

An Assessment of the Reformation Doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*¹

By

Warren C. Trenchard

Richards Divinity School, La Sierra University

Introduction

A set of three Latin expressions has long been associated with and deemed to be characteristic of the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. These are *sola scriptura* (“by Scripture alone”), *sola fide* (“by faith alone”), and *sola gratia* (“by grace alone”).² Not only is *sola scriptura* typically listed first, but it is also understood to be foundational to the others and to the whole of Reformation theology.

As a basic principle of the Reformation, *sola scriptura* is generally understood to mean that Christian faith and practice are to be founded upon biblical injunctions alone and not on those of Church teachings or tradition, on the decisions of Church councils, or on the dictates of Church leaders. In some cases, *sola scriptura* meant that the Bible contained all that is necessary for the interpretation of the Bible, i.e., the Bible interprets itself, or that it is sufficient for faith and practice.

The start of the Protestant Reformation has long been associated with Martin Luther’s posting the so-called 95 Theses on the church door in Wittenberg in 1517. More descriptive was another title associated with the document, “Disputation on the Power of Indulgences.” Accordingly, this dramatic act was Luther’s attack on the Roman Church’s practice of selling indulgences, which were certificates that purported to grant temporary relief from punishment for sins to the purchasers or their family members. Although this document represents an important moment in the Protestant Reformation, it did not contain any of the *sola* expressions, including *sola scriptura*.³

While Luther’s 95 Theses referred tangentially to the Bible, it was not until 1519 in his public debate with Professor Johann Eck that Luther launched *sola scriptura*. Eck asked how Luther could understand the Bible without the popes, councils, and universities. Luther replied, “A simple layman armed with scripture is to be believed above a pope or a council without it.”⁴

In debates and hearings over the next few years Luther continued to rely on and develop this concept as a defensive response to his critics.⁵ He did not systematically structure the notion or apply it consistently. Although the other reformers espoused some form of this principle, they practiced it differently and often reached very different interpretative conclusions using it, e.g.,

¹ This version, dated 24 November 2021, is the latest edition of the paper, “*Sola Scriptura* after 500 Years: The Fate of a Reformation Slogan,” delivered at the Adventist Association for Religious Studies annual meeting in Boston, MA on 17 November 2017.

² Sometimes modern reflections on the Reformation also include the expressions *solo Christo* (“through Christ alone”), *solī Deo gloria* (“glory to God alone”), *sola ecclesia* (“the Church alone”), *sola caritas* (“charitable-love alone”), and *sola Spiritus* (“in the Spirit alone”).

³ In some ways, this was a strange document to be associated with the launch of the Protestant Reformation. It was a very focused, practical attack on a specific Church practice that Luther opposed. It was not a declaration of ecclesiastical independence, the launch of a counter movement, or a systematic statement of a Reformation theology.

⁴ Karen Armstrong, *The Bible: A Biography* (New York: Grove Press, 2008), 163.

⁵ S. L. Greenslade, ed., *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 3: *The West from the Reformation to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 3-4.

Luther and Zwingli on the Eucharist.⁶ The principle of *sola scriptura*, did not have an auspicious start.

The purpose of this paper is to assess the concept of *sola scriptura* about half a millennium after its inception. In particular, I will examine the veracity and effectiveness of this Reformation doctrine for modern readers of the biblical text and members of faith communities that value the Bible. I will focus mainly on some of the most challenging issues facing this doctrine and the degree to which it can realistically function today.

The Integrity of the Bible

Let us first consider the problems for *sola scriptura* associated with text, translation, and canon, which all concern the integrity of the Bible, i.e., the makeup of *scriptura*. The Bible itself addresses none of these matters. Each requires external scholarship and informed decisions.

Text

Concerns about the text of the Bible stem from the complex history of the wording and contents of the Hebrew Bible and the Greek New Testament. The Hebrew Bible exists in whole or in part with significant differences of wording and general content and with various text types among the Dead Sea Scrolls, Greek, Syriac, and Latin versions, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Targums, and the Masoretic Text (MT). The New Testament is preserved wholly or partially in about 6,000 Greek manuscripts, 10,000 Latin manuscripts, and over 9,000 manuscripts in other ancient languages and in the works of early Christian writers. Among all these, there are about 300,000 textual variations, most of which, fortunately, are not significant.

