ABSTRACT

SCRIPTURE IN HISTORY: A SYSTEMATIC
THEOLOGY OF THE CHRISTIAN BIBLE

Marquette University

This work utilizes advances in philosophical hermeneutics, the historical study of Christian Scripture, and traditional theological resources to articulate a systematic theology of the Christian Bible. Chapter one introduces the challenges of the contemporary ecclesial and academic situations of Christian Scripture and invokes and explains a functional notion of systematic theology as a resource for meeting those challenges. Chapter two examines the use of the rule of faith by Irenaeus, Origen, and Augustine to locate the emergence of Christian Scripture within the faith of early Christian churches. It shows that structured, intelligible Christian belief and thought are developing and operative in Christian communities and that such faith guided engagement with Christian Scripture.

Chapter three summarizes the judgments of the previous chapter, invokes the doctrines of the Nicene Creed as a rule of faith for locating Scripture within the economic work of the Triune God, and supplements the Creed with judgments and hypotheses regarding divine and human freedom and action and the missions of the Son of God and the Holy Spirit in human history. Such resources provide heuristics of the divine contexts of Christian Scripture. Since Christian Scripture bears the influence of its human transmitters and serves distinctive human purposes, chapter four articulates a philosophical and theological anthropology as an account of the human context of Christian Scripture.

Chapters five and six explain the nature and purpose of Christian Scripture within the divine and human contexts of the previous two chapters. The former offers a historical overview and theological evaluation of the material history and diversity of Christian Scripture. The latter provides an account of the unity of Christian Scripture. Scripture is one, despite its diversity, because of the unified work of the Holy Spirit in inspiring and illuminating it in Christian community, because of the unity of its reference to the revelatory work of the Triune God centering on Jesus Christ, and finally because of its usefulness for bearing witness to and facilitating the work of the Holy Spirit and the Son of God in history.