The Interpretation of Holy Scripture by the Consensus of the Church

V. G. Gilbert

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THE INTERPRETATION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

BY

THE CONSENSUS OF THE CHURCH

by

V.G. Gilbert

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of
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Our thesis is based upon the first principle of Pro-
testantism, which of course is much older than that system,
the slogan of the Reformation, "Ad Fontes", when applied to
religion, pointed at once to the Christian sources of the
first century A.D. but the question was, who shall read
the sources, or whose authority was to be relied on for
interpretation. This question was not new because the authority
of the Church had not been questioned seriously since the
decline and fall of Rome. From the rise of the Bible to a
place of absolute authority in matters of faith brought with
it the urgent need of a means of understanding the text.

The Protestants accepted upon the principle of private
interpretation which of course led to anarchy. They found
themselves in the same position as the advocates of two authorities, the
only Scripture, under private judgement. The contradiction
is self-evident. They tried to break on a certain measure, but found that the principle of private judgement in
INTRODUCTION

That the New Testament Scriptures stand alone as the source material of the Christian Way is very widely recognized. As to the final authority of this literature, however, there are two widely divergent schools, the Roman Catholic and the Protestant. The former places authority in the Church militant, while the latter clings to the maxim of Chillingworth, "The Bible is the religion of Protestants".

Our thesis is based upon the first principle of Protestantism, which of course is much older than that system. The slogan of the Renaissance, "Ad Fontes", when applied to religion, pointed at once to the Christian sources of the first century A.D., but the question was, who could read the sources, or whose authority was to be final in their interpretation? This question was new because the authority of the Church had not been questioned seriously since the decline and fall of Rome. Thus the rise of the Bible to a place of absolute authority in matters of faith brought with it the urgent need of a means of understanding the text.

The Protestants settled upon the principle of private interpretation which of course led to anarchy. They found themselves at once the advocates of two authorities, the holy Scriptures, and private judgement. The contradiction is self-evident. They tried the creed as a remedial measure, but found that the principle of private judgement in
matters of faith rendered all other authority invalid. Actually then we have two systems. One holds to the final authority of the Church in matters of faith; the other holds to the holy Scriptures. To the aid of the latter, or Protestant group a third principle came, its purpose being to eliminate the dilemma of possessing two contradictory authorities. We speak of the majority mind of the Church. The idea is expressed quite clearly by the common sense philosophy of Scotland. Dr. Reid defines the common sense with which they dealt, in the following words: "There is a certain degree of sense which is necessary to our being subjects of law and government, capable of managing our own affairs, and answerable for our own conduct to others. This is called common sense because it is common to all men with whom we transact business. The same degree of understanding which makes a man capable of acting with common prudence in life, makes him capable of discerning what is true and what is false, in matters that are self-evident, and which he distinctly apprehends."

In defining this concept there is a danger of confusing our terms. Since we have adopted a term from a certain school of philosophy, which might be rejected by other schools, we beg to define what we mean by common mind, as it is used in this thesis. We have used synonymously common mind, common intelligence, common reason, and universal intelligence. These terms undoubtedly would

not be used in this manner by philosophers, but to us they serve to explain the concept with which we have to deal. Throughout the thesis the term common mind is used more than any of the others.

Perhaps the best way to define the principle with which we are dealing, is to show how it works. When applied to Scripture the rule of faith observed by all would be the doctrines drawn from that literature by the majority of the believers of all time. In this sense it might be called the majority mind of the Church. But common intelligence extends beyond believers for it seems that they must be in possession of it in order to apprehend the Gospel message. This common intelligence surely is possessed by the wise, or at least a majority of them. The common mind then as we refer to it is possessed by all intelligent, responsible people.

The decision rendered by this mind should be as near the truth as one might hope to arrive. It would be kept within the circle of responsible people; it would rest with the majority; and furthermore the responsibility would be lifted from the conscience of one individual. When this common intelligence becomes obedient to the will of God through the Holy Spirit it becomes the mind of the Faithful. It becomes at once neither Roman nor Protestant. It opposes Romanism whose concept of the Church leaves all authority vested in a hierarchy. On the other hand it is contradicted by Protestantism in so far as that system
the event is so momentous as that which the Apostles had
to deal. They were not men of letters, but of action; their
task was, to witness, and their commission was to preach,
teach, and expound the teaching of Jesus. We must not expect
them to write until the fear that the message
might be lost, forced it upon them. Acts of Apostles with
its sermons, the miraculous conversions, and missionary
successes in the literary interest, and the desire for instruc-
tion on the part of the Churches, which demand that the message
of the Apostles should be handed on in writing.

That "Christianity is an historical religion", is only
another way of saying that it is a religion of fact. It is
not our present task to produce evidences concerning the
facts, but only to deal with them in their relation to the
activities of early Christians. Such a series of facts as
those connected with the origin and development of the New
Testament needs no external proof.

The fact itself, upon which Christianity rests, is
expressly stated by the apostle to the Gentiles: "I declare
unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also
you received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are
saved——For I delivered unto you first of all that which
I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according
to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose
again the third day according to the scriptures".\(^1\) The New
Testament itself is evidence of a tremendous manifestation
of Divine power. Our object in this chapter is to trace the
formation of the canon and show to what extent the universal
intelligence influenced the choice of books, because it

The men who live closest to events are those who are
very often too busy to write about them. Especially so when

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1. 1 Cor. 15:1f
the event is as momentous as that which the Apostles had to deal. They were not men of letters, but of action; their task was, to witness, and their commission was to preach, teach, and baptize believers. Accordingly we cannot expect them to write until waning years, and fear that the message might be lost, forced it upon them. Acts of Apostles with its sermons, its innumerable conversions, and missionary work, speaks of endless activity among the faithful.

It is the literary interest, and the desire for instruction on the part of the Churches, which demands that the message of absentee Apostles take written form. At this point our interest begins. Out of the bulk of literature, which was authoritative or true to the facts? Surely those living so close to the events would have no difficulty in making the proper choice. It is quite significant that no literature contemporary with the "New Testament text is extant to bear witness against the facts which it proclaims.

In passing from a spoken to a written word one thing is certain, that is the letter must agree with the former. The necessity of change was urged upon them by two things. First, the desire to preserve the testimony; second, the problems of the Christian life coming to the Apostles from widely scattered congregations. Both would serve as guarantors of the norm in the transfer from an oral to a written message; a norm that carried divine authority because it
would have been formed through the personal preaching of the Twelve and their associates. This is the first evidence of the common mind in the person of the Faithful throughout a wide area, being used to apply a norm. If we understand that this group is the Church, then it follows that the Church did not create the New Testament literature, but merely served as a guarantor for that which had already been created.

That the Church did not create the New Testament is clearly seen in the fact of its own origin out of the message of that sacred volume. The common mind came into use therefore, not as a creating agency, but rather as a norm. "In two points the history of the N. T. resembles that of the O. T. Both proceed in the first instance, directly or indirectly, from 'pneumatic men, and yet both were written without the idea of founding a sacred book." 1

The true origin of the New Testament is well expressed in the following quotation:

The life of Christ had been lived and ended. The fundamental events of the Christian Religion were all past and over. The Christian Church was launched on its career; the late comers Paul had joined the original apostles, and had begun his new and adventurous work of planting churches in the Gentile as well as Jewish lands. This work had been going on for some years.

A whole journey, taken up with preaching and church founding is recorded in the Acts (13:4-14:26), but has not left behind it any literature that is now extant. Another journey had begun and was some way advanced—it would be about the year A. D. 51—when a letter was written, followed by a second, which are both in our possession (1 and 2 Thess.). These two Epistles are the

1. H. R. E. p. 571 Sanday: The Bible
first beginnings of the New Testament. It is highly probable that other letters had been written by St. Paul before them; occasions for letters would have been as plentiful on the first journey as on the second, and St. Paul was evidently in the habit of using these occasions in a perfectly natural way."

But the movement that we find at work in St. Paul's Churches did not originate with them. It originated on what we call the Day of Pentecost, i.e. in near proximity to, and under the immediate influence of, the Resurrection. The fires were kindled by the Mother Church at Jerusalem, and the first great colonies at Antioch and Damascus, before they spread to the sphere of the missionary labours of St. Paul. It was a contagion, like the effect of leaven, that passed from one individual Christian to another. The life of the Churches was as far as possible removed from a dead and humdrum existence. A great wave of enthusiasm swept through them all; or rather, not a single wave but a succession of waves, a succession so sustained that it seemed to be continuous. St. Paul himself did but share in this."

Thus we see the natural way in which the facts of divine revelation so influenced one generation that it recorded them for its posterity. Further quotation from the same source may serve to clarify the point of origin before we proceed to show how the common mind was instrumental in selecting certain books from a large body of literature.

"The Gospels are a class of writings peculiar to Christianity. To understand them we must consider how they arose. . .For the first years after the Lord's Resurrection there was no need or demand for writings of any kind. All this time the Church was living in the expectation of its Master's speedy return. . .Only by degrees did the hope begin to subside. Meanwhile there can be little doubt that individual Christians, the disciples in Galilee and Jerusalem with the women and the relatives of the Lord would compare notes with each other, with greater or less activity of intercourse according to the degree in which they were thrown together."

1. H.R.R. p. 574. Sunday: The Bible
But the motive at work at first was not what we should call historical or biographical. It was exactly expressed by the pithier word "Gospel". This is practically a coinage of the first Christians, sanctioned by, or even perhaps originating with our Lord himself, to express the hope and salvation addressed to a disheartened and despairing world. The ground of hope and salvation centered mainly in the Life and Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ himself. And therefore the earliest preaching was in the main contents a preaching of these things, in part a narrative and description of them as facts, and in part an enlargement upon their profound significance in the spiritual sphere.\(^1\)

We have spoken only of that literature which found its way into our New Testament. Before the operation of the common mind can be seen we must have before our minds a picture of the avalanche of material from which the Church was obliged to preserve only the best. Two considerations should come before us. First, the consideration given to the Apostolic writings by those closest to them, whose writings are extant. In this regard we shall consult the Apostolic Fathers. Second, the great body of literature contemporary with and immediately subsequent to that created by the Apostles must be examined.

"The Gospels for a full half-century were treated as histories, the best histories current, but still not such as included all others or repelled all possibilities of improvement of themselves. If once we give up the strict verbal accuracy of every detail, and do not multiply incidents to an incredible extent merely in order to satisfy every different expression in the Gospels, they will themselves reveal to us their true character."\(^2\) "From the very

1. HEB Sneyd: The Bible Vol. 2 p. 574
2. Ibid, p.318
first Gospels contained elements of Sacred Books. The
'Words of the Lord Jesus' could not but be sacred. It was
but an easy step from the Words themselves to the record of
the Words. Besides, the Acts recorded were equally sacred,
and indeed had a still more momentous place in the scheme
of Christian doctrine."¹

The attitude of the Apostolic Fathers helps us to under-
stand the sifting process which took place as the Books of
Inspiration were separated from a great collection of lit-
erature. "The writings of the first Fathers are not impelled
to write by any literary motive, nor even by the pious de-
sire of shielding their faith from the attacks of enemies.
An intense feeling of a new fellowship in Christ overpowered
all their claims. ------Within the compass of a few brief
letters they show that the writings of the Apostles were
regarded from the first as invested with singular authority,
as the true expression, if not the original source of Chris-
tian doctrine and Christian practice."²

It is important furthermore to note that the Fathers
understood the difference between their writings and that of
the Apostles. The Fathers, "had certainly an indistinct
perception that their work was essentially different from
that of their predecessors. They declined to perpetuate
their title, though they may have retained their office.-----
Without having any exact sense of the completeness of the
Christian Scriptures they still draw a line between them and

¹. Westcott: The Canon of the New Testament pp. 20, 21
². Sanday: Inspiration p.316
their own writings. This attitude undoubtedly meant much to the Church when it attempted to decide which books to use in its worship. The relationship sustained between these two groups of writings is seen in the following:

"The Epistles of St. Paul to the Ephesians, his pastoral Epistles, and the Epistles of Clement and Ignatius, when taken together, mark a harmonious progression in the idea of a Church. The first are creative, and the last constructive." Their message was virtually the same as that of their predecessors, but as we have seen the function was different. "The Gospel which the Fathers announce includes all of the articles of the ancient creeds."

Our second consideration before taking up the influence of the common mind upon the Canon of the New Testament, is that of the Apocrypha. This is the name applied to a large body of literature which competed with the Apostolic writings for a place in the regard of the Christian Church. They "were not canonical, but neither were they secular," nevertheless in many instances they found extensive usage in the church.