Textual critics who examine the complexities of these biblical texts work with various strategies and tactics (or rules) that often lead to different conclusions as to the preferred original reading—even sometimes concluding that establishing an original is not possible or even desirable.⁷ These scholars study the numerous variant readings of sentences, clauses, phrases, and individual words to determine the most likely original readings of biblical texts, as well as the historical lineage of such variations.

Before anyone attempts to interpret a particular text, he or she must go through the complex process of establishing its most likely reading by some means.⁸ The interpreter must either do this personally or accept the judgment of specialists. Because textual scholars do not always agree, there are multiple reconstructions of biblical texts that claim originality. Thus, there is no uniform

⁶ Alister E. McGrath, *Christianity's Dangerous Idea: The Protestant Revolution--A History from the Sixteenth Century to the Twenty-First* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 69. Thomas Albert Howard and Mark A. Noll, eds., *Protestantism after 500 years* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), 157, 195. Armstrong, 173. This disagreement also included Calvin. Justin S. Holcomb, ed., *Christian Theologies of Scripture: A Comparative Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 121-22.

⁷ Jennifer Wright Knust, "In Pursuit of a Singular Text: New Testament Textual Criticism and the Desire for the True Original," *Religion Compass* 2, no. 2 (2008): 180-194.

⁸ Many continue to employ general "rules," such as "the more difficult reading is preferred," while others, like Emanuel Tov ("Criteria for Evaluating Textual Readings: The Limitations of Textual Rules," *HTR* 75, no 4 [October 1982]: 429-448), argue that context should be the deciding factor.

Bible or *scriptura*. Furthermore, the Bible itself offers no help for text critical questions⁹ and, in this regard, is certainly not its own interpreter. This clearly weakens *sola scriptura*.

Translation

After establishing or accepting the most likely original text of the Hebrew Bible and the Greek New Testament, some specialists and most laypersons depend on translations of these texts into languages they understand. Because translation always involves interpretation, there are often wide variations of meaning between the original language texts and the translation texts as well as among the various translations themselves. To further complicate matters, some translations are based on other translations and not on original language texts.¹⁰

The most significant ancient biblical translation project was the effort to render the Hebrew Bible into Hellenistic Greek to accommodate Diaspora Jews. The result was the Septuagint (LXX), which also became the Bible of first-century Christians. However, in places the LXX differs significantly from the Hebrew text. For example, the number of patriarchs from Adam to Abraham is different, as are their ages at the births of their genealogically-traced sons. This combination in the LXX adds 1,466 years to the time span from Creation to the death of Abraham compared to the MT! Clearly, Bishop Usher did not follow the chronology of the LXX.¹¹

Translators do not always work with the same original language text or operate with the same translation philosophy. While some try to reflect literal meanings of the parent languages in the daughter languages, others seek meaning equivalences in the daughter languages, and still others operate somewhere between these extremes. Thus, translations of the same biblical text can vary significantly.¹²

The Bible provides no guidance for translators. The process lies entirely outside the biblical text. The multiplicity of meanings, even for an individual sentence, that results from essential translation activities seriously undermines the validity of *sola scriptura*.

Canon

The question of canon moves from the micro considerations of text criticism and the interpretative concerns of translation to the macro decisions that concern what documents, among the wide variety of alternatives, would ultimately constitute the Old and New Testaments. Although we have no access to such deliberations concerning the Law and Prophets sections of

⁹ The New Testament is not just silent on how to establish the original text of the Old Testament. It actually contains numerous instances of quoting or alluding to textual readings that favor the LXX over the MT (e.g., Matt 1:23; Mark 7:6-7; Luke 3:6; Heb 2:6-8), readings that reflect the MT over the LXX (e.g., Matt 13:35; Rom 12:19; 1 Cor 3:19), and readings for which there is no extant OT manuscript evidence (e.g., Eph 4:8).

¹⁰ E.g., the *Vetus Latina* (Old Latin) of the Old Testament was a translation of the Greek Septuagint not of the Hebrew Bible. The Latin Vulgate of the whole Bible was the *Vorlage* (prototype or source) for translations into various European languages including French, Czech, and English (e.g., Wycliffe's translation and the Great Bible).

