

CAPTIVE TO THE WORD

*Martin Luther: Doctor of
Sacred Scripture*

by

A. SKEVINGTON WOOD

B.A., Ph.D., F.R.Hist.S.

*"I am bound by the Scriptures . . .
and my conscience is captive
to the Word of God".*

Martin Luther



THE PATERNOSTER PRESS

SBN: 85364 087 4

Copyright © 1969 The Paternoster Press

AUSTRALIA:

*Emu Book Agencies Pty., Ltd.,
511, Kent Street, Sydney, N.S.W.*

CANADA:

*Home Evangel Books Ltd.,
25, Hobson Avenue, Toronto, 16*

NEW ZEALAND:

*G. W. Moore, Ltd.,
3, Campbell Road, P.O. Box 24053,
Royal Oak, Auckland, 6*

SOUTH AFRICA:

*Oxford University Press,
P.O. Box 1141, Thibault House,
Thibault Square, Cape Town*

*Made and Printed in Great Britain for
The Paternoster Press Paternoster House
3 Mount Radford Crescent Exeter Devon
by Cox & Wyman Limited Fakenham*

CHAPTER III

LUTHER'S DEBT TO THE PAST

THE ATTEMPT TO RECOUNT THE SPIRITUAL SAGA OF Martin Luther from the angle of his biblical motivation must be broken off for the meantime in order that consideration may be given to his theological development. The pilgrim's progress cannot be divorced from the battle for the mind. Whilst Luther struggled to find a faith for living, he also strove to grasp the key which unlocks the treasury of the revealed Word, on which all authentically Christian doctrine must needs be based. Any adequate account of Luther's growth in theological understanding has to include an assessment of his indebtedness to Christian thinkers who preceded him and whose works he consulted. Increasingly he learned to look to the Scriptures alone for guidance: at this stage, however, he did so partly as he copied his predecessors. Those to whom he expressed his deepest gratitude for the way in which they had come to his aid, were themselves men who took the Bible seriously. They taught Luther to do the same, although later he used the yardstick with which they had supplied him to measure their own teaching, and in some instances to expose its insufficiency. But he was candid enough to acknowledge how much he owed to those from whom he ultimately differed in important respects.

This linkage between Luther and the tradition of the Church would have surprised many of his contemporary opponents, who regarded him as a dangerous innovator and a deviationist from accepted doctrines. If it were to be conceded that he was in any way related to the historical past, it would have been alleged that he was a reviver of ancient heresies. When Luther's Ninety-Five Theses were scrutinized by the University of Paris, this was the line of attack. The resultant publication, the *Determinatio* (1521), deplored the fact that throughout the Christian centuries the threat to orthodoxy involved in the perversion of truth had assailed the body of the Church like a malignant growth. Amongst the heresiarchs explicitly named were Marcion, Sabellius, Mani, Arius, and, more recently, Waldo, Wyclif and Hus. "Alas, in our times new members have been added to this family of vipers. . . . The most important among them is a certain Martin Luther who tries to reinstate the teachings of the aforementioned heretics."¹ The document comes to the conclusion that on free will and

¹ *Collectio Judiciorum de Novis Erroribus*, ed. Charles du Plessis d'Argentré (1724), Vol. I., p. 365. Cf. Heiko A. Oberman, *Forerunners of the Reformation: The Shape of Late Medieval Thought* (1967), p. 27.

grace Luther was Manichean; on contrition, Hussite; on confession, a Wyclifite; on the precepts of Christ, akin to the Brethren of the Free Spirit; on the punishment of heretics, a Cathar; on the authority of councils, a Waldensian; and on the observance of laws, a near Ebionite. A formidable indictment indeed!