"The tendency to manufacture semi-sacred books, and the tendency to forge books under famous names were in full

1. Westcott p. 57  
2. Ibid p. 32  
3. Ibid p. 53

Note: Some of the most important writings of the Fathers nearest the Apostles are: Epistle of Barnabas (70-130 A.D.); Epistle of Clement of Rome to Corinth (66 A.D.); Seven Letters of Ignatius (110); Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians (110); Didache (70-155); Shepherd of Hermas (100 to 140); Tattian’s Diatessaron (150). In these much of the New Testament is quoted, although the books had not as yet found lodgement in one volume.
operation at the beginning of the Christian era. 1

"Speaking generally, it may be said that they took their rise in the heresies of the second and fourth centuries. The heretics who sought to establish their views in the midst of the Church, which held by certain books and by their ordinary interpretation, were under the necessity of (1) putting forced interpretations on the true books; or (2) of altering the text of those true books; or (3) of constructing new books for themselves. We find, as a matter of fact, that sometimes one of these courses was adopted; sometimes heretics followed all the three." 2

"In the second century men began to appeal to the written Word because the living voice of those who had heard Jesus, or had known those that companied Him, was hushed in death. Especially, when controversy arose, was where an appeal to 'that which was written.' The increasing authority thus ascribed to the sacred books led the heretics, in simple defense of their position, to forge rivals and counterparts." 3

By its origin, and the high quality of certain portions of its content, the Apocryphal literature presented a double-barreled problem to the Church. The point which we wish to make here is the supplementation of so much literature, some of it almost duplicating that of the Apostles, created a problem which could find adequate solution only in the common or universal intelligence as exercised by the Faithful throughout the church. Further complications developed with the use in various churches of the Apocryphal books. "As soon as the Christian Church had gained a firm footing in the Roman Empire it required what might be called an educational literature; and an attempt was made at a very

2. Ibid
3. Ibid
early period to supply the want by books which received in a certain degree the sanction of the Church. Apocryphal writings were added to manuscripts of the New Testament and read in churches; and the practice thus began continued for a long time."


ote: Euseb. H. E. iii. 3 Here he refers to the Shepherd of Hermas as being "used for elementary teaching," but not for proof of doctrine.

Note: General divisions of Apocrypha (corresponding to the contents of the New Testament)

Gospels-------

Protoevangelium or Gospel of James; Gospel of Thomas;
Acts of Pilate, sometimes published as first part of the Gospel of Poedemos; Also Gospels forged in the name of the Apostles, and others named after those who used them.

Epistles--

Acts-----

Acts of Peter and Paul; of Paul and Thecla; of Barnabas; of Philip; and hail; of Andrew; of Andrew and Matthias; of the Martyrdom of Matthew;
of Thomas, etc., etc.

Apocalypses-----

The Apocryphal Gospels are valuable because: 1. They imply the existence of canonical books; 2. discrepancies in different text are proof that men felt at liberty to manipulate books; 3. traditions in them influenced Christians while their names were forgotten.

The purpose of the Apocryphal Acts was to solve some problem of discipline or government, therefore they treat chiefly of minor points. Charteris, p 103
With the literature of the period before us, we shall turn to a definition of the term 'Canon' as applied to the Sacred Books. "Cognate, perhaps with κανάκα (κανών), a reed (and so a pipe), a word which is borrowed from some Semitic language, κανών is a reed, especially when used as a tool, and then a tool, whether made of wood or not. It is most often a tool of the carpenter or builder, used for determining the right direction of a piece of wood or stone which is to be used in building—the level, a simple piece of wood carefully made and usually provided with a scale, exactly translated by the Latin regula. Besides being straight, it had to be incapable of bending. It was used also for the scribe's ruler, regula."

Two characteristics of the canon must be kept in mind. First, it is straight, thus serving as a rule or norm. Second, it is incapable of bending. Canonization of sacred literature therefore became a task of measuring books by a certain standard. This work performed by the early church was of such a nature as to require divine guidance. In this regard we must recognize a common intelligence in possession of the church universal which worked in their choice of books.

The common intelligence here referred to is, of course, the mind of the church. It is universal only in the sense, and to the extent that the church is universal. It is a Spirit-guided mind, or may we say, the mind of the faithful. Now this may not always be true in determining the content of

1. Souter: Text and Canon of the N. T. p. 154
holy Scripture. In determining, for instance, the meaning of a Greek term the authority of a non-Christian might be as great as that of a Christian. The common intelligence may in such cases extend to broader limitations. Perhaps it may be better understood by answering the question, "By what test is a principle of common sense to be distinguished from a prejudice of the human race?" Although universality of belief is one of the tests by which a principle of common sense is characterized, it is not the only essential test. There are two others. "That the truths assumed as maxims of common sense should be such that it is impossible for any disputant either to defend or to attack them, but by means of propositions which are neither more manifest nor more certain than the propositions in question." "That their practical influence should extend even to those individuals who affect to dispute their authority." That the Gospel especially meets this latter test is seen in the fact of its influence upon those who come to it with an open mind, willing to be guided by the Spirit that works through the Word.

The definition of their task is found in the definition of the Canon itself. "A Canon is a list of biblical books which may be read in the public services of the church, and if such be produced with the authority of a synod or council of the church." The process by which the Canon was formed has already

2. Ibid
3. Ibid p. 156
received some attention. We shall proceed at this point to examine its formation as influenced by the common intelligence. The origin of the books has already been studied, but their use is a different matter. "Sometimes, even in churches of the same province or place a book was received in one church while rejected in another."1 "It was not till about 230 that lists of these books were drawn up in the effort to secure uniformity everywhere."2

Henceforth we shall be dealing with times that are conservative rather than creative. Canonization is a process, and implies a body of material upon which to work.

"The earliest mention of a written Gospel is in the Didache (vii.6). --Ignatius refers to the written Gospel, thus "From such references it is perfectly clear that already at this time 'the Gospel' was something well known in the churches, a document or body of documents, to which it was sufficient to appeal without further specification. "--Also it was a name very seldom used in reference to the Gospel, therefore it must have been a set of documents."3

That the above mentioned body of literature was very definite in character and limitations is seen in the following quotation: "The noncanonical Gospels, such as the Gospel of Peter, derive all their valuable matter from our canonical Gospels. Marshall's Gospel was a deliberate preference of Luke's Gospel to the others as more nearly representing his

1. Souter: Text and Canon of the R. T. p. 168
2. Ibid. 159
3. Ibid. 161
Tatian employed our canonical Gospels, as the basis of his Diatessaron. Their position must, therefore, have been long assured in Rome before the date of that compilation, 170.1

The many books which we have in one volume, and hence may have in a given place, were at the time of which we are speaking scattered over a wide territory. "The New Testament is not an incongruous collection of writings of the Apostolic age, but the sum of the treasures of Apostolic teaching stored up in various places."2 The works of the Apostle Paul himself serve as an indication of varied collections of books over a wide area. "We know that he wrote at least four to Corinth, in the province of Achaia, of which the second and fourth have survived; three to the province of Asia, namely, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon; three to the province of Macedonia, First Thessalonians, Second Thessalonians, and Philippians; one to the province of Galatia and one to Rome."3

From widely situated churches comes evidence of the knowledge and acceptance of certain books.4 We know further-

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1. Scouler: Text and Canon of N. T. p. 161
2. Westcott: Canon of N. T., p. 5.
4. Ibid., p. 1707.


Tertullian (197-220) Carthage, Africa, and of Rome. Rigid acceptance of only four Gospels; placed the two apostles first,
more that the letters of Paul were read in other churches than those to whom they were addressed, and hence may have been copied and acquired permanent abode in the files of many congregations. In Ignatius and Polycarp we get the first clear knowledge of Paul derived from his letters. The way in which they refer to Paul shows that they can assume knowledge of his letters on the part of communities which they address in Asia, Macedonia, and Rome. From the heretic Marcion we learn that he had access to Paul's letters, c. 140 A.D. From Tertullian and Eusebius we learn his catalogue. Galatians, First Corinthians, Second Corinthians, Romans, First and Second Thessalonians, Laodiceans (Eph.), Colossians Philippians, and Philemon.

Books limited to sectional usage awaited the visit of someone who would carry it, with recommendations, to another locality. If indeed the book was of greater importance either to the author or to the church it would be carried by request.

Continued.

Origin of Alexandria and Caesarea (255). His canon quoted by Eusebius.

"Speaks of four Gospels, which alone are undisputed in the church of God under heaven." He recognized epistles of Paul addressed by him to the Churches he founded; First Peter, and possibly Second Peter; Apocalypse; First John, and possibly Second and Third John; for not all accept their genuineness. "The reason for excluding Acts is that Eusebius is only quoting extracts."

1. Col. 4:16
2. Souter: Text and Canon of N.T. p. 164
3. Ibid, p. 165
Hence the more acceptable books passed more rapidly into universal use, some of them never receiving more than local or temporary use. These in the course of a few decades were found to be short of the canon by which the New Testament books were measured. Consequently, through gradually increasing neglect they were dropped from the list. On the other hand "No consensus of testimony in favor of any Apocryphal book can be produced. One province or one sect might favor this book or that, but Christendom as a whole was not affected by local predilections."

1. Souter, p. 178 f.
2. Eusebius.
3. Clement and Origin as Holy Scripture.
4. Barnabas (canonical position in Egypt)
5. Clement and later rejected; never accepted in the West.
6. Clement (sent from Rome c. 96 A.D.)
7. Used also by Origen, Clement, and Irenaeus. Not accepted in the West.
8. Second Letter of Clement (a homily, probably of Egyptian; origin c. middle of 2nd. Cent.)
9. The West had no knowledge of it.
10. Apocalypse of Peter
11. Widely used in the East and some in the West.
13. Not canonical in the West, though used to some extent.

2. Charteris, Inter, p. 166
It would seem that the first major step had been taken in forming the New Testament Canon, when the Apostolic writings reached a place of equal authority with the Old Testament. "No witness of this period (first half of the Second Century) knows any collection of New Testament writings, even a provincial and incomplete one. Yet the regular public reading of certain books, especially Gospels, had doubtless begun at that time, as well as those Epistles which had been originally received by individual churches." The Apostolic writings were placed higher and higher in authority and dignity until they reached a level with those of the Old Testament. Perhaps at this point the church was first aware of a body of literature of such importance as to demand attention.

In addition to equality of authority as a factor in the choice of Apostolic writings by the Church, there were other influences which favored them. We refer especially to heretical influences and persecution. In regard to the former we find that, "As long as the traditional rule of Apostolic doctrine was generally held in the Church, there was no need to confirm it by written rule." Heretics arose who claimed to be possessed of other traditionary rules derived in succession from St. Peter or St. Paul, and it was only possible to try their authenticity by documents beyond the reach of change or corruption. Dissensions arose within the Church itself, and the appeal to the written work of the Apostles.

became natural and decisive. And thus the practical belief of the primitive age was first definitely expressed, when the Church had gained a permanent position, and a fixed literature.  

The rise of Apocryphal literature played no small part in influencing the Church to prefer the Apostolic writings. This might not seem evident on the surface as we think of the great number of additional books to complicate the choice. Our point is clearly expressed in the origin of the Apocryphal books. "In the second century men began to appeal to the written word, because the living voice of those who had heard Jesus, or who had known those that companied with them was hushed in death. Especially when controversy arose, was there an appeal to 'that which is written'. The increased authority thus ascribed to the secret books led the heretics, in simple defence of their own position, to forge rivals and counterparts. Did the orthodox appeal to the words of Paul, or Peter or John? The heretics had also apostolic words to fall back upon. Here they are! The Gospel of "Philip", or of "Thomas", or of "Pseudo-Timaeus", or of "Peter". See again in the fourth century, when the common opinion of the Christian Church had gravitated to agreement on the contents of the canon, and the Church had sufficient unity to make public and recognized use of the canon or collection, we find a large and widely known number of books outside of the canon. They were not all Gospels. Some of them were Acts; some had other names;

1. Westcott: The Canon of the N. T. pp. 5, 6
most of them had received their first shape in the second century. The fact that these books arose 'in controversy' over an existing body of authoritative literature in the Church would be sufficient reason for the common opinion to favor that which more nearly conformed to the oral message. It is a true observation that error in any age has served to quicken the senses of the Church, rather than to dull or confuse them, and thus to hasten its decisions.

The other factor influencing the choice and preservation of the authoritative books was that of persecution. It is a fact worthy of note that people yield only that which is of least importance, and preserve at the risk of life only that which is most treasured. During the official persecution of the Church by Rome, which books were yielded to the inquisitors? The answer to this question will determine the value placed by the early Church upon any given book. "When it became necessary to determine what 'superfluous' books might be yielded to the Roman inquisitor without charge of apostacy, the Apocryphal writings sank at once to their proper place." In the midst of these influences the Church very early acquired a collection of books which it considered of divine inspiration. "The first document which was in any strict

1. Charteris: Canonity p. 97
2. Charteris: Canonity p. 323
   "The higher became the authority of the proper books the more they were separated from all other literary productions and regarded as the abiding record of the immediate revelation, the less could this middle class (Apocrypha) maintain itself as such in value and purpose."
3. Westcott: Canonicity N. T. p. 10
sense the possession of the whole Church—was a little book, corresponding to the common matter of Matthew and Luke, which scholars are now in the habit of calling Q, and which used (as the present writer believes, rightly) to be identified with the Matthias Legenda mentioned by Papias. (Bis. E. E. III 39).” 

"At the end of the second century the churches of Asia Minor, Alexandria, and West Africa, of which the three famous writers last mentioned (Theophilus of Antioch, Irenaeus; Tertullian; Clement of Alexandria) may be regarded as the spokesmen, appeared to be agreed in the acceptance of our four Gospels, the Acts of Apostles, thirteen epistles of Paul, one of Peter, one of John, and the Revelation."------

But this noteworthy agreement of several important and widely separated churches as to the origin and authority of a certain number of writings had no legal character whatever and did not rest upon the decision of a council or other ecclesiastical power.”2 of course there were other collections of more or less importance.3 But the above will suffice to show the decision of the early Church.

