleiermacher, whereas there were yet more than seven thousand pastors who continued quietly building the kingdom of God as they proclaimed what Scripture spoke. We live in a time when theological fashions seem to be changing. The Scripture that was left in bits and pieces by higher criticism is coming together again.

It is true that a man can live without an appendix, and can even lose a kidney or a lung and not die, but vigorous health and the strength to endure hardship are in the robust wholeness of the body, which is of God fearfully and wonderfully made. We may, with St. Augustine, be at a loss to explain why God gave men paps, but that does not permit us to deny that God did it or that He did it wisely.

The question: "What can be dispensed with?" is being replaced by the question: "What can be maintained?" There is talk of the rediscovery of the Bible, which is surely useful. The Old Testament is being rehabilitated. One hears not so much of the theology of Paul and Peter and Jesus. There are nowadays theologies of the New Testament and of the Old Testament. Tomorrow may see a theology of the Scripture.

While being grateful for all that is helpful for our growth in understanding and using Scripture, we have really such a job on our hands as does not allow us to follow and wear what happens to be the fashion of the moment. The pastor, as Christ's under-shepherd to whose care redeemed men are committed, will, in faithfulness to his Master, his call, and his office, stand in the pulpit with the abiding Scripture in his hand and say, "Thus saith the Lord."

London, England