The rejoinder to the *Determinatio* was entrusted to Melanchthon, who penned a spirited *Apologia*. He had little difficulty in demonstrating the injustice of the charges laid against Luther as a perpetrator of heresies. Whilst Scripture was recognized as the sole source of revelation, Luther repeatedly appealed to the fathers of the Church for corroboration of his views - Augustine, Ambrose, Hilary, Cyprian, John Chrysostom, amongst others. Luther's doctrine, asserted Melanchthon, agreed for the most part with that of the older theologians.¹ It was with them that his name should be associated, and not with the notorious heretics.

Now it is obvious that Melanchthon could hardly have made such claims so early as 1521 unless Luther had already disclosed in his lectures, sermons and treatises the extent to which he was dependent on the past. For all his sharp criticisms on occasion, Luther had clearly derived more benefit than perhaps he realized from his extensive patristic reading, as well as from his examination of the medieval writers. Of course, this indebtedness must not be exaggerated, as is sometimes the tendency today by way of reaction from earlier distortions. As Jaroslav Pelikan observes: "One could ask whether some of the interpreters of Luther's early development adequately considered the possibility that he derived some of his ideas from the Scriptures rather than from Augustine, Occam, Lyra, Hugo Cardinal, or his own virtuosity."²

Robert H. Murray was thus justified in insisting that Luther was "no intellectual Melchizedek".³ His thought had a pedigree. That ancestry can be traced through Occam and the Nominalists to Augustine and the early fathers. Luther's own summary of his programme was: "Back to the Bible, to Augustine, and to the Church fathers!"⁴ It was in fact largely through Augustine and the fathers that he was forced back to the Bible as alone possessing final and exclusive authority.

But first we must indicate Luther's debt to the more immediate past in the Middle Ages. This has tended to be the missing factor in any estimate of the reformer's derivations. One of the problems formerly lay in the lack of clear evidence about this enigmatic era. This handicap has been virtually removed, for there has been a notable revival of medieval research in recent years. In consequence, a revised version, as it were, of the Middle Ages is emerging, in which the contrast between pre- and

¹ CR. I. 405.

² LW. Companion Volume, 'Luther the Expositor', p. 42.

³ Robert H. Murray, *Erasmus and Luther: Their Attitude to Toleration* (1920), p. 39.

⁴ Cf. LW. 31. 75.

post-reformation conditions is not so universally stark as it was once supposed to be. Adolf Harnack went so far as to define the medieval Church as a middle stage – a “fore-reformation” – between the early Church and the Church of Protestantism, and enquiries since his day partly substantiate his claim.¹

As Brian A. Gerrish rightly recognizes, in his study of Luther's theology entitled *Grace and Reason*, the whole question of the reformer's relation to Occamism is highly controversial.² The difficulty is that not only are we uncertain about the extent to which Luther drew on the thought of the Nominalists: we are still not altogether sure about what the Nominalists themselves were driving at, despite a good deal of research into their works. It is therefore essential to proceed with some caution, and to avoid misleading generalizations or pronouncements which go beyond the present evidence.

William of Occam (c. 1280–1349), the reviver of Nominalism and nicknamed “the invincible doctor”, was an Englishman from Surrey. He entered a Franciscan order and first studied and then taught at the University of Oxford. One of his leading tenets was that beings should not be multiplied unnecessarily. By the application of this principle – usually known as “Occam's razor” – he denied all reality to universals. Hence it was impossible to provide logical proof either of the existence or attributes of God. The distinction between the latter was held by him to be merely nominal. It was the essence of Nominalist philosophy, which had its origins in the eleventh century, that universals are simply names (hence the title) invented to indicate the qualities of particular things. The Realists, against whom Nominalism was a protest, regarded universals as possessing substantial reality existing *ante res*.

As Warren Quanbeck points out, in a perceptive treatment, Occam's philosophy “developed in a time of corroding scepticism”.³ The Thomists tried to counter the critical spirit of the period with a theology of re-orientation. The mystic turned inwards and concentrated on spiritual experience. Occam preferred to meet the situation by developing a new epistemology and establishing the realities of faith on the basis it supplied. At the same time, however, Occam sought to reinstate the supremacy of Scripture as the fountain of revelation, and to expose the incapacity of human reason to rise to a knowledge of God without such aid. It can readily be seen how significant for Luther was Occam's emphasis on the place of the Word.