"It appears that by 140 in the entire circle of the Catholic Church the collection comprising the four Gospels and thirteen Epistles of Paul were read alongside of the Old

1. H. E. E. Vol II. p. 375 
3. The Valentian Collection ——Souter. p. 166 f. 

Four Gospels and the Gospel of Truth
Romans, First and Second Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians—probably
First and Second Thessalonians, and Philippians.
Also Gospel of Peter, Acts of John and of Peter, Apocalypse, Acts, First and Second Peter, and Hebrews are traced in their works.
Testament writings, and that in one part or another of the Church other writings such as Acts, Revelation, Hebrews, First Peter, James, and the Epistle of John were held in like honor. Our point is that the process by which this choice was reached was dominated by the common or universal mind. In other words it was reached by the consensus of opinion among the Faithful which comprised the Church.

Common agreement as to the authentic books was reached primarily by usage in the churches. The nature of the books themselves of course determined this usage. "It is an unspeakable advantage that the Books of the New Testament are now seen to be originally united with the lives of the Apostles that they are recognized as living monuments, reared in the midst of struggles within and without by men who had seen Christ, stamped with the character of their age, and inscribed with the dialect they spoke; that they were felt to be the product as well as the source of inspirational life." In the canonization of the Gospels there can be no doubt that reading in the Churches bore an important part. We learn from Justin that already in his day this was practiced. The Gospels were read by the side of the Old Testament Prophets. It is probable that at first this public reading was not confined strictly to the Four Gospels. Just as the Gospel of Peter was read at Rhossus, so we believe that the Gospel according to the Hebrews would be read in the

2. Westcott: The Canon of N. T. p. 2
Nazarene communities of Falls and the neighborhood. But besides the watchfulness against heresy, the usage of great Churches would by degrees thrust out the usage of the less. There would be a process of levelling, which would become more rapid as communications between the different Churches increased and the bonds of discipline which held them together became more firm.¹ Thus we see the influence of common usage in accepting only the Apostolic writings as Catholic.

The Apostolic Fathers testify to the possession of a common creed by the Church. The books which finally became the content of the canon were only the written expression of that creed. "They prove that Christianity was Catholic from the very first. They show that the great facts of the Gospel-narrative and the substance of the Apostolic letters formed the basis and moulded the expression of the common creed. They recognize the fitness of the Canon and indicate the limits within which it must be fixed."²

We must observe especially the democratic influence occurring from Church usage. "The usage in the Churches would be determined, especially at the earliest and most critical stage, by those of its own members who carried the greatest weight whether invested with formal authority, or not, but especially when invested with such authority, or at least through direct intervention of those who possessed it. The

¹ Sandy: Inspiration p. 315
² Westcott, p. 59
judgement of individuals would thus pass into and be lost in the judgement of the society; and the combined judgement of these societies would be the verdict of the Catholic Church. The whole process was checked at each step by an active and jealous sense of what was Catholic in doctrine. This is a picture of the universal mind as it works in any case where truth is to be distinguished from error. Whether it be in the formation of the original literature of Christianity, or in the interpretation of that literature, the truth may be reached only by the consensus of opinion as it is expressed by the Faithful, or those professing the Christ who are competent to make choices.

"It is then to the Church, as 'a witness and keeper of holy writ', that we must look both for the formation and proof of the Canon. The written Rule of Christendom must rest finally on the general confession of the Church, and not the independent opinion of its members. The extent of the Canon, like the order of the Sacraments, was settled by common usage, and thus testimony of Christians becomes the testimony of the Church." Private interpretation of the Scriptures is as subject to error, and might be as far from the truth as private judgement in the choice of books for the Canon. Therefore individual interpretation must be subject to a higher authority, namely, the sum total of judgement as expressed by the group.

The technique by which individual books acquired a place in the canon is exemplified by the case of the Hebrew letter.

1. Sande, p. 53
2. Westcott, p. 12
Lack of Apostolic origin was felt with regard to, so one of two possible solutions was taken. It is these solutions in which we are interested. "One was to regard the work in question, if not directly Apostolic, as vouched for by the Apostles. ------The other was to lay stress not so much on Apostolic authorship as on reception by the Churches. It was a parallel line of argument all through the history of the Canon. Reception by the Churches clearly admitted by degrees, and reception by the Apostolic Churches took the next place as an argument to certain Apostolic origin. In the later stages of the history ecclesiastical usage proved decisive. It runs through the canon of Origin and Eusebius. St. Augustine lays it down explicitly. 'In regard to the Canonical Scriptures let him follow the authority of as many as possible of the Catholic churches. ------He will therefore follow this rule as to the Canonical Scriptures to prefer those which are accepted by all the Catholic Churches to those which are not accepted by some; and among those which are not accepted by all to prefer those which the greater and more important Churches accept to those which are supported by fewer Churches or those of less authority.' I Again it is usage among the Churches to which we call attention. No test could better provide for the use of the common or universal intelligence.

Through customary usage, therefore, the books which met the test became a part of the Canon. As we have already seen.

1. Sanday: Inspiration p. 73
there were no councils or appointment of committees and fixing of standards. "The very fragmentariness of the information at our command will help to confirm the conviction that the final result was neither consciously aimed at from the beginning nor guided in its development by principles; that on the contrary, circumstances, accidents, even taste, and above all custom, little concealed in its origin, brought about the choice."

The only goal to which such a process will guarantee final arrival is that of universal agreement, among those who profess faith in Christ. But what goal could have more purpose, or be more in accord with the teaching of Jesus "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"?

1. Charteris: Canonquery p. 310
SUMMARY

We have tried to show that the universal or common mind, as defined in the beginning, was the chief factor in the choice of the proper books for the Canon of the New Testament. If it was used in choosing the books, then it must be used in determining what they say, rather than trust to the individual's private interpretation. The facts which we have reviewed in the foregoing discussion are as follows:

1. A much larger body of literature than that which acquired a place in the Canon was in use during the early days of Christianity, and was lost because of the suppression.

2. Only a small portion of that literature was canonized, leaving a larger part outside.

3. There were no laws or guiding principles to serve as a basis of choice, but rather it came about by common consent among the Churches, some of it the direct result of Apostolic preaching.

4. Through the guidance of the common mind the Apostolic writings were accepted, while those which were forged, and those dealing with trivial matters, were rejected.

5. The choice of the Faithful through common consent proved to be only those books of Divine inspiration. In this the common mind proves itself to be trustworthy.

"The criterion was that the writings should be of Apostolic authorship, and conform to the Rule of faith. The common substratum was the Rule of faith itself, which grew around the Baptismal Formula, and at length appeared as the Apostolicum. 1 "It was the church that invested the Canon with authority, since it was the Church that laid down the conditions of canonicity". 2

1. E.R.E. Vol. II p. 816
2. Ibid
CHAPTER II

EFFECT OF ROMANISM UPON SCRIPTURE INTERPRETATION

We have shown in the foregoing chapter that by means of the universal mind only those books which were divinely inspired were canonized. This process required several generations. During the subsequent centuries Christianity gradually lost itself in a decadent Graeco-Roman civilization, and the authority of the Scriptures was lost because of the suppression of the universal mind. We may expect to find, therefore, that wherever the spirit of Roman Imperialism is predominant the universal mind cannot express itself, and consequently the absolute authority of the New Testament is not enjoyed.

In this early tendency of Christianity to shift its authority from the New Testament to the Imperial system there are two periods that we shall note: first, the apologetic and second, the systematic.

"The apologies were written, not so much with a view to inducing those addressed to accept Christianity, as to assure for Christians the right to exist."1 Their religion had already stood the test of Imperial opposition, and had fed more martyrs to the cause than Paganism could consume. While in this drunken stupor, made so by the blood of martyred Christians, Rome was ready to listen to the plea of the Apologist. The supreme danger to the church in this period lies in the

fact that Christians sacrificed evangelistic zeal for the right to live side by side with Pagans. This has been an ever present problem to the church, a problem of living by faith, and not by sight, holding the written Word as its only norm.

While the Apologists were making their impression upon the emperors, the apologetic spirit was at work within the Church. The tendency has always been for Christians to use every weapon except the sword of the spirit against their adversary, in overcoming Paganism, or in converting the Barbarians who constituted the world of Latin Christianity, or in opposing the Mohammedan hoards. In the period with which we are dealing the same spirit which lessened evangelistic zeal also opened the way for Imperialism to gain a footing, and exert its authority over that of the Scriptures.

We have already shown that the Christian literature of the first three centuries, even the best of it, was inferior to the books of the New Testament. However it is of great importance to us. "This literature is our only source of information as to the process by which apostolic Christianity was transformed in doctrine, polity, life worship, and institutions into the Christianity of the fourth century, and by which Christianity became so widespread, powerful and secularized as to gain recognition as a religion of the State." 1

"These writings contain all available information regarding the use of the New Testament Scriptures in the churches of the first three centuries." 2

2. Ibid
During its struggle with paganism Christianity experienced many adversities which nullified the influence of the universal mind which had served in establishing the New Testament books. Among these were, changes in the concept of the Christian ministry, the use of the allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures by Apologists, the rise of the Episcopacy, and the growth of creeds to preserve the norm of faith.

The message of the Apostles created a priesthood of believers in Christ. To them there was only one mediator between man and the one God. With Christ only, as a mediator all men stood before God upon the same basis, namely their faith in Christ as the son of God. This equality among the faithful was lost however through their association with Paganism. All pagan religions held sacro-dotalism as a common possession. Herein lay certain tendencies which lent themselves to adaptation by Christianity: "The ordinances possessing magical efficacy must be ministered by a properly qualified priest; the priest, by reason of his ceremonial consecration, a mediator between God and men, the channel through which alone the ordinary believer can secure spiritual benefits; the following of priestly directions more important than morality."

Changes in the ministry of Christ marked one of the important defects of Christianity by preparing the way for the development of a hierarchy. "The central point of the theocratic church system was the idea of a visible, outward

priesthood, serving as the medium of connection between Christ and the church; of a sacerdotal caste distinctively consecrated to God, and requisite for the life of the church,—through which order alone the influences of the Holy Spirit could be diffused among the laity. Thus was laid the foundation for the development of a pagan institution within the church arrogating to itself divine prerogatives, whose authority could replace holy writ.

The next factor involved in destroying the authority of the Scriptures was the allegorical interpretation employed by the Apologists. Of course their motive was beyond reproach, but the means had a baneful influence upon the Book; "The Allegorical Interpretation of Scripture, by virtue of which Scripture could be used in support of any doctrine or practice whatsoever. Nothing so completely destroys the authority of the Scriptures as a standard of faith and practice as this method of interpretation, which had long been in vogue among pagans and Alexandrian Jews." While this method may not have been misused by the Apologists it led the church farther away from the authority of the Holy Scriptures until a better method was introduced by Origen. It is difficult to determine whether the above system or that of the Montanists "who regarded their own dreaming as of far more importance than the written word," was the most destructive to scriptural authority; both influenced utter disregard for the judgement

1. Neander: Hist. of Christian Religion and Church p. 179
3. cf. p. 8
Formerly made by the consensus of opinion among the faithful.

The greatest enemies of any system are very often found within the ranks of its most ardent advocates. Such is the case in the early history of Christianity. The rise of the Episcopacy was another factor which served to shadow the Scriptures by centralizing authority in the church around certain offices. In the Shepherd of Hermas, "The church is represented as presided over by presbyters, and no distinction is apparent between presbyters and bishops." However, it was only a few generations until this condition was entirely changed. Speaking of the period dating from 100 to 313 A. D. Newman says, "At the beginning of the period we had two classes of church officers; presbyters or bishops, and deacons. Now we find not only a clear distinction established between presbyters and bishops, but also the addition of subordinate officers, viz., sub-deacons, readers, acolytes, janitors, and exorcists. The multiplication of officers originated in large churches, such as those of Rome, Alexandria, and Carthage.---The hierarchical spirit was active. The same tendencies and circumstances that raised the bishops above the presbyters, raised presbyters, as being entrusted with the ordinances, far above deacons and laymen."2

This ecclesiastical development was furthered by the authority usurped by ecumenical councils. Montanism sought progress in superadded revelation. "But in the place of the

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2. Ibid. p. 243
Mentalistic growth from without was here substituted another.
The progressive development, as it is here apprehended is of,
necessity, connected with a specific organ. It expresses it-
self by means of general councils; and to this progress, so
expressed, all individuals must submit their own judgement.
Thus the interpretation of the sacred Scriptures, --which
were acknowledged as being the only complete source of know-
ledge concerning the truths of faith, --and the deduction
of the doctrines of faith from them, were made to depend on this
kind of ecclesiastical authority. It is this only which can
enable us to find out that which is right amidst the infinite
contrarieties of human opinion.¹ Neander states further
that, "in this manner was gradually formed a legislative
tribunal over the whole church; and the materials were now
at hand for constitution a general ecclesiastical legislation."²
The principle of drawing upon the judgement of the whole group
of Christians was in accordance with that which was manifested
in the formation of the Canon. Our point here is that it was
overruled by ecclesiastical tendencies, which in turn were
superintended by the emperor of Rome.³

We only wish to mention in passing the efforts at creed-
making, in order to point out that the whole procedure was
just another attempt to preserve the central truths of the
Christian system. "We have observed, on our study of the writings
of Irenæus, Tertullian and Origen, that in opposition to

¹. Neander: Hist. of the Christian Religion & Church p. 211
². Ibid p. 212
³. cf. Ayer: Source Book of Ancient Church Hist. p. 289
heresy there grew up in the churches a clear concise confession of faith, which tended more and more to become stereotyped into a creed. At a later period the process was completed by attributing the fully developed creed to the apostles. The difficulty again, is that they draw attention at the expense of the Scriptures themselves.