¹¹ Some of the documents of the LXX have a significantly different content than their MT counterparts. E.g., The Greek text of Jeremiah is one-seventh shorter than the Hebrew. This is complicated by the fact that some of the Hebrew texts of the book found at Qumran agree with the LXX in this regard. Proverbs in the LXX is also shorter than the MT version and has a different arrangement of their common contents.

¹² E.g., John 3:3; Rom 12:1-2 (especially note the free, creative translation by J. B. Phillips).

the Hebrew Bible,¹³ there is some, debatable evidence of Rabbinic discussions about the status of certain books in the Writings section.¹⁴

The LXX represents a serious canonical problem for Christian readers of the Old Testament. This is because the LXX, with its set of additional documents, largely equal to the Apocrypha, was the main Bible of early Christians. Most significantly, this includes the writers of the New Testament, who liberally quoted from the LXX and alluded to it in their own writings, thereby indirectly extending any perceived authority of their own to the LXX.

Originally, Christians deemed their own writings as secondary to the Jewish scriptures (especially in the form of the LXX) and the oral tradition of Jesus' teachings.¹⁵ They did not begin to discuss the comparative authoritative status of these writings until the second century. By the end of that century, largely the result of simple usage, Christian leaders generally and uncritically accepted four gospels and most of the letters associated with Paul as constituting the authoritative Christian writings.¹⁶ Regional, theological, and practical differences concerning the makeup of the New Testament remained throughout Christendom for the next two centuries. Although there were a few regional dissenters, by the end of the fourth century the New Testament canon was finally settled.¹⁷ It was not seriously reconsidered until Luther's concerns about a Christological canon within the biblical canon and with a particular set of New Testament documents that troubled him theologically.¹⁸ This is an interesting reflection of the fragility of *sola scriptura* even during the Reformation.

These issues concerning the Old and New Testament canons constitute a serious problem for *sola scriptura*. The Bible does not define these canons nor address such matters. The discussions, debates, and decisions of canon lie entirely outside the Bible. They were conducted by Jewish and Christian scholars and leaders over centuries in various parts of the world. Without such activities there would be no Old or New Testaments or at least no consensus concerning the makeup of these collections. This further weakens the concept of *sola scriptura*.

The fundamental matter of what constitutes the Bible, as evidenced by the issues of text, translation, and canon, requires procedures and processes, as well as scholarship and decisions, conducted by authoritative persons and groups within communities of faith. All of this lies outside the Bible itself and is alien to *sola scriptura*.

Apart from the problematic issues associated with what constitutes the Bible, or the *scriptura* element of this Reformation expression, the contents of the Bible itself often exhibit characteristics that create problems for this doctrine.

Biblical Inconsistencies

¹³ The earliest references to three sections of the Hebrew Bible, but without any information concerning how and when they were defined, is found in the Greek prologue to Sirach. The identifications of the first two sections are specific ("the Law and the Prophets"/"the Law itself, the Prophecies"), while the third is general ("the other books of our ancestors"/"the rest of the books").

¹⁴ The possibility of some kind of Rabbinic discussion of the status of a few OT books is sometimes seen in *m. Yad.* 3:5.

¹⁵ E.g., Clement of Rome, c. 96.

¹⁶ E.g., Irenaeus, *Adv. Haereses*, c. 180.

¹⁷ E.g., the Easter letter of Athanasius in 367, the Council of Rome in 382, the Synod of Hippo in 393, and the Council of Carthage in 397.

¹⁸ In his German New Testament (1522), Luther located the Epistles of Hebrews, James, and Jude and the Book of Revelation following what he called "the true and certain chief books of the New Testament."

Let us consider the issue of consistency within the biblical text. If *sola scriptura* is valid, we should reasonably expect the Bible, as the presumed single, authoritative source for faith and practice, as well as all matters pertaining to God's activities in human history, society, and the natural world, to be consistent in its contents not only within both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures but also between the two.