¹ Adolf Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, Bd. III, *Die Entwicklung des Kirchlischen Dogmas* (5th edn. 1932), pp. 374–6.

² Brian A. Gerrish, *Grace and Reason: A Study in the Theology of Luther* (1962), p. 5. On Nominalism, *vide* DTC. II. 718–83.

³ Warren A. Quanbeck, “Luther's Early Exegesis”, *Luther Today. Martin Luther Lectures*, Ed. Gerhard L. Belgium, Vol. I (1957) p. 42.

Luther frequently referred to Occam as his "beloved master".¹ He had the highest respect for his abilities. He spoke of him as *summus dialecticus*.² He affirmed that Occam was "without doubt the most eminent and the most brilliant of the Scholastic doctors".³ He even claimed that he himself belonged to Occam's party.⁴ These tributes offset the rather harsher things that Luther also had to say about the Nominalists generally as "hog theologians".⁵ Much of Luther's invective arose no doubt from his disappointment that the philosophy in which he had placed his confidence failed in the end to bring him to Christ. But even though he later repudiated much that he had learned from the Occamists, and often with characteristic vehemence, in more sober moments he realized that he had found at least some wheat amongst the chaff.

As soon as Luther started on his courses at the University of Erfurt in 1502 he would be introduced to the prevailing Nominalist influence. Two of his teachers – Jodocus Trutvetter and Bartholomeus Arnoldi from Usingen – were notable enthusiasts for Occam, and when Luther started his theological studies in the monastery his instructor was Johann Nathin, who had been a personal disciple of Gabriel Biel, as had Johann Jeuses von Paltz, who had also had a hand in training Luther. As he prepared himself for ordination, Luther read "with a bleeding heart" Biel's *Exposition of the Canon of the Mass* (1499).⁶ During the academic year of 1508–1509 in addition to lecturing in ethics at Wittenberg he helped Trutvetter (who had moved there by then) with his course on Occamist theology. When Luther returned to Erfurt he set about paraphrasing the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard with the help of commentaries written by Occam, Biel and Pierre d'Ailly. It would thus appear that Luther was introduced to Occam both by his own teachers and through the writings of Biel and d'Ailly. We must deal with Luther's debt to the latter after looking more closely at what he gained from Occam himself.

In his *Dialogus*, Occam laid the utmost stress on the infallibility of the Bible. Hence he argued that a Christian is bound to accept what is written in it or what follows from it as a logical consequence. On the other hand, "what is not contained in the Scriptures, or cannot with necessary and obvious consistency be deduced from the contents of the same, no Christian needs to believe".⁷ The authority of Scripture rests, according

¹ WA. 30. ii. 300; cf. 39. i. 420, 38. 160. Rupp notes that many of Luther's deferential remarks about Occam turn out to be ironical (E. Gordon Rupp, *Luther's Progress to the Diet of Worms* (1951), p. 17).

² WATR. 5. 516. No. 2544a; cf. 4. 679. No. 5135.

³ WA. 6. 183.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 600; cf. 195; also WATR. 5. 653. No. 6419. *Vide* Gerrish, *op. cit.*, pp. 44–45.

⁵ WA. 56. 274.

⁶ LW. 54. 264. No. 3722. Luther said he still had the work in his library in 1538.

⁷ William of Occam, *Dialogus*, I. 2. i, in Melchior Goldast, *Monarchia Sancti Romani Imperii*, Vol II (1614), p. 411; cf. II. 2. x, in Goldast, Vol II, pp. 769–70; Reu, *Luther and the Scriptures*, p. 134.

to Occam, on its divine inspiration. The Bible is instinct with the Holy Spirit.¹ Nevertheless, the foundation of Christian truth is not the Bible alone, but also the apostolic tradition and the continuing disclosures of the Holy Spirit.² No doubt each of the additional items was regarded as springing from the first, yet the door was left open to allow the entrance of all sorts of unscriptural extras, as Luther was quick to realize.