The factors involved in the shifting of authority, already mentioned, are by no means the product of the Apologists, but merely have contemporary beginnings. We shall see their further development in the next period as the church begins to systematize its efforts.

Historians seem to be undecided concerning that period which deals with Constantine the Great. The question is whether Rome was christiannized or Christianity was romanized. We shall not attempt to settle it since our task is only to show the effect that the conquest had upon the authority of the Scriptures. It is difficult to separate the factors which lost the Scriptures their final authority, and catalogue them as external and internal. On the other hand, Roman Imperialism, at least in the early days of Christianity, seems to fall among the external influences. At the same time, there were doctrinal changes going on within.

"Christianity having once affirmed and distinctly expressed its proper essence, in the conflict with Judaism, Hellenism, and Orientalism, the opposition coming from quarters exterior to itself would naturally retreat into the background, and the

internal oppositions of different dogmatical tendencies, which in the meantime had been forming must now fall into conflict with each other, for a higher unity. Next after that stage of development which we may distinguish as predominantly apologetical, would follow another and a new one, which we may call the systematizing period. The school of Origen was the point of transition from the apologetical to the systematizing tendency.\(^1\) We should not fail to notice that Neander places the point of transition from apologetics to systematization, exactly where it would fall in accordance with our thesis, that is upon Origen, among whose foremost contributions was his insistence upon a change in the method of Scripture interpretation. Origen (185-254 A. D.) "was the first to introduce a scientific method of interpretation, in opposition to the rude, crossly literal method, combined with anthropomorphism and Chiliasm, which had hitherto prevailed.\(^2\) In opposition to the above methods he was led, "to an arbitrary, allegorical method of exposition".\(^3\)

While doctrinal differences were gradually undermining the Christian faith by sowing seeds of dissunity, the way was being paved for a new and different unity, one of organization about the structure of the Roman State. "To each of the contending doctrinal parties the struggle in defence of its own peculiar mode of apprehension appeared to be one and the same thing with struggling in defence of Christianity itself. If

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2. Ibid, p. 382
3. Ibid, p. 381
on the one hand, they had, with clear consciousness, seized
and held fast to the right relation of a conceptual system
of faith to the life of faith, and the relation of the indi-
nual Christian doctrine to that which constitutes the
proper and fundamental essence of the gospel, to the doctrine
of Christ as the Redeemer of mankind; everything would have
been different." This peculiar twist in motive lost the
Church to its central objective, and cut it off from its
source of supply, leaving it to the mercy of that which was
to come, the conquest of Constantine the Great.

"In the year 312 Constantine, who with the comprehensive
vision of a great statesman had seen the requirements of his
age, gave recognition and freedom to the Church.----He re-
mained high priest (pontifex maximus) of the pagan worship,
notwithstanding that he embraces Christianity as a cate-
chumen receiving baptismal instruction, and was baptized in
the year of his death, 337. Paganism still stood opposed to
Christianity as a powerful foe; and that not merely because
in the beginning of the fourth century the majority of the
population throughout the Empire was still pagan." The action
of Constantine concerning the Church is of such familiar ground
that we shall not dwell upon it. Suffice to remark that
Christians could not expect too much of an Emperor whose heart
and motives were pagan. For all the favors granted the Church
during this period, it was to pay in kind.

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2. Sohn: Outlines of Church History p. 44
Nor was Rome to wait many seasons until the debt of the Church fell due. The Latinizing process began where other agencies of destruction left off. "That pagans so readily gave up their religion and embraced Christianity, can be accounted for only by the fact that Christianity adapted itself so entirely to their ideas as to make the change little more than nominal."¹ This condition, no doubt, doubled its influence under the liberties granted by Constantine and his successors.

Christianity thus disarmed of its original authority presented an easy prey to the Imperial system. "Latin Christianity, from its commencement, in its character, and in all the circumstances of its development, had an irresistible tendency to monarchy. Its capital had for ages been the capital of the world, and it still remained that of Western Europe. The monarchy reached its height under Hildebrand and InnocentIII; the history of the Roman Pontificate thus becomes the center of Latin Christian History."²

Opposite the decline of Scriptural authority is the gradual development of human prestige. We have already spoken of hierarchical organizations as being the gift of paganism. This heretical growth, which was unknown to the early Church, gave place at this time to a similar system remodelled into Roman patterns of the State. The Latin patriarchate was a natural outgrowth of Romanization. "Among the city bishops towered the bishops of the capital cities of the various

¹ Newman: Manual of Church History Vol. 1, p. 314
² Milman: Hist. of Latin Christianity p. 41
provinces, "They were styled in the West metropolitans, in the West usually archbishops."¹ In the East they were legally established during the fourth century. In short, the "Still above the metropolitans stood the Patriarchs, the oligarchical summit, so to speak, the five towers in the edifice of the Catholic hierarchy of the Greco-Roman empire."² These were located at Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, and Constantinople. In contrast to this period is that prior to the council of Nice. "The first ecumenical council of Nice in 325, as yet knew nothing of five patriarchs, but only the three metropolitans."³ Of Alexandria, Antioch and Rome. The extent to which authority at this time was vested in the patriarchy is shown in the following expression of their duties, "They had oversight of one or more dioceses; at least of two or more provinces or eparchies. They ordained the metropolitans; rendered the final decision in church controversies; conducted the ecumenical councils; published the decrees of the councils and the Church laws of the emperors; and united in themselves the supreme legislative and executive power of the hierarchy."³

With the surrender of the authority of the Scriptures for that of Roman Imperialism the Church lost all semblance of its pristine character. No Roman Emperor would willingly bow to any superior power within the State, and the Church now came within its jurisdiction. "The right to administer ecclesiastical law, to summon general councils and to confirm their resolutions, to appoint bishops to the more

1. Schaff: Hist. of Christian Church Vol II p. 270
2. Ibid p. 272
3. Ibid p. 274
important episcopal sees; the right of supreme jurisdiction in the spiritual courts, a determining voice in all dogmatic controversies which agitated the Church, in short, the supreme government of the Church was claimed by the Roman State, and claimed to some purpose."

The primacy of Imperialism formed a perfect opportunity for the development of the Roman Catholic system. The principle of Catholicism, which aimed at the formation of the Church according to a definite constitutional plan, had now full scope for its development. The constitution of the Church was in the main modelled on the organization of the Empire. The city (civitas) was the lowest political unit of the Empire. It became the lowest political unit of the Church. In the constitution of the Church the territory of the city appeared as the episcopal diocese. In the constitution of the Empire, the province, with the provincial governor, stood above the civitas. The episcopal dioceses were united in like manner under the direction of the metropolitan, the bishop of the provincial capital, forming the ecclesiastical province."

From Constantine's conception of Christianity, and the status which he gave to it in the Roman empire, it is only a step to the completed papal state. 'Legal validity of episcopal jurisdiction dates from the time of Constantine.'

From his time also, "The history of the Church and that of the world in Europe are so closely interwoven, that neither

1. Schm: Outlines of Church History, p. 46
2. Thid, p. 47
3. Schaff: Hist. of the Christian Church, p. 102
can be understood without the other." ¹ ² Constantine claimed that he, "as a Christian emperor was a divinely appointed bishop, a bishop over the external affairs of the church. He made then a distinction between two divinely authorized episcopacies, one secular or imperial, corresponding to the old office of Pontifex Maximus, and extending over the whole Roman empire, therefore ecumenical or universal." ³

Although it was some years later before the Papacy was officially recognized, scarcely half a century had passed before the first decretal was issued. "The first authentic decretal is that of Pope Siricius, the successor of Damasus." ⁴ (385-388).

The only thing that has ever stood in the way of the supremacy of the papal state since its inception is secular power. Consequently, when internal decay and barbarian invasions had finished their work of disintegration upon Rome, the papal authority actually took the throne. "When the Western empire fell into the hands of the barbarians, the Roman bishop was the only surviving heir of this imperial post, or in the well-known dictum of Hobbes, "the ghost of the deceased Roman empire, sitting crowned upon the throne thereof"." ⁵

Regardless of the good that might be said for the Papal state in saving Christianity from the powers that destroyed

¹ Schaff: Hist. of the Christian Church p. 131
² Ibid p. 133
³ Milman: Hist of Latin Christianity p. 42 (note)
⁴ Schaff: Hist. of the Christian Church Vol. 2 p. 288
Rome, our contention is that the conditions which favored its rise also suppressed the universal mind which should have had an influence in keeping the Scriptures before the people. To speak of the Church under its dominion as Roman Catholic is a contradiction of terms. Truly it was Roman; indeed very much so, but in no real sense was it catholic. "The papacy is theologically the formal completion of the hierarchical conception of Christianity; politically it is the survival of the Roman conception of universal sovereignty." It is not from the Christian side of its parentage, then, but from the Roman that it derives its universal nature.

"The papacy is undeniably the result of a long process of history. Centuries were employed in building it, and centuries have already been engaged in its partial destruction. Lust of honor and of power, and even open fraud, have contributed to its development; for human nature lies hidden under episcopal robes, with its steadfast inclination to abuse the power intrusted to it; and the greater the power, the stronger the temptation, and the worse the abuse." It is not a universal mind, but a Graeco-Roman mind that is expressed in the Papacy. Unlike the holy Scriptures which it disregarded its

2. Schaff: (Note, p. 268) "Recall the interpolations of papistic passages in the works of Cyprian; the Roman enlargement of the sixth canon of Nice; the citation of the Sardican canon under the name and authority of the Nicene council; and the later notorious pseudo-isidorian decretes. The popes, to be sure were not the original authors of these falsifications, but they used them freely and repeatedly for their purposes."
3. Ibid, p. 288
fallacies cry our against any claim to divine inspiration.

In its last analysis the Roman Church admittedly consists not of obedient believers in Christ, but of the hierarchy. In this regard alone the Church defies its Creator, usurps the authority of his head. "The fundamental fallacy of the Roman system is that it identifies papacy and Church, and therefore, to be consistent, must unchurch not only Protestantism, but also the entire Oriental church from its origin down." 1 The papacy, as an historical fact, or so far as it has been acknowledged, is properly nothing more than the Latin patriarchate run to absolute monarchy. 2 Scarcely had the sixth century passed before the sacerdotal had gained such influence, "that even a man of Gregory's unquestioned Christian gentleness and natural humanity could not escape the predominant passion." 3

Aside from the human desire to achieve power the Papacy was the natural outcome of Roman influence upon the Church. "As Rome was the chief city of the West, and the seat of government for the entire West, the Council of Nicaea gave to the bishop of Rome authority over all bishops in the West (including Western Africa, Italy, Gaul, Spain, Britain, etc.); and this authority being so much more extensive than that of the other patriarchates, naturally tended to encourage the Roman bishops to the assertion of absolute supremacy over all the churches." 4

2. Ibid
3. Milman: Hist. of Latin Christianity p. 87
No attempt will be made to trace the development of papal authority to the present time. But one more step to secure its authority should be noted. It is the efforts of medieval scholasticism, an attempt to reproduce ancient philosophy, "under the control of ecclesiastical doctrine, with an accommodation in cases of discrepancy between them, of the former to the latter." One of the foremost names is that of John Scotus Egeria (600-610). "He set the example to later scholastic theologians of placing the "Fathers" on the same level of authority as the Scriptures." Another important character in this more recent development of Romanism was Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109). "He insisted on unconditional submission to ecclesiastical authority." Along with these aids the Universities provided their influence by using in theology as their text books, "the Bible and the "Four Books of Sentences", by Peter Lombard. Scholasticism had a profound influence upon Scripture interpretation in two respects. In the first place its fundamental principle of 'absolute submission to authority' applied not to Scripture, but to the church which consisted of the hierarchy. "The church is the final and absolute judge of what the will of God is at any particular time and under any particular circumstances. The teachings of the church must therefore be accepted and defended without regard to the dictates of conscience or reason. The tendency

2. Ibid, p. 475
3. Ibid, p. 476
4. Ibid, p. 472
of the entire medieval system was in the direction of de-throning conscience in the individual and making the will of the hierarchy the conscience of the entire priestly and monastic body, and through this body, of the entire constituency of the church.\textsuperscript{1}

Secondly Scholasticism brought down an avalanche of materials to become of equal authority with the New Testament. "The teachings of the church are to be found in the Bible (including the Old Testament Apocrypha), the decrees of popes, the canons of councils, the writings of the early Fathers, etc. The Bible is authoritative only as it has been authoritatively interpreted by the church, and succeeds to have any independent influence upon thought.\textsuperscript{2} To attempt to arrive at the exact teaching of the Scriptures by the study of the original languages and the application of correct exegetical principles would have been regarded as an impertinence, and would have subjected a person to persecution and heresy."