However, there is no such consistency. The Bible contains numerous discrepancies and contradictions on the ages and counts of people, measurements, family relationships, event orders, genealogies, etc. Without elaboration, I note merely a few significant inconsistencies found wholly or partially within Genesis, the first Old Testament book:

- Genesis contains two different and sometimes contradictory creation stories.¹⁹
- Adam was to have died the day he ate the forbidden fruit but lived for 930 years.²⁰
- The composite Flood story contains contradictory elements.²¹
- The Nephilim existed before the Flood and after the Flood but were not on the ark.²²

In the New Testament, we find most of the inconsistent material in the Gospels from the Infancy Narrative²³ to the Passion Narrative²⁴ and what lies between them.²⁵ For me, the most compelling biblical contradiction involves Mark's narrative²⁶ of Jesus' raising Jairus' daughter with its embedded story of his healing a hemorrhaging woman. Matthew's account²⁷ has all the essential, Markan details with one major difference. As the story begins in Mark, the official tells Jesus his daughter is dying; in Matthew, he says that she has died.²⁸ The girl cannot have been

¹⁹ Gen 1:1-2:3; 2:4-25. Some of the inconsistencies include:

Different pre-creation conditions: water chaos vs. desert chaos

Different first creation: light vs. male human

Different order: vegetation > male and female humans vs. male human > vegetation

Different order: birds and land animals > male and female humans vs. male human > birds and land animals > female human

²⁰ Gen 2:17; 5:5.

²¹ Gen 6-8. Some of the contradictions include:

One pair of all animals enter the ark vs. seven pairs of clean animals and one pair of other animals enter the ark

The flood lasts 150 days vs. 40 days

A raven sent to test for dry land vs. a dove sent to test for dry land

²² Gen 6:4; Num 13:33.

²³ E.g., did Jesus' family move to Nazareth to avoid the threat of Herod's son (Matthew) or was that their original home (Luke)?

²⁴ E.g., did Jesus carry his own cross (John) or did Simon of Cyrene carry it (Matthew, Mark, Luke)?

²⁵ E.g., did James and John ask Jesus for a favor (Mark 10:35) or did their mother ask him on their behalf (Matt 20:20)?

²⁶ Mark 5:22-43; cf. Luke 8:41-56.

²⁷ 9:18-25.

²⁸ Because, at the beginning of the story, Matthew has the synagogue official tell Jesus that his daughter has died, he understandably does not include the episode of people (Mark) or a person (Luke) interrupting Jesus' journey with the official to announce that Jesus need not continue to the house because the girl is dead.

alive and dead at the same time.²⁹ These and numerous other contradictions seriously undermine *sola scriptura*.

Natural Revelation

Most Christians believe that divine revelation consists of both special and natural elements. Special revelation typically involves things like the Scriptures, the witness of Jesus of Nazareth, and the ministry of the Spirit. Natural or general revelation conveys the knowledge of God and God's activities revealed in the universe and nature.³⁰ While the former has been thoroughly analyzed, the latter has received scant attention by comparison.

By this understanding of the bifurcation of revelation, whatever the authoritative range of the Bible as revelation may be, it does not include nature. That can only be the domain of natural revelation.³¹ Therefore, natural revelation alone, not the Bible, is authoritative regarding God's activities in the universe and nature. As such, it cannot be judged or trumped by the Bible. It is through the study of nature, whether macro or micro, that such revelation of God is unveiled.

We call the systematic study of nature, natural science. The multiple disciplines of natural science follow a well-established method that moves toward eventual self-correction. These disciplines range from the macro research of the universe to the micro study of sub-atomic particles and living cell components. Even when natural scientists disagree among themselves, a broad consensus emerges over time. Furthermore, unlike biblical scholars, natural scientists often have the benefit of proof in the practical application of their theories and laws.³²

Thus, while the Bible may normatively reveal God as the source of the universe and its contents, it is natural science, as the window into natural revelation, that normatively reveals how and when God went about this creative activity and how God sustains it all. This clearly makes *sola scriptura* incomplete at best.

That the Bible is not normative regarding the natural world is also evident by the bad science that it often displays. Note two examples of untenable science in Genesis:

- The firmament contains the sun, moon, stars, and birds (1:14-18, 20).
- Jacob breeds animals in front of striped rods to produce striped offspring (30:37-42).³³

²⁹ Both versions of the story are complex narratives with the same embedded sub-narrative of the hemorrhaging women. They share over twenty-five, specific narrative details, differing only on the significant matter of whether the girl was alive or dead at the beginning. That the two versions represent separate historical events is theoretically possible but wholly unlikely. The probability against that being the case is enormous. It would require two separate instances of a synagogue official asking Jesus to heal his daughter or raise her from the dead, Jesus healing a woman with a twelve-year hemorrhage on the way to the official's house, and Jesus' resuscitating the daughter. All this would have to occur in Galilee during Jesus' brief ministry there, as portrayed by the Synoptic Gospels.