As Boehmer shrewdly remarks, Occam's attitude to Scripture could only have helped Luther to find a resolution both of his spiritual and theological dilemmas if he had been able at the same time to have furnished the key to a true understanding of the biblical message.³ This Occam was quite incapable of doing, for "highly as he thought of the Bible in theory, he actually saw nothing more in it than a fortuitously assembled *omnium gatherum* of divine oracles which are contrary to reason, and the meaning of which can only be ascertained with the help of Catholic dogma. . . . If Luther had simply followed in Occam's footsteps, the Bible would have remained for him a book with seven seals, and it would never have occurred to him, even remotely, to try impartially to find out what the Book actually contains."⁴ Reinhold Seeberg made a similar observation: "In spite of the fact that in principle the Scriptures are acknowledged as the sole authority, positive interest in discovering Bible truth is almost entirely absent. In the last analysis, the real interest of Occam as well as of many of his contemporaries, in stressing the authority of the Bible, was to secure a means of criticism by which the authority of the Church's dogmas could be shaken, or the dialectics with which they were upheld at least be made more complicated. By stressing the sole authority of the Bible the Nominalists also helped to prepare the way for the coming of the Reformation. By this ecclesiastical positivism, however, they impeded its progress mightily and contributed very little toward the work of rediscovering fundamental Bible truth."⁵

Two other elements in Occam's teaching, not directly related to his attitude to Scripture, nevertheless proved decisive in shaping Luther's thought. One was the conviction that unaided human reason is incapable of arriving at a sure knowledge of God. The methods and approach of philosophy, though valid in their own sphere, possess no value or relevance when applied to that which can be apprehended only through revelation. The truths of such revelation, conversely, are absolutely certain and sure, and must be accepted on the authority of Scripture, even if they seem contradictory to reason. Although recent research suggests that this presentation of Occam's teaching may require modification, it will be

¹ Occam, *op. cit.*, II. 3. iv (Goldast, Vol. II, p. 822).

² Occam, *op. cit.*, I. 2. v (Goldast, Vol. II, pl. 416).

³ Boehmer, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 142-3.

⁵ Reinhold Seeberg, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* (4th ed. 1930) Bd. III, p. 724. Cf. Reu, *Luther and the Scriptures*, pp. 135-6.

apparent that Luther was strongly influenced in the direction of exalting the efficacy of Scripture over that of man's unenlightened reason. Occam's critique of Aristotelian presuppositions necessarily threw faith back on biblical revelation for its basis.

The other feature of Occam's outlook which affected Luther was his stress on the sovereignty of God. This he derived largely from Augustine. In essence, God is absolute, even arbitrary, will. The plan of redemption is an expression of His nature. The method of incarnation and atonement is the choice of the divine will which reflects the character of the divine being. Occam's view of God involves "unconditioned and unforeseen predestination", as Febvre recognizes.¹ All this clearly had its impact on Luther, and came out in his controversy with Erasmus on free will. But it also had its bearing on Luther's struggle for faith and an understanding of the Bible. This overwhelming emphasis on the ineluctable sovereignty of God – carried to an extreme which ignores the scriptural balance between wrath and mercy – contributed to Luther's difficulties in realizing that God is indeed gracious. Much of his *tristitia* may have been due to the pressure of such a one-sided conception of God. "Perhaps, more than any other human factor, Nominalism may have been decisive in intensifying his sense of sinfulness and unworthiness before God (*coram deo*)," explains McDonough.² This, of course, was to lead him in the end to a full trust in Christ, but we cannot help feeling that he lingered rather longer than was needful in the Slough of Despond.