In other words what Romanism did for Christianity was to make it an evolutionary religion, rather than one revealed; like a germ which was to be developed, rather than a "Faith once for all delivered unto the saints". "This religion gradually moulded together all which arose out of the natural instincts of man, the abiding reminiscences of all the older religions, the Jewish, the Pagan, and the Teutonic with the few and indistinct glimpses of the invisible world and future

\begin{footnotes}
2. Ibid
\end{footnotes}
state of being in the New Testament, into a vast system, more sublime perhaps for its indefiniteness, which, being necessary in the condition of mankind, could not but grow up out of the kindled imagination and religious faith of Christendom.

Roman Catholicism has never conceded antithesis of its power. But we shall not develop this phase, since it is quite only our purpose to show its influence upon Scripture interpretation. "The Decretals, the Palladium of the papal power, are collected, completed, promulgated as a law of Christendom by Gregory IX," (1227-1234). It was during the period of the twelfth century that the leity was, "entirely forbidden Holy Scripture, so that the possession of a translation of the Bible was forthwith accounted a token of heresy, and only translations prepared for the sole purpose of supporting the Roman Church were tolerated." Sometime centuries of canonisation.  3. Gieseler: Ecclesiastical History, Vol. III p. 440

1. Milman: History of Latin Christianity p. 108
2. Ibid., p. 106
The imposition of Roman Imperialism upon the church was a violation of the universal mind employed in the formation of the Canon. This form of absolutism brought results which may be summarized as follows: 1. Authority shifted from an inspired literature to the church itself. 2. A concept of the church arose which was based upon the Roman Imperialistic system, thereby vesting all authority in the hierarchy of the church. 3. Scholasticism aided this new concept by advocating absolute submission to authority of the papal monarchy. 4. Church Fathers, decretales, canons of papal dominated councils, etc., became of equal authority with the Holy Scriptures, thus undoing the work of the foregoing centuries of canonization. 5. The right of the individual, established by Jesus and his Apostles, passed under papal supervision, thence to be lost, and with it all access to the inspired Word.
CHAPTER III

THE EFFECT OF PROTESTANTISM UPON SCRIPTURE INTERPRETATION

A form of absolutism other than that inflicted by Romanists must receive attention in the history of Scripture interpretation. We speak of Protestantism. Like other sectarian movements it arose within the organized church, received nourishment from that body until its adverse principles caused it to be expelled. Protestantism is in its essence just what the term suggests, namely "a protest". It was primarily a protest against ecclesiastical authority, the authority which we see in the foregoing chapter had over shadowed the Scriptures.

Protestantism came as a protest against the status quo which had been fixed to the church by Roman imperial principles. This condition is well stated by Newman.1 Thus resting entirely upon ecclesiastical authority, there was little effort or inclination among the medieval theologians to arrive at new views of truth. The church had determined how Scripture was to be interpreted, and the Latin text of the Bible was regarded as infallibly correct. There was, therefore no reason why medieval theologians should attempt to find out the true meaning of the Scriptures by a study of their original languages, and of the historical relations of their different parts.

Medieval theology thus furnished one of the strongest barriers to the progress of true enlightenment. While Protestantism was, and still is in many ways a hindrance to the Gospel of Christ, it could have no influence upon scriptural authority until the Scriptures had been rescued from the degradation placed upon them by the Romantics. This rescue may be attributed to the scholars of the renaissance or period of new learning. Although the renaissance is only one phase of reformation, it truly deserves a place of priority by virtue of its influence upon the Scriptures. It is characterized as coming with, "its contempt for scholasticism, its temporary return to Platonic paganism, its restoration of the study of the Scriptures in their original languages, its contempt for human authority, and its consequent promotion of freedom of thought." To the last three characteristics may be traced the outstanding principles of the Protestant reformation.

The Crusades of European Christianity brought two cultures together, the East and the West. The East with its high state of civilization had long since lost contact with that part of the Roman empire that was overcome by the barbarian hordes of central Europe. The West had known no civilization since the days of Roman supremacy. Its citizenry was in no large degree removed from its barbaric ancestry. Contact with ancient culture brought a consequent awakening with renewed interest in every department of human life. The appropriate watchword of

this awakening was "AD FONTES", meaning back to the source. Thus in every department of knowledge they began to trace the streams of life to their respective sources.

Christianity, being one of the chief interests, and having received its portion of distortion, furnished at once a fertile field of endeavor. When the watchword "Ad Fontes" was applied in this realm it was soon discovered that the Holy Scriptures were the only source of information concerning the holy life. Thus in one master stroke was brushed aside the tradition of a corrupt church and men began to work upon the source material. It was necessary for this to take place before there was any semblance of scriptural authority with which any movement might deal. "Without the revival of learning, Colet, and Heuchlin, and Erasmus, and Luther, and Zwingli, and Calvin, would have been impossible." 2

The awakening of the western mind rescued the Scriptures therefore, and restored their authority in matters of the Christian faith. "Besides creating a contempt for scholasticism, the great bulwark of papal absolutism; it awakened freedom of thought in general; it caused the Scriptures to be studied in the original languages, and without reference to traditional interpretation." 2 "Free discussion broke up the hegemony of dogmatic assertion. The authority of the Fathers and of the papacy lost its exclusive hold, and thinkers sought another basis of authority in the general judgment of contemporary

Christendom, in the Scriptures alone or in reason.\textsuperscript{1} It is quite significant that in this last quotation by Schaff we should find him referring to "the general judgment of contemporary christendom". It was this common or general judgment that overthrew mediaeval tradition and restored the Scriptures to their place of authority. This is what we have been referring to as common mind. It was prevalent during the period when the books of Scripture were canonized, but was lost to the dominance of Roman imperialism. It was this restoration of the Scriptures as a fit subject for the exercise of human intelligence that paved the way for John Wyclif. "To Wyclif the Scriptures are the authority for every Catholic tenet. \textemdash All things necessary to belief for salvation are found in them. They are the Catholic faith, the Christian faith, \textemdash fides christiana, \textemdash the primal rule of human perfection, the primal foundation of the Christian proclamation."\textsuperscript{2} The Renaissance also brought about the thought later expressed by Wyclif that, "There is, in fact only one sense of Scripture, the one God himself has placed it in the book of life for the wayfaring man."\textsuperscript{3} Wyclif stands between the Renaissance and the Reformation, so to speak, and serves as a true example of the renaissance watchword applied to life. He, "brushes away the false principles of the Fathers and Schoolmen by pronouncing the "literal verbal sense", the true one."\textsuperscript{4}

1. Schaff: "History of the Christian Church" Vol. 5 pt. 2, p. 188
4. Ibid.
"The Renaissance may fairly be said to have spread to Christianity when scholars began to exercise on the early documents of the religion, the New Testament and the writings of the Fathers, the faculties trained on Greek and Roman classics, and when the vivification of ancient history spread from Plutarch to the Gospels and the Acts."¹

Some of the outstanding names connected with the renaissance and the contribution which they made are as follows: Lorenzo Valla of Florence turned back from the Vulgate text of the New Testament to the Greek text; John Colet of Oxford, began to lecture upon the writings of St. Paul in the spirit of a more critical age; Erasmus of Rotterdam, whose Greek Testament, in spite of its critical imperfections, must be considered as the starting point of a mighty movement.²

The renewal of learning with its zeal for source material pointed the way to the church. Because of universal ignorance the Roman Church had been able to keep the Scriptures hidden, but now the stage was set for a new scene. Only time was needed for the common people to apply the watchword of the Renaissance. In addition to the pressure of a new desire to learn, the abuses of the Roman clergy hastened the spirit of reform. The pressure of the Renaissance, therefore caused the subject of the Holy Scriptures to draw early attention when the reform was once under way.

"The formal element of the Protestant theology of the Reformation period was adherence to the Scriptures as the only

¹. Gardner, p. 284
². Ibid.
sufficient guide of faith and practice. This was held to at first unconditionally, in opposition to the papal theory, which gives to tradition a place side by side with Scripture, while making Scripture and tradition alike dependent for their authority on the Church.1 This particular phase of reform is the one which we want to follow in our thesis to see why it failed in its purpose.

Long before the reformation Matthias of Janow, a fore-runner of John Huss, "emphatically appealed to the Bible as the undoubted source of Christian faith."2 "Only with the rise of the Churches of the Reformation, however, was the doctrine of Scripture authority pushed to its final consequences, as the Reformers------in view of the frequent errors of the church tradition, and of the fallibility of the Church and its representatives, believed it possible to fall back upon the authority of Scripture alone. In this course they really proceeded upon their personal experience of faith; as we know Luther himself criticized the canon with faith as his criterion."3

The reformers placed the Scriptures in the place of Church and tradition. "Whereas on the Roman Catholic view, the Church, as being in possession of the Holy Spirit, was the trustee of infallibility, in the Reformed Churches, this prerogative is accorded to Scripture."4 If the reformers had been content to hold to this truth alone all would have been well, but they stumbled at the problem of applying it to

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4. Ibid
human experience. Instead of allowing the Scripture to lead in experience and thought, their zeal for freedom from Imperial bondage led to a second tenet which overshadowed the authority of the Scriptures. We refer to the right of private judgement. ¹ However, the right of private judgement ¹

"While the Renaissance relied without reserve upon the autonomy of the individual, and, in the last analysis, upon purely empirical, egotistic, and immoral individualism, Luther added from the word of God the concept of man created in the image of God, and understood Christianity as both freedom and compulsion. It has ever since been the problem of Protestantism to reconcile the freedom of the world of man, and of the church, with God's revelation, and to assign to the conscience its proper function as guide of conduct and belief when enlightened by the Gospel or the law of Christ."² Luther himself found this difficulty of reconciliation. "Few religious leaders ever expressed greater devotion to the Scriptures than Luther, and in controversy with the Romanists he made the Scriptures the only rule of faith and practice. Yet we shall see that even the Scriptures must adapt themselves to his theories or suffer the penalty of deaconization, and church authority was of some account when rites retained by him were shown to lack clear and scriptural authorization."²

Very often the right of each individual to study the Bible has been confused with the right of private interpretation.

¹. Schaff Herzog Essays. Vol. 9, p. 293
and certainly, the apparently firmer foundation offered by
of it according to personal experience, The Reformation,
"successfully established the unconditional right of every
layman to the Bible. It rested upon the perspectivas,
that is to say, the intelligibility of the Scripture to the
ordinary pious mind." However, the right above mentioned,
does not give license to read the text with no respect to the
rules of grammar. Private judgement has its place in accept-
ing or rejecting the message, and freedom of choice must at
all times be a condition accompanying the Gospel, but history
has once for all rendered its verdict against placing private
judgement on a par with the Holy Scriptures, in matters of
authority. As every other liberty of man has its limits, so
also does the right of privately interpreting the Scriptures.
Otherwise only searce and chance results, as is seen in
the Protestant world.

Protestantism confronts us, therefore, with a double
principle which is inherently basic. "A theory of Protestant-
ism which has been widely prevalent makes it consist of
Imperialism [Imperialism], based largely in the
a formal and material principle, the former grounded in the
doctrine of the all-sufficiency of the Scripture, for every-
thing in the Church the latter in the concept of justification
that all established national religions, whether Greek or
by faith." The one who made the greatest contribution to
ward reconciling these two conflicting ideas was William
Chillingworth. In 1634 he returned to the Church of England
after having embraced and rejected the Roman Catholic faith.

2. Schaff-Herzog Vol. 9, p. 383
and certainty; the apparently firmer foundation offered by
the Church of Rome proved delusive; and then he settled upon
Scripture interpretation by reason." —Protestantism, "he
understands to be not "the doctrine of Luther, of Calvin, of
Melanchthon; nor the confession of Augusta (Augsburg), or
Geneva; nor the catechism of Hiedelberg, nor the articles of
the Church of England; no, nor the harmony of Protestant con-
fessions but that wherein they all agree, and which they all
subscribe with a greater harmony as a perfect rule of their
faith and actions, that is, the Bible. The Bible, I say the
Bible alone is the religion of Protestants." This celebrated
maxim of Chillingworth's is not representative of actual Pro-
testant practice, but only of their ideal. It is also note-
worthy that no mention of private judgement is included.

In actual practice the principle of absolutism is inherent
within the Protestant system, just as it is within that of the
Roman Catholic. Each Protestant sect becomes an imposing
autocracy, differing from Rome only in power of numbers, and
unity within the group. "Protestantism, after gaining
victory over Romanism (Imperialism), became involved in in-
ternal strife; the two forms of Protestantism itself— the
Presbyterian and the Episcopal. In the ensuing struggle
Presbyterianism gained the ascendency in Scotland. When Pres-
byterianism had thus attained the supremacy it so long had
sought, it began, in a short time, to furnish fresh illustra-
tion that all established national religions, whether Greek or
Mohammedan, Papal or Protestant, have in them the essence of

1. Schaff-Herzog Vol.3, p. 28
A specific example of the above charge is not difficult to find. The Act of Supremacy in 1534 after the case of Henry VIII made the king the only supreme head on earth, of the Church of England. "This act is further so defined as to give to the king absolute ecclesiastical authority—in matters internal (the repression of false doctrine and the promotion of true, etc.)."

With regard to the Scriptures we may rightly conclude that Protestantism defeated its own purpose. In trying to restore the Church of the New Testament by a protest against ecclesiastical authority, it set up other such authorities to overshadow the Book. The question which they raised and failed to answer was, 'how is one to know when he has properly interpreted the Scripture?' This question was not answered for centuries, except by the incorrect Protestant idea that each one was to interpret according to his own standards.