³⁰ The Bible recognizes the validity of natural revelation, e.g., Ps 19:1-6; Rom 1:19-20.

³¹ In fact, if the nature and its characteristics are not the sole content of natural revelation, then the very concept of natural revelation is meaningless.

³² E.g., humans have not only developed viewpoints about gravity and the orbits of heavenly bodies but have also travelled to the moon and returned based on this knowledge.

³³ Furthermore, Leviticus contains numerous examples of untenable biology, including rock badgers and hares chewing the cud (Lev 11:5-6); leprosy being cured by various cultic rituals (Lev 14); becoming "unclean" by touching an unclean animal but only until the evening (Lev 11:23-40); a woman birthing a daughter becomes ceremonially unclean twice as long as one birthing a son (Lev 12:1-5). In Deut 1:10 Moses considers the Israelites to be "as numerous as the stars of heaven" (which one estimate puts at 1 with twenty-four zeros!). Hebrew cosmology

Cultural Conditioning

The Bible was written over many centuries by various people of different religions and cultures in many places. It faithfully reflects these differences and cultures, often conveying the distortions, misunderstandings, and fallacies of the people involved. Such distortions extend even to ideology and theology, including descriptions of God and God's attitudes and behaviors.³⁴ They certainly include distortions of social and domestic roles, political structures, mathematical precision, historical reality, and scientific principles. This is not because such people were devious but because they lived in societies and cultures that universally understood things as they did. Given their contexts, their perspectives are entirely expected. However, in none of these regards should the Bible be taken as normative. For example, if we wish to establish the content or chronology of one or more events of the past, we must consider the evidence from historical analysis and archaeology. While the Bible may help us pose questions of history, it cannot determine the answers. Only the disciplines of historical analysis can cut through the cultural conditioning of the Bible to find genuine answers to historical questions. Thus, *sola scriptura* is further limited.

Tradition

The devaluation of tradition associated with *sola scriptura* in the sixteenth century is not recognized or supported by the Bible. On the contrary, biblical writers often acknowledged that they received their beliefs and ideas through tradition, i.e., passed from person to person and from group to group.³⁵

The Bible contains many traditional inclusions, especially in the form of creedal³⁶ and hymn³⁷ fragments. Sometimes the traditional material in the New Testament comes from Jewish Pseudepigrapha³⁸ and pagan authors.³⁹ Paul approvingly recognizes both the process of tradition⁴⁰ and, at least in one case, its superior value.⁴¹ Far from the Bible setting itself apart from or above

understood the universe to consist of heaven, earth, and the underworld (Exod 20:4; Deut 5:8; cf. Phil 2:10; Rev 5:3, 13).

³⁴ I appreciate a colleague reminding me of the contrasting theological positions of Proverbs/Deuteronomistic History/Prophets vs. Ecclesiastes/Job and the theology of liberation vs. the theology of conquest in the Hebrew Bible. The New Testament also contains the very contrasting theological perspectives of the Fourth Gospel vs. the Synoptics, Paul vs. James, etc.

³⁵ E.g., Luke declared "many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed on (παρέδοσαν) to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word" (1:1-2).

³⁶ E.g., Deut 6:4; 1 Kgs 18:39; Acts 8:36-37; Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 8:6; 12:3; 1 Thess 4:14; 1 Tim 3:16; 1 Pet 3:18; 1 John 4:2.

³⁷ E.g., all the Psalms; Phil 2:6-11; Col 1:15-20; Heb 1:1-3; 1 Pet 2:21-25. Revelation contains hymns in chapters 4, 5, 7, 15, and 19.

³⁸ E.g., 1 Cor 11:10; 1 Pet 3:19-20; 2 Pt 2:4; Jude 6, 9, 14-15.

³⁹ E.g., Acts 17:28; 1 Cor 15:33; Titus 1:12.