As we have seen, Luther probably reached Occam indirectly through his disciples. Of these, Biel and d'Ailly were the most influential. Gabriel Biel (c. 1420–1495) who has been dubbed the last of the Scholastics, was himself educated at Erfurt after leaving Heidelberg. He later joined the Brethren of the Common Life and was instrumental with Count Eberland of Württemberg in founding the University of Tübingen, where he held the chair of theology. We have seen how Luther read his *Exposition of the Canon of the Mass* as he prepared himself for the priesthood. He also knew Biel's *Collectorium*, which was a commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, on which Luther lectured at Erfurt. Biel modified Occam's dichotomy between faith and reason, allowing that although the Word of God alone conveys the whole of revelatory truth, reason may legitimately be employed to interpret and confirm it. He acknowledged the Bible as the unique source of revelation, and held all canonical books as inspired. Yet he also found a place for the apostolic tradition, on the strength of what he had read in the writing of Basil the Great. The Church and the pope can transmit the knowledge received through the Scriptures, but they cannot add to it. They are to be obeyed only in so far as they do not violate the integrity of the Word.

¹ Lucien Febvre, *Martin Luther: a Destiny* (E. T. 1930), p. 33.

² McDonough, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

It is not hard to see how all this appealed to Luther, and became part of his own thinking. When he was expounding the *Sentences* with the assistance of Biel he would sometimes call his pupils Gabrielists. "I know what Gabriel says," he told Johann Lang in a letter written in October 1516, "and it is all very good, except when he talks about grace, love, hope, faith and the virtues. Then he is a Pelagian."¹ Later, however, in his *Disputation against Scholastic Theology*, he made Biel his main target of attack.²

The other outstanding Occamist known to Luther was Pierre d'Ailly (1350-1420), a French Cardinal and Chancellor of the University in Paris. Along with Biel, he is regarded as one of the chief exponents of the new way (*via moderna*) as over against the old way (*via antiqua*) represented by Thomas Aquinas. The Thomists kept a place for reason in reaching the knowledge of God, but the advocates of the new way, following Duns Scotus, taught that in matters of faith the Bible was the sole guide. As we have noted, this was also a Nominalist axiom. Pierre d'Ailly spoke in the most explicit terms about the supremacy of Scripture, alluding to its "infallible author"; and to the apostle Paul as a "celestial secretary".³ He insisted that Christ had built His Church on the Bible and not on Peter. Hence he could affirm that "a declaration of the canonical Scriptures is of greater authority than an assertion of the Christian Church".⁴ Excerpts like that enable us to realize why Luther warmed to the teaching of the Occamists.

Despite the strictures of his more mature judgment, Luther was indebted to Occam and his school to a greater degree than he was prepared to admit. If on the one hand it is too much to claim that Luther is nothing but an "ossified Occamist", it is unrealistic on the other hand to dismiss this influence entirely.⁵ Boehmer is quite right to point out that in all its essential features Luther's Christianity was the greatest conceivable anti-thesis to Occamism.⁶ Yet it cannot be denied that Occam made it easier for Luther to overcome the medieval religion. This remains true in spite of the adverse effect of his idea of God as an arbitrary tyrant. It was Occam who put Luther on the track of a biblical grasp of justification with his talk about the non-imputation of sin. For Occam that was a hollow phrase, but as he brooded over the Word, Luther was able to fill it with saving content. "I know what Scholastic theology did for me: I know also how much I owe to it," Luther confessed. But he added significantly: "and I am glad that I am delivered from it, and give thanks for my deliverance to Christ the Lord."⁷

¹ WAB. I. 66.

² LCC. 16. 266-73.

³ Paul Tschackert, *Peter von Ailly* (1877), Appendix, p. 9.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁵ Boehmer, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

⁷ Cole, I. 8.