One of the greatest difficulties lay in the lack of distinction between faith and opinion in the Scripture. "The intelligibility of the Bible is not absolute, but relative, depending as much upon the state of mind of him who reads it and the method of pursuing it, as upon the pericopism of the book itself. All Protestants assert, that the way of salvation is clearly defined in the Sacred Volume, so as to be plain to the most ordinary comprehension. If, then, erroneous views

1. Richardson: Memoirs of A. Campbell, Vol. 1, p. 51
be formed from it, the cause is to be sought, not in the Bible, but in the mind of the erringist himself. He comes to the Scriptures as an advocate of preconceived opinions or doctrines, to seek proof and arguments by which to sustain these views, and not, as a sincere inquirer after truth, to engage in a process of careful investigation, and with a mind prepared to follow whithersoever truth shall lead."

In applying the right of private judgement, and by subjecting the Bible to private experience a very bad mistake has resulted. The Old and New Testament has been given a place of equal authority in matters of faith and practice. The lack of distinction between the various periods of God's revelation is one of the outstanding stumblingblocks of Protestantism. The opinion generally prevailed at the beginning of the present period (a) that the precept and example of the Old Testament regarding the treatment of dissenters from the established form of religion apply to Christianity as well as to Judaism. The theocracy of the American Puritans is one of the many institutions derived from the Old Testament. In trying to apply old forms given under another dispensation, to the content of the new life given through Christ, the confessional churches have found much difficulty. It will be recognized as the same mistake made by the disciples of John. They wondered why the disciples of Jesus did not fast, as did they and the

1. Millennial Harbinger 1862, p. 562
(a) The Era of Protestant Denominationalism 1648-1868
Pharisees. The answer was that new wine put into old wineskins would not only be lost, but would also destroy the skins. So in applying Old Testament forms to the faith and practice of Christians both the form and the new life is misunderstood. The institutions given under new revelation must be used in attaining the new life.

The process of interpreting Christianity by the Old and New Testament alike is known as the literal Bible. Through the confusion caused by trying to fit a new message to old forms, creeds have labored to smooth out the most apparent wrinkles. An outstanding example of the result of such long and laborious explanations is seen in the case of Anglicanism, of which the founder, Methodism was a life-long member. "The most characteristic feature of English Protestantism, from the beginning until now (except during the Puritan period), is its half-hearted compromising disposition.---This compromising spirit is manifest in the Prayer Book and the Thirty-nine Articles.---The Prayer Book, which was to constitute a chief part of the religious instruction of the masses, was based upon Roman Catholic liturgies and is decidedly Romanizing in its tendency. The theologians, on the other hand, had been educated under the influence of German Protestantism. Something decidedly Protestant was demanded by them, and could safely be accorded to them in matter of creed.---It was attempted to make the Anglican ecclesiastical system acceptable to Protestants and Romanizers alike."

---The result of this compromise was double-

1. Matt. 9:16; Mk. 2:22; Lk. 5:36
barreled. High churchmen interpret the Articles by the Prayer Book, while the low churchmen interpret the Prayer Book by the Articles.

The conception of the Bible as a level book that is with two testaments equally binding upon Christians, has caused it to be looked upon as an esoteric piece of literature. The result is readily detected in the 'experience religion', of Protestant groups. Thus we find the Bible being interpreted by experience, rather than fulfilling its true function of guiding human experience. An outstanding example of this is to be found in the life of Augustine. "His ideas of human depravity were derived from the correspondence of his own experience with Paul's representation of the antagonism between the flesh and the spirit, between the law of the mind and the law of the members (Ro. 7.). His "Confessions" constitutes one of the most psychological disclosures in all literature and should be read by everyone who wishes to sound the depths of human experience in relation to the religious life."  

We have termed the above procedure of Augustine, 'an example', but it is more than that; it is a precept. "As with the schoolmen, Aristotle was ranked next to the inspired writers in matters of philosophy and of formal reasoning, and became virtually the authoritative interpreter of the Scripture teachings, so with the Protestant Theologians was Augustine."  

2. Ibid, Vol. 2, p. 311
Perhaps it is needless to say that this attitude contradicts the spirit of Protestantism, and shows the human tendency to lean upon the words of another.

Next after Augustine in the realm of speculation comes Martin Luther. Although one could fairly expect him to be guided by the New Testament in matters of Christian faith and practice, yet the facts show quite the contrary. In spite of his extensive work of translation the confusion of the two Testaments of God made the Bible an esoteric book to be understood only as subjected to personal experience. So strongly has this attitude impressed itself upon the modern denominational mind that we find it echoed by the advocates of experience-centered religious education. "In the preface of his New Testament Luther indulges in the subjective criticism of the inspired writings as to merit the appellation "Father of modern Bible criticism".1

To lift the Law and the Prophets to a place of equal authority with the New Covenant is to minimize at once the authority of Jesus the Christ; and exclusive authority which he claimed for himself. It is also to witness against the testimony of Luke when he indicated that the Law and the Prophets are not to pass away, but rather will be superseded. (a) The Scriptures have suffered an eclipse, and thus are thought to be quite beyond understanding because human efforts have telescoped the Covenants which God gave to different ages of the world.

1. Newman: Vol. 2 p. 68
(a) Luke 16:16
The promise of the renaissance was to elevate the New Testament to its rightful place of authority in matters of Christian faith and practice. This indeed was accomplished to a marked degree as scholars applied themselves to the source material of the Holy Life. Christians welcomed this newly-found book with joy, just as they welcomed the victory of Constantine after a long period of persecution. But like the latter victory, new and more subtle enemies followed in its wake.

The principle of the renaissance pointed to the New Testament, and scholarship of the period allowed the book to interpret itself. But Protestantism failed to hold the open Bible before the masses. It is as though it held the book out to the people, then in the same gesture withdrew it by casting before them the concept of the Level Bible.

If the Bible is not allowed to interpret itself as any other book, but rests upon some external theory or is subjected to an experience-centered faith, it no longer is an open book. There is no place left for the common intelligence to exercise itself regarding the text.
CHAPTER IV
MOBEMENTS AND PRINCIPLES CONTRIBUTING TO RIGHT INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE

Aside from the two forms of absolutism discussed in the foregoing chapters, and sometimes interwoven among them, is a group which we may term 'the faithful'. By this we mean those in all generations, and among all sects, who have read the Bible as an open book. It is a group similar, except in point of time, to those who chose certain writings of the first century and preserved them as inspired. The concept is expressed perhaps more clearly by Paul to Timothy. "The things which thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." (a) This is the one and only true Apostolic succession, if such there be.

The above principle is not Roman in either principle or practice. It antedates the Roman Church. It was in existence while Rome was still the enemy of the Church. Here we find a repudiation of papal authority before such was born, by setting up a priesthood of believers in Christ. It was such a group that constituted the body of Christ referred to by the Apostle Paul as the Church. This body of Christians existing already in New Testament times, invalidates the papal concept of the Church.

(a) I Tim. 2:2
Even as the body of Christ on earth antedates Romanism, so it necessarily follows that it lived for centuries without Protestantism. To the unbiased mind both are systems imposed upon the body. If the Bible is the religion of Christians, and the New Testament the only norm of Christian faith and practice as decided by the renaissance, then personal experience is not a safe guide, in such matters. Protestantism like Romanism must be rejected as falling to measure up to the New Testament concept of the Body of Christ, that is Christian only.

The Christian faith is of a universal nature. Jesus ordered it preached to "every creature" of "all nations". To remain purely catholic, therefore, it must be kept free from anything that delimits. Both the terms 'Roman', and 'Protestant' forbid the term catholic, unless a contradiction will be permitted. The propagation of the faith, as recorded by the Bible itself, was done on a catholic basis; no race or class distinction was recognized. Paul placed the whole matter of sects in the realm of the impossible, (Col. 3:11). "There can be neither Jew nor Greek; there can be neither bond nor free; there can be no male and female; for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus." And again, speaking of the "new man" he says, "Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman free man; but Christ is all, and in all." (Col. 3:11)

The catholicity of the Christian faith requires a norm by which to preserve its pristine purity. This norm of faith and practice is of course none other than the New Testament.
Speaking of the need which the church has for the Bible, Gardner says, "Her Bible has been in all ages her most precious possession, and has tended constantly to curb the aberrations of pious unreason, and to keep open the way back to the original basis of the faith." Many movements have appeared through the centuries advocating New Testament Christianity in lieu of the established order of their day. They can be found as far back into the Christian centuries as heresy goes. Wherever neglect of Scripture is found, there usually appears someone to preserve them; otherwise the modern world would not have the written message.

From Chrysostom's time (345-407 A.D.) comes an interesting and illuminating account. "To this period also was transmitted from the primitive Christian times the recognition of the right, closely connected with the consciousness of the universal Christian priesthood, and belonging to all Christians, of instructing and edifying themselves by going directly to the fountain of the divine word.---It was regarded as the chief part of a pious Christian education, both in men and women, to become early familiar with the holy Scripture. ---Among both women and men, of whatever rank in society, it was regarded as the characteristic mark of those with whom Christianity was a serious concern of the heart, that they were much occupied with the study of the Bible." The reason for Christians forfeiting the conditions referred to above, cannot be placed entirely upon the responsibility of the clergy. It was not the clergy who first

endeavored to hold back the laity from occupying themselves with the Bible. "It was rather the latter, who themselves, employed this distinction between the spiritual and secular for the purpose of palliating a life wholly given to the world, and as a pretext for their neglect of the Bible."¹ Both Chrysostom and Augustine tried to prevent this tendency.

The normative influence of Chrysostom is seen in the way he handled the Scriptures. In the first place he distinguished between essentials and non-essentials. "In Chrysostom we recognize an interpreter of Scripture who had been formed in the Antiochian school, when we find him admitting without scruple the existence of many discrepancies in the Gospel narratives as to unimportant matters relating to times and places, and in particular forms of expression. This agreement in essentials, with diversity in things not essential, he regards as proof of the credibility of the narratives. He holds that the only thing important is agreement in the essential matters, in that which serves to the end of salvation, whereupon Christianity repose. Under this head he places the incarnation of God; the miracles of Christ; his resurrection and ascension; the fact that he gave precepts serving to salvation."² It is very significant that he places under the essential category the precepts of Jesus leading to salvation. Herein lies the secret of correct Scripture interpretation. It is a self-evident fact that all systems, Roman and Protestant alike, have veered from this course.

¹ Neander: History of the Christian Rel., p. 317
² Ibid., p. 390.
One of the earlier movements which placed stress upon the New Testament is commonly known as the Paulicians. They arose in Armenia under the leadership of one Constantine, about 660 A.D. Having received a copy of the New Testament from a Christian returning from captivity among the Saracens, he was greatly interested by the Pauline Epistles and resolved as far as in him lay to secure a restoration of Christianity to its primitive Pauline form.¹ They called themselves "the holy, universal, and apostolic church."² That which interests us with regard to these Christians is their regard for the holy Scripture. "In addition to their peculiar dualistic doctrines, their characteristic marks were the affixing of a high value to the universal use of the Holy Scriptures, and a rejection of all externalities in religion."²

Not a great number of Christian groups advocating the use of the Scriptures alone as a norm of faith are to be found until about the twelfth century. The reason for their lateness, and their multiplicity when once they did appear is evident. Gieseler gives four reasons: First: "The Hierarchy, unmindful of its spiritual calling, was entangling itself in careless warfare in order to bring all secular power under its sway." Second, "The system of ecclisiasical doctrines, with its progressive development, was enclosing the reason with bonds ever narrowing. Third, "The means of salvation held out by the Church, were at the same time ever more and more losing their spiritual character, and their moral power, by the one sided speculatio

¹ Newman: Manual of Church History Vol. 1 p. 379
² Gieseler: Ecclisiasical History Vol. 2 p. 209
of the Schoolmen, and also sinking to lifeless mechanism in their ministration by a coarse Priesthood which had lost its respect for morality." Fourth, "This torturous Church-system, despairing of any spiritual influence, was endeavoring to win consideration for itself by continued acts of external aggression."

Another reason for normative movements, quite removed from those above, is to be found in the character of the people. "Underneath all this discontent was the spiritual hunger of the masses. The Bible was not an altogether forgotten book. The people remembered it. Popular preachers like Bernard of Clairvaux, Robert of Abriñ SS al and Vitalis of Savigny quoted its precepts and relied upon its authority. There was a hankering after the Gospel which the church did not set forth. The people wanted to get behind the clergy and the ritual of the sacraments to Christ himself." In behalf of our thesis we may say here that this popular zeal for the open Book has at all times resulted in a correct understanding of its essential contents. Under such conditions it becomes a self-interpreting book, and this only when ministers and people are familiar with its message.

The movements under discussion were not overwhelmingly large for a very obvious reason: "Only a few individuals who had made up their minds to follow the principles of New Testament Christianity regardless of consequences, and who had come to regard the current social and civil arrangements as so little in accord with the spirit of Christianity as to be

2. Schaff: Hist. of Christian Church Vol. 5, p. 463
unworthy of perpetuation, were likely to venture upon the advocacy of these principles before they had been shown by experience to be practicable. Such were the Waldenses and related parties in the mediæval times and the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century. 1 However small the number may have been in a given party, all together there must have been a great many people who held to the Scriptures alone as the only norm of Christian faith and practice.