⁴⁰ E.g., 2 Thess 3:6; 1 Cor 11:2.

⁴¹ "For I handed on (παρέδωκα) to you as of first importance (ἐν πρώτοις) what I in turn had received (παρέλαβον)" (1 Cor 15:3a). He proceeded to quote this significant, confessional tradition in vv. 3b-5a:

tradition, the biblical text recognizes that it is, at least in part, the product of tradition and freely incorporates it.

Christian Teachings and Practices

Not all contemporary Christian teachings and practices have a biblical basis or authority. Notably, the Bible contains no systematic consideration of doctrine and no comprehensive manual of Christian practice. More specifically, there is no definitive biblical basis for particular ecclesiastical structures and governance, for the practice of infant baptism, for the doctrine of the Trinity, for prohibiting the consumption of alcoholic beverages, for combining foot washing with the Eucharist, for the investigative judgment, or for the notion of biblical inerrancy. If *sola scriptura* were valid, we should expect that all Christian doctrines and practices would be authorized by biblical injunction. They clearly are not.

Conversely, few, and in most cases no, modern Christians believe or practice all biblical teachings, e.g., the cultic purity laws of Leviticus, baptism for the dead, speaking in tongues, subordination of wives to husbands, advice to slaves, or restrictions on the role of women in worship. If *sola scriptura* were valid, we should also expect that all Christians would believe and uphold the whole range of biblical teachings and practices. They clearly do not.

Christian Fragmentation

Finally, a practical problem for the validity of *sola scriptura* is the incredible fragmentation of Christianity that has stemmed from the Reformation and its tacit endorsement of individual interpretations.⁴² The broad recognition and adoption of *sola scriptura* has not moved Christians toward the validating unity that Jesus is said to have desired.⁴³ Rather, it has spawned division and often hatred and violence over competing scriptural interpretations. Ironically, this fragmentation had begun while the Reformers were still alive.

Recognizing the challenges that plague *sola scriptura*, some Christians⁴⁴ have proposed a presumably more compelling expression—*prima scriptura* (“scripture is first”). This concept asserts that the Bible is primary among all other forms of revelation and knowledge including tradition.

However, *prima scriptura* suffers most of the same problems as its more restrictive counterpart, including those of text, translation, and canon. Furthermore, the Bible is not normative as revelation concerning the natural world, which is the revelatory purview of natural science.

that Christ died
for our sins
according to the scriptures,
and that he was buried,
and that he was raised
on the third day
according to the scriptures,
and that he was seen

⁴² The number of Protestant denominations varies greatly, depending on how one defines “denomination.” A number in the hundreds seems much more reasonable than 9,000, as reported in the *World Christian Encyclopedia*.

⁴³ John 17:21-23.

⁴⁴ E.g., Anglicans, Eastern Orthodox, Methodists, and some Roman Catholics.

Whether *sola* or *prima*, the Bible is still culturally conditioned and often obsolete, still full of internal contradictions, and still often unhistorical and unscientific.

Conclusion

After examining *sola scriptura* from the perspectives of biblical integrity (text, translation, and canon), biblical consistency, natural revelation, biblical cultural conditioning, biblical use of tradition, Christian teachings and practices, and Christian fragmentation, I conclude that, after more than five hundred years, this Reformation doctrine is theologically invalid and functionally unsustainable. It was never firmly established even during the Reformation period. The problems associated with it that I have reviewed are formidable. The attempt to soften *sola scriptura* into *prima scriptura* does not nullify these problems, leaving neither doctrine defensible.

In light of all this, what then is the Bible, if it is not *sola* or *prima*? It is the earliest, and in many cases, the only source of testimony to the life, culture, concerns, events, practices, and beliefs of Ancient Israel and Earliest Christianity. It is also an important witness to the development and trajectories of such practices and beliefs over the time spans of the Hebrew and Christian texts. Within its mass of time and place-conditioned content are valuable, timeless reflections of practical wisdom, spiritual development, and ethical behavior. It contains important testimony of personal and communal encounter with and understanding of God. Above all, the Bible introduces us to Jesus of Nazareth and his mission to reveal the God of the poor, the outcast, and the marginalized—a revelation that still challenges us to walk in his way.