Before we discuss what Luther derived from Augustine, as representing the fathers of the Church, mention must be made of another Schoolman who forms a link between the two. Peter Lombard (c. 1100–1160) taught in the Cathedral school in Paris and later became Bishop of the diocese. His *magnum opus* was the *Sentences* (1148–1150), which was adopted as the standard textbook of theology throughout the Middle Ages. Only at a later date was it superseded by the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas. Luther studied the *Sentences* for his doctorate and lectured on them at Erfurt. He came to Lombard as already a convinced Occamist and thus tended to read him through Nominalist spectacles. He spoke of him as “a great man”, and valued him because above all the Scholastics he stressed faith rather than reason.¹ Peter followed Augustine in his conception of sin, predestination, grace, faith and justification. With Anselm, Abelard and Bernard, however, he refused to accept the unqualified impotence of man’s will after the fall and held that grace is not irresistible. Rupp notes that Peter Lombard represents the twelfth century conflation of the Scriptures and the fathers before the major infiltration of Aristotle in the next century.² No doubt Luther outgrew his unqualified admiration for Peter Lombard as *summus theologus*, but he expressed his approval of him at a later date, with the exception of his views on justification which were “too thin and weak”.³

It is hardly surprising that as a member of an Augustinian order, Luther should have devoted much of his time to examining the works of the great African father. He must have been introduced to some of these at quite an early stage. His marginal notes in the *Opuscula*, the fifteen books *Concerning the Trinity* (Augustine’s principal dogmatic systematization), and *The City of God* prove how thoroughly he mastered them. We know that Luther had his own copy of Augustine’s exposition of the Psalms. Before he had started to read him – perhaps before he entered the cloister – Luther admitted that he had very little room for Augustine.⁴ How different it was now! He positively “devoured Augustine”, and obviously relished the meal.⁵ As Jean Cadier puts it, Luther read the works of Augustine “with passion”, and Rupp explains that it was “the rapture of a younger theologian for his first theological love”.⁶ So familiar did Luther eventually become with Augustine’s writings that Melancthon could report that he held most of their contents in his memory.⁷

Luther had chosen his master well, for Augustine was essentially a

¹ LW. 54. 26. No. 192; cf. 260. No. 3698 – “a very diligent man with a superior mind”; WATR. 2. 575. No. 25442.

² Rupp, *Righteousness of God*, p. 92. ³ End. 25. 258. ⁴ LW. 48. 24.

⁵ LW. 54. 49. No. 347. Luther added that when he came to understand justification “it was all over with Augustine”.

⁶ Jean Cadier, “St. Augustin et la réforme”, *Recherches Augustiniennes*, Tome IV (1958) p. 358; Rupp, *Luther’s Progress*, p. 21.

⁷ CR. 6. 159.

biblical thinker. "God's Word is always the rule of truth," he affirmed.¹ It is a serious error, if not a sin, to doubt it. "Everything written in Scripture must be believed absolutely."² Hence "we unhesitatingly give credence to the divine Scriptures".³ They carry "paramount authority to which we yield assent in all matters".⁴ They are "the work of God's fingers because they have been completed by the operation of the Holy Spirit, who works in the holy authors".⁵ Thus they are altogether reliable, for "God's Scripture neither deceives nor is deceived".⁶ There is such unanimity that "they were spoken as if by one mouth".⁷ The Bible is "both clear and obscure, simple and profound, lucid yet full of mystery".⁸ "If it were nowhere plain, it would not feed you; if it were nowhere hidden, it would not exercise us."⁹

The Scriptures are to be accepted as the sole and supreme standard in "all matters that concern faith and the manner of life".¹⁰ No one should be believed, however wise or saintly, unless he bases his arguments on Holy Writ.¹¹ Quoting this last injunction with evident approval, Luther added that here we learn how the fathers are to be read, namely, that we ought not merely to ask what they say, but whether they use clear texts of Scripture and sound reasoning from it.¹² In his sermon on the shepherds, Augustine told his hearers that they must disdain everything outside the Scriptures if they were not to be lost in the mists.¹³ The peril of abandoning the rule of God's Word was grave: "If the authority of the divine Scripture is undermined, faith itself will become undermined, and once faith is shaken, love will abate."¹⁴