It makes little difference which one of the many groups we single out; always their attitude toward the Scripture is the same. The Waldenses were named after Peter Waldo, their early leader, who from curiosity to know the contents of the Scriptures, which he was accustomed to hear in Latin, employed two priests, the one to translate, and the other to copy into the vernacular, large portions of the Scriptures. It is probable that he was already inclined to make the Scriptures his guide. Certainly, when he came to a knowledge of scriptural truth he was not slow to put it into practice. 2 Peter was a rich merchant of Lyons. He "distributed his means to the poor, secured numerous followers, and, both personally and through his disciples, taught the Scriptures to all that would hear throughout that region, urging them to turn from their sins (c. 1170)." 3 "The New Testament was their textbook and even the women and children mastered it in a manner that surprised the ignorant priests of the time. This they

2. Ibid. Vol. 1, p. 570
3. Ibid
circulated in the vernacular." 1 Such movements were very numerous during this period, and it is evident from the way they were persecuted that they cause the Roman Church much grief. 2

Perhaps the most outstanding figure of pre-Reformation times with regard to Scripture interpretation is Marsilius of Padua. He was the joint author with John of Jandun, of the 'Defensor Pacis', (1324). "Marsilius insisted on the exclusive authority of the canonical scriptures naturally interpreted by the consensus of believers, without priestly interference." 3 This concept answers the qualifications which we have laid down in this thesis describing the common mind. Some might insist that since it is the mind of believers, it is rather Christian mind, but not all believers are obedient Christians, hence the term 'common' comprising a greater number of intelligent people.

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2. Other movements of this period, similar to the Waldenses in their insistence upon the New Testament as the only norm of Christian faith and practice are here indicated:

The Bogomolies, a Bulgarian sect, thought to be closely related to the Paulicians on the one hand, and to the Cathari of western Europe on the other. The term means, "Friends of God". Their teachings were procured about 1111 A.D. This party represents our purpose only in its relationship to other parties.

The Cathari (1032) of Southern France were associated with numerous sects throughout France, Germany, and Italy. (Gieseler: Vol. I, p. 304).

Petrobrusians, from Peter de Bruys (c. 1164), and Henricians, from Henry of Lausanne (c. 1116). "These rejected the authority of the Fathers and of tradition, adhering to the Scriptures alone." (Newman: Vol. 1, p. 566).

"The supreme authority to determine in all disputed matters pertaining to faith he ascribes to a general council, assembled with the consent and participation of all the faithful; and to such a council he thinks the guidance of the Holy Spirit may have been promised."

While the Defender Fides was written against the papal office, it stands today as an indictment against the clerical office of Protestantism. Marsilius declared the Scriptures, "To be the ultimate source of authority. They do not derive their authority from the Church. The Church gets its authority from them. In cases of disputed interpretation it is for a general council to settle what the true meaning of Scripture is."\(^2\)

It may be truly said that Protestantism adopted the view of Marsilius regarding the place of the Scriptures, but it came far short of his view of interpretation. He was in no wise willing to rely upon the private interpretation of the individual as authentic. Marsilius looked upon the Holy Scriptures as constituting alone the ultimate source of all our knowledge of the Christian faith; and to them alone as contradiestinguished from all human writings, he ascribes infallibility. Yet it was his opinion that the holy Scriptures would have been given in vain, if they would have proved an injury to mankind, if the doctrines necessary to salvation could not be derived from them with certainty. Hence it followed that Christ would clearly reveal these doctrines to

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1. Neander: Hist of Chr. Rel. and Church, p. 32
2. Schaff Hist. of Christian Church, Vol. 5, p. 2
the majority of the faithful, when they searched after the true sense of the holy Scriptures and invoked his assistance; so that the doctrine drawn from the holy Scriptures by the majority of believers in all times, ought to be the rule for all. And hence he concluded that the highest respect was due the decision of general councils."

The next movement which we shall briefly mention has already received some attention at the hands of Marsilius. We refer to Gallicanism, or as it is sometimes called, 'the Gallican theory'. Of course in its truest sense it is more than a theory. It is defined by Hastings thus: "In the domain of spiritual things, the supreme authority belongs to general councils and not to the Pope, who on the contrary must obey their canons." This realization came to the minds of churchmen who were already doubting the authority of the Roman system. When the fifteenth century opened, "The word 'council' now that the bold initiative was taken, was hailed as pregnant with the promise of sure relief from the disgrace and confusion into which Western Christendom had been thrown and of a reunion of the Church." The council of Pisa which convened in 1409 was the first reforming council. "The Pisan synod marks an epoch in the history of Western Christendom not so much on account of what it actually accomplished as because it was the first revolt in council against the theory of papal absolutism which had been accepted for centuries. It

1. H.E.H.E. Vol. 6
3. Ibid, p. 138
followed the ideas of Gerson and Langarstein, namely, that the Church is the Church even without the presence of the pope, and that an ecumenical council is legitimate which meets not only in the absence of his assent, but in the face of his protest." This marks the beginning of the Conciliar or Gallican theory. In reality it was nothing more than the realization and expression of a fact which had been long overlooked.

In the Council of Constance (1414) the theory was actually recognized to the extent that Roman Catholic historians deny that it represented the Roman Church. The challenge of the reformed councils not only brought low the power of the popes, but reinforced the papal claim. At the council of Ferrara-Florence (1438-1445) the doctrine of papal irresponsibility was formulated to counteract the power of a general council. And in 1570 the dogma of papal infallibility was established.

In these dogmas we see the strong defense which the Roman Church tried to make for its ecclesiastical system. We may ask what this has to do with common mind in the interpretation of Scripture. It has everything to do with it because the Roman Church will neither concede to the Scriptures supreme authority, not to the mind of the faithful the right to read holy writ.

The Gallican theory in many ways was merely an application of the Defensor Fidelis. In the Declaration of 1062 were four articles of which we quote the second and fourth.

Article 2, "Even in the domain of things spiritual, the authority of the Popes does not extend beyond the limits fixed by the Council of Constance." Article 4, "Doctrinal authority is subordinate to the judgement of the Church, which may reform it."  

The fourth and fifth sessions of the Council of Constance, "mark an epoch in the history of ecclesiastical statement. The council declared that being assembled legitimately in the Holy Spirit, it was an ecumenical council and representing the whole Church, had its authority immediately from Christ, and that to the Pope and persons of every grade owed obedience in things pertaining to the faith and to the reformation of the Church head and members. It was superior to all other ecclesiastical tribunals."  

The outstanding man representing the University of Paris and the Gallican theory at Constance was Gerson. He held to the principle, "ever maintained by him, that all positive laws must yield to the greater good of the whole,—the power as well of the civil magistrate, as of the head of the Church was conditioned on this. If kings by the law of inheritance could be deposed where the good of the state required it; how much more should popes, created so by election, be liable to election from office, when the good of the Church required it." Roman Imperialism when imposed upon the Church of Christ cannot stand the test of this principle advocated.

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1. H.E.E. E. Vol. 6, p. 162
3. Diehich of Hieheim outstanding pamphleteer; Cardinal d'Ailly
4. Neander: History of the Chr. Rel. and Church p. 94
by Gerson. In the place of ecclesiastical authority he placed the Holy Scriptures as revealing Christ to the reader. "The Scriptures, Gerson taught, are the Church’s rule and guide to the end of the world."1

After admitting that the scriptures are the rule and guide, who is to interpret them? Certainly not those ecclesiastics who have subjected them already to their own authority. "It is remarkable that Gerson, while he maintained the necessity of agreement in the truths of faith to the neglect of subordinate differences which might exist without injury to the former, impugns as a vulgar error the opinion, that every man may be saved by his own particular religion."2 This particular viewpoint prohibits the idea of individual interpretation, and thus leaves only one answer, namely, the application of the common sense of the whole group of competent believers.

Of course the above views are accepted by neither the Roman Catholic, nor the Protestant. "The Vatican Council assented to the Pope’s infallibility and full jurisdiction over the whole Church. (July 1870) Henceforth Episcopal Gallicanism became a heresy, and its upholders had either to repudiate it or leave the Catholic Church."3

Another normative movement which should have attention at this point is that of the Anabaptists, commonly known as the Anabaptist revolt of the sixteenth century. "In an im-

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1. Schaff: Hist. of the Chr. Church, Vol. 5, p. 2
2. Neander: p. 92
portant sense the Anti-pedobaptist movement was little more than a consistent carrying-out of the principles that lay at the basis of Lutheranism and Zwinglianism, both of which, repudiating tradition and all human authority, made the Bible the only rule of faith and practice and aimed at the restoration of evangelical Christianity in its primitive and unadulterated form.¹ "A scientific classification of the radical evangelicals of the sixteenth century that were popularly known as "Anabaptists," "Cata baptismists," or "Baptists" ("Wiedertaufer," "Wiedertaufers," "Täufer," "rebaptizers," "perverters of baptism," and "baptizers," the latter with the implication of laying undue stress on believers' baptism), is hedged about with difficulties.

These terms of reproach were applied by Lutherans, Zwinglians, and Catholics to all radicals indiscriminately who would own allegiance to none of these communions, repudiated any sort of connection with Church and State, and rejected infant baptism as unscriptural, inconsistent with their ideas of the purpose and significance of the ordinance, and radically opposed to their conceptions of the church as made up exclusively of baptized believers voluntarily associated for mutual edification and the propagation of the Gospel."²

The Anabaptist movement in general history has reference to those, "denying the validity of infant baptism.³ They aimed at restoring what they claimed to have been primitive Christianity. This restoration included the rejection

² Ibid, p. 149f.
³ The Catholic Encyc. Vol. 1, p. 445
of oaths and capital punishment and the abstention from the exercise of magistracy." \(^1\) It is quite evident that the above principle was a revolt against human authority. In the case of capital punishment and oaths the question involved is, who has the authority to punish or to hear an oath? Their answer was, "No man or group of men", therefore their abstention from the exercise of magistracy.

Of course the principle which underlies the above stand is that of the absolute authority of the Holy Scriptures. "In a more consistent manner than the majority of Protestant reformers, they maintained the absolute supremacy and sole efficiency of the canonical Scriptures as a norm of faith." \(^2\) The way by which they arrived at the correct interpretation of the Scripture must have been by the common intelligence. While they held to the Protestant principle of private interpretation, it was carried out only by the most extreme advocates. "Private interpretation of the Scriptures, and inward teaching by the Holy Ghost could be claimed by an individual and lead to the extreme Anabaptist views." \(^3\) The source of the above quotations would brand them fairly conservative in their representation of the success of the Anabaptists in living their principles. Therefore one would naturally conclude that, since they maintained the absolute supremacy and sole efficiency of the canonical Scriptures as a norm of faith and since those who followed the Protestant principles of

\(^1\) The Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 1, p. 445  
\(^2\) Ibid  
\(^3\) Ibid
private interpretation and special revelation were only the extremes there must have been a factor involved which was neither Roman nor Protestant. This factor could have been none other than the common mind. They were willing to let the Scriptures speak for themselves and declare the revelation of God.

Further evidence of the above fact is seen in their rejection of certain other human doctrines. "Infant baptism and the Lutheran doctrine of Justification by faith alone were rejected as without scriptural warrant." This position was not reached either by private interpretation or by special revelation of the Holy Spirit, because it rests upon a mutual agreement concerning the content of the text of Scripture. When any group denies the validity of a human dogma they are always charged with placing too much emphasis upon that particular teaching. As in the present century the Protestant Denominations have laid a blanket charge against all immersionist groups. The universal declaration is that they place too much stress upon the doctrine, but the truth is to be found in just the opposite, as is shown from a non-sectarian source. The Anabaptists, "were charged with laying an over-emphasis on baptism; but as a matter of fact, its place in their scheme was not so important as in that of Luther. They insisted on believers' baptism, because they regarded it as Scriptural, and necessary to the purity of

the Church; Luther insisted on infant baptism because he regarded it as necessary to the salvation of the individual. They believed that infants dying in infancy are saved without the necessity of baptism.¹

By permitting the Bible to interpret itself to the common intelligence of the group the Anabaptists arrived at another truth far in advance of their age. "Some of them, at least, asserted the superior authority and sanctity of the N. T. over the O. T. as the fuller, clearer revelation of God, thus approximating to the modern view of a progressive revelation. Prister Meier says: 'I obey that in the Old Testament which I find confirmed in the New'.²
SUMMARY

We have been unable to include all of the normative movements of the Christian era, but only those representative of the application of the common mind. Every generation has had its Christians who have been begotten of water and of the Spirit of God as it worked through the Word. To these the Scriptures have spoken a message undiluted by human dogmas and free from human authority.

In this chapter there are certain facts which we desire to summarize. First, it is the stream of faithful Christians who have preserved the norm through troubled eras. Second, there were certain normative movements which arose only when human imposition threatened the Word of God. Third, Gallicanism dethroned the Papacy and abolished absolutism to a marked degree. Fourth, Anabaptist groups carried the principle of Protestantism into actual practice by actually taking the New Testament as a norm of faith. In this way the road to a clearer stand upon the Bible, and the Bible alone, was paved, as the Scriptures were permitted more liberty to speak their language and thus to deliver their universal message.