One of the most helpful distinctions in Augustine was that between the spirit and the letter. In this he was an heir of Origen, although he made more of it than the Alexandrine genius. Augustine also relates the differentiation to that between *signum* and *res* – the sign and the thing signified. In reading the Bible, the believer must pay attention to the spiritual significance lest he should be "put in subjection to the flesh by a blind adherence to the letter".¹⁵ The letter itself is dead until it is quickened by the Spirit. It is only as the Spirit who inspired the Word breathes again in the heart of the Christian that Scripture again becomes alive. This distinction constituted one of the major principles in Luther's hermeneu-

¹ *De Sermo in Monte*, 30. 2. On Augustine's attitude to Scripture, vide A. D. R. Polman, *The Word of God According to Augustine* (E.T. 1961) from which this and other quotations have been derived. Cf. A. Skevington Wood, *The Principles of Biblical Interpretation* (1967), Chap. III, "Augustine", pp. 53-66.

² *De Civitate Dei*, 21. 6. 1; cf. *Contra Faustum*, 11. 5.

³ *Epistolae*, 147. 39, 40; *De Peccatorum Meritis et Remissione*, 3. 7.

⁴ *De Civitate Dei*, 11. 3.

⁵ *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, Ps. 8:7.

⁶ *De Patientia*, 26. 22.

⁷ *Contra Faustum*, 11. 5.

⁸ *De Civitate Dei*, 20. 23; *Prooemium in Ps.* 118.

⁹ *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, Ps. 140:2; *De Sermo in Monte*, 352. 6.

¹⁰ *De Doctrina Christiana*, 2. 4.

¹¹ Cf. *Epistolae*, 82. 2. 5; *Contra Faustum*, 11. 5.

¹² LW. 27. 156; cf. WA 1. 647.

¹³ *De Sermo in Monte*, 46. 24.

¹⁴ *De Doctrina Christiana*, 1. 41.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 3. 5.

tics, although he was to insist more strongly on the primacy of the literal sense than his mentor. It is thought that Luther may have first encountered this feature of Augustine's exegetical methodology in the writings of Jacques Lefèvre from Étapes (c. 1455-1536). The French humanist, who was sometimes known by his latinized name of Faber Stapulensis, inherited the Augustinian tradition. Luther made use of his commentaries on the Psalms and Romans in compiling his own lectures on those books. Lefèvre accepted the Bible as "the sole rule of Christians".¹ When he issued his exposition of the Epistles in 1512, he told young Guillaume Farel: "My son, God will renew the world and you will be a witness of it."² That prophecy of the reformation was destined to be fulfilled and Lefèvre was one of those who paved the way for it.

In the preface to the Wittenberg edition of his German writings, the initial volume of which appeared in 1539, Luther paid one of many tributes to Augustine to be found in his remains. Luther asked his readers not to allow their interest in his books to prevent them from weighing the Scriptures themselves. In making such a recommendation he was following "the example of St. Augustine, who was, among other things, the first and almost the only one who was determined to be subject to the Holy Scriptures alone, and independent of the books of all the fathers and the Saints".³ Then Luther drew this salutary lesson for his own time. "And if the example of St. Augustine had been followed, the pope would not have become Antichrist, and that countless mass of books, which is like a crawling swarm of vermin, would not have found its way into the Church, and the Bible would have remained in the pulpit." That is but one example amongst many which could be adduced to show that Luther virtually equated "our theology and St. Augustine".⁴ Although he renounced his monastic vows, he remained doctrinally an Augustinian for the most part to his dying day.

¹ Pierre Imbart de la Tour, *Les origines de la réforme*, Tome III, *L'Évangélisme (1521-1538)* (1914), p. 127; DTC. 9. 145-6.

² A. L. Herminjard, *Correspondance des réformateurs* (1866), Tome I, p. 15.

³ LW. 34. 285.

⁴ *Ibid.*