In chapter...
The restoration movement of the nineteenth century is generally conceded to be a concerted effort, on the part of Christians in the Middle West, to restore the Christianity of the New Testament. Aside from the great need of the immigrants, which took the form of spiritual and moral depravity, there had been a growing influence of the Scriptures. This, we believe, was due in part to the school of rationalistic thought which arose in the latter part of the seventeenth century and continues to the present time. Its influence is not in the field of interpretation, in which it so often specialized, but rather in the fact that it, like the Renaissance, brought the Scriptures into more widespread attention.

The old school of rationalism had perhaps more bad influence than good, but its rise may be accounted for in the same way as that of the Renaissance, namely by observing its work. No one will dispute the fact of ignorance in the Middle Ages, and how might that be more readily shown than by the scholars in every field applying themselves to new learning? Now observing the work of the rationalists we see a certain reaction against stagnant creedal Christianity that had deteriorated almost to dogmatic superstition. For what is the idea of the literal Bible, and the application of Old Testament
forms to the Christian life, more than superstition and misinformation? We do not intend to uphold this rationalism in any way, but it teaches us that one can be as sincerely wrong as he can sincerely right. In other words, sincerity is not the whole test as the Scriptures reveal.

In the face of a rationalistic and creedal Christianity, rationalism presented an appeal to truth. Christian Wolff, disciple of Leibnitz, and one of the forerunners of the movement, said, "To make philosophical truth as self-evident and incontrovertible as mathematical." The demonstrative implications, and later results were not good, but like the Renaissance of an earlier century it served to liberate human thought by applying the mind to history and nature. In this latter respect it was good.

The new rationalism of the nineteenth century, a contemporary of the restoration movement, also basted a bad influence as far as Scripture interpretation is concerned. Strauss, "Insisting that the gospel narratives are based upon myths that grew up in the church which in some way had come to idealize a man named Jesus, utterly denied the historical character of the Gospels and discredited Christianity as a supernatural religion." This of course would give the church credit for creating the Scriptures of the New Testament which is false. With only a small amount of reflection one may see that it was rather the message of the New Testament

1. cf. Acts, 10:3; also Paul conscientiously persecuting the church.
3. Ibid., p. 559
that created the Church. The chief point which we are trying
to make is found in the later developments of the school of
rationalism, namely, that of higher criticism, headed by
F. C. Baur. Aside from all the harm which it did, there are
two or three ways in which it aided the restoration movement.
"Among the good results that have followed have been the con-
firmation of the historical character of the New Testament
writings, a minuteness in the study of their contents that
might not otherwise have found place, and concentration of
attention on the life of Christ to an extent unexampled in
past ages." 1 Another good result is that of the examination
of Jewish literature.

The three good results helped in two ways, first, by
bringing more attention to bear upon the Scriptures. We
have already shown how the contemporary common sense philos-
ophy tested its principles in addition to the requirement
that they be universally believed; it was required that their
practical influence should extend even to those individuals
who affect to dispute their authority. The thought here is
that the Word revealed in the Scripture has influenced even
the scholars who have been involved in criticism. The chief
thing is that the gospel has been brought to light, regardless
of whether the end has or has not justified the means. The
second good result is that of bringing light upon the litera-
ture of the Old Testament, and centering attention upon the
life of Christ. This undoubtedly has served to distinguish
between the testaments.

We shall leave the school of rationalism to its own meanderings since we are interested in it only so far as it serves to propagate the Scriptures. As for injury to the message revealed in the Book there has been none. If perchance it could not stand all the tests to which men could put it, then it would be false. Our interest in the schools of criticism is only to see how they have exposed a divine truth which has power to free the human race from sin.

The restoration movement is an effort to apply the Scriptures to human life by restoring the Christianity of the New Testament. Our purpose here is to show its method of Scripture interpretation as it applied to the end in view. Two more sources of influence must be considered. First, the schooling of the Campbells, and second, the divided Protestantism of their day. They inherited the right to a divided church, being members of the Old-light, Antiburgher, Seceder, Presbyterian of the Irish branch of the Church of Scotland. There is little wonder that upon examination of the Scriptures they discovered the sin of schism in the body of Christ. They came to realize that although the Bible was the religion of Protestants there were countless interpretations of it as to the way in which men might be saved. The solution, to them, lay within the field of interpretation: "All the differences in religious faith, opinion, and sentiment, amongst those who acknowledge the Bible, are occasioned by false principles of interpretation, or by misapplication of the true principles. —

Were all students of the Bible taught to apply the same
rules of interpretation to its pages, there would be a greater uniformity in opinion and sentiment than ever resulted from the simple adoption of any written creed." 1

With the contemporary problem weighing upon them they merely applied their training to the Scripture and actually formulated the principle of Scripture interpretation which we have observed in other periods of history. The Campbells were graduates of the Common Sense school of philosophy in Scotland. Thomas Reid and others of that school appealed to common sense as a criterion of Truth. In defining the common mind we noted that all men with whom we can transact business are possessed of a sufficient amount of intelligence to make them subjects of law and government, and to render them capable of managing their own business. To this idea of common sense the terms natural light and reason were also applied. 2

Common sense, or natural light, they found to be an powerful instrument when applied to the Scripture. In the last analysis it was nothing more or less than allowing the Scriptures to interpret themselves to the open mind of man. "God has spoken by men, to men, for men. The language of the Bible is then human language. It is, therefore to be examined by the same rules which are applicable to the language of any other book, and to be understood according to the true and proper meaning of the words, in their current acceptation, at the times and in the places in which they were originally written or translated. — As, then there is no divine dictionary,

grammars, or special rules of interpretation for the Bible, then that Book, to be understood, must be submitted to the common dictionary, grammar, and rules of the language in which it was written. 1

The Common Sense philosophy of the Scotch school was not a new invention. The criterion which it applied to truth, at least in its general meaning, was known to the Greek Philosophers of ancient times. In fact Reid and Stewart drew upon their writings. "These things are to be regarded as first truths, the credit of which is not derived from other truths, but is inherent in themselves. As for probable truths, they are of such as are admitted by all men, or by wise men; and among these last, either by all the wise, or by the generality of the wise, or by such of the wise as are of the highest authority."2 Herein lies the conception of the common mind as expressed by Aristotle, which would apply in determining truth in any realm of human thought. "Reid, like Plato could see no possibility of people reasoning together at all unless their unity of thought was predicated upon the unity of the divine mind, through fellowship with which we are all enabled to think together. Unless there is a common mind, common reason, or common sense in which we share and through which we think together even Hume himself would not be able to get his destructive ideas across to the rest of us."3

According to the above definition of a first truth the Gospel message would at once qualify as such. It is the truth divinely revealed, the credit of which is not derived from other truths. The record of this truth is the New Testament, consequently the way to conceive it is by an appeal to the common mind.

The restoration of Christianity to its pristine order of faith and practice leads immediately to the New Testament. In this regard, and this only, it adopted the principle of Protestantism as advocated by Chillingworth. The design of the Declaration and Address of Thomas Campbell was to establish the church on New Testament doctrine and life. Its propositions, "were merely designed to open the way, that we may come fairly and firmly to original ground upon clear and certain premises, and take up things just as the Apostles left them, that thus, disentangled from the accreting embarrassments of intervening ages, we may stand with evidence upon the same ground on which the Church stood at the beginning." In commenting upon this effort Richardson says, "Never before had any reformer taken distinctly such ground as this. Never before had any one presumed to pass over so lightly the authorities and usages and decisions of so many intervening centuries—-to ascend at once to the pure fountain of truth, and to neglect and disregard, as though they never had been, the decrees of Popes, Councils, Synods.

and Assemblies. Campbell here expresses his profound trust in the Holy Scriptures while he still clung to his Presbyterian teaching. Thus he advances beyond his contemporaries in his willingness to apply the Bible as the religion of Protestants.

Alexander Campbell later wrote, "There is an intellectual and a moral universe as clearly bounded as the system of material nature. Man belongs to the whole three. He is an animal, intellectual, and moral being. Sense is his guide in nature, faith in religion, reason in both. The Bible contemplates man primarily in his spiritual and eternal relations. -- The Bible is to the intellectual and moral world of man what the sun is to the planets in our system--the fountain and source of light and life, spiritual and eternal. There is not a spiritual idea in the whole human race that is not drawn from the Bible. As soon will the philosopher find an independent sunbeam in nature, as the theologian a spiritual conception in man, independent of The One Best Book."

To those of the restoration plea there was nothing divine about the Bible except its message. In every other particular it was conceived to be as any other book. Others had thought of the Book as awe inspiring and beyond approach except by a few consecrated men among God's elect. It was to the masses a book entirely hidden. But to the Campbells it was the word of God revealing himself to sinners through Christ, hence, if Christ came to save sinners, they ought to

1. Campbell: Christian System, p. 3
be able to receive his message lest he had died in vain.

"The words of the Bible contain all the ideas in it. These words, when rightly understood, and the ideas are clearly perceived. The words and sentences of the Bible are to be translated, interpreted, and understood according to the same code of laws and principles of interpretation by which other ancient writings are translated and understood; for, if God spoke to man in his own language, he spoke as one person converses with another—in the fair, stipulated, and well-established meaning of the terms. This is essential to its character, as a revelation of God; otherwise it would be no revelation, but would always require a class of inspired men to unfold and reveal its true sense to mankind."

There are certain rules by which the content of any literature can be determined. We shall here include seven such rules as Campbell deemed necessary to adequately understand divine revelation. These are only in their abbreviated form.

"Rule 1. On opening any book in the sacred Scriptures, consider first the historical circumstances of the book. These are the order, the title, the author, the date, the place, and the occasion of it.

Rule 2. In examining the contents of any book, as respects precepts, promises, exhortations, etc., observe who it is that speaks, and under what dispensation he officiates. Is he a Patriarch, a Jew, or a Christian? Consider also the persons addressed, their prejudices, character, and religious relations.

Rule 3. To understand the meaning of what is commanded, promissed, taught, etc., the same philological principles, deduced from the nature of the language, or the same laws of interpretation which are applied to the language of other books, are to be applied to the language of the Bible.

1. Campbell: Christian System, p. 3
2. Ibid, p. 3f. Also in his other writings
Rule 4. Common usage, which can only be ascertained by testimony, must always decide the meaning of any word which has but one signification; but when words have, according to testimony, (i.e., the Dictionary,) more than one, whether literal or figurative, the scope, the context, or parallel passages must decide the meaning; for if common usage fail, the design of the writer, the context, and parallel passages fail, there can be no certainty in the interpretation of language. Understanding it has made the Bible practically a

Rule 5. In all tropical languages ascertain the point of resemblance, and judge the nature of the trope, and its kind, from the point of resemblance.

Rule 6. In the interpretation of symbols, types, allegories and parables, this rule is supreme: Ascertain the point to be illustrated; for comparison is never to be extended beyond that point - to all the attributes, qualities, or circumstances of the symbol, type, allegory, or parable.

Rule 7. We must come within understanding distance.

In regard to this last rule a further statement should be made. We have spoken of the common mind as being that possessed by all intelligent, responsible people. This mind can determine what the Scripture says by applying our reason to it. However, there is an attitude which the mind must possess in order to grasp God's revelation. This is expressed in the seventh rule above. "There is a distance which is properly called the speaking distance, or the hearing distance; beyond which the voice reaches not, and the ears hear not. To hear another, we must come within that circle which the voice audibly fills." -- The moral soundness of vision consists in having the eyes of understanding, fixed solely on God himself. -- It is sometimes called a single eye because it looks for one thing supremely. -- Humility of mind, or what is in effect the same, contempts for all earth-born pre-eminence, prepares the mind for the reception of this light; or; what
is virtually the same, opens the ears to hear the voice of God. 1 and we would learn as we learn to keep a

The right of private interpretation had already reaped an abundance of dissent. Instead of opening the Scripture to human understanding, it had made the Bible practically a closed book. "Does not every sect suppose that from all others the true meaning of the scriptures is his! The secret cause of this ignorance is in the general presumption that the Bible is not to be submitted to all the natural and common rules of interpretation to which all other books in the world are to be subjected." 2 As we have already indicated, the school of Rationalism, although fraught with evils, forced an exposition of the Scriptures. It accustomed people to seeing the book verbally torn asunder, thus affording the opportunity for Christian scholars to point out its content.

The Bible, when subjected to the common and natural rules referred to above, will certainly reveal to men the message which God meant to convey through His Son. As to believing or practicing what it says, that is a different matter. The primary disagreement of men through the centuries is not in the matter of what the Scriptures say, but rather as to their final authority in matters of faith and practice. The use of the common mind presupposes absolute trust in their divine authority.

The usual objection to the common mind on the part of Protestants is that it destroys their freedom of conscience.

2. M. H. 1830, p. 118
Of course the movement itself is a revolt against human authority, and one would naturally expect them to keep a constant vigil over their hard earned freedom. But Campbell himself was thoroughly Protestant in this particular, that is, he claimed allegiance to no man. He was very careful, however, to distinguish between divine and human authority. He urges all to, "Resume that precious, dear-bought liberty from subjection to any authority but his own in matters of religion." His reference here is to human authority. In no case did he ever advocate that this should replace the authority which Christ claims over his own.

Protestants had made numerous efforts to collect a consensus of private judgement and formulate it into a creed. By this method the individual judgement was indeed lost, for not only matters of faith, but those of opinion were included, thereby forcing creedal authority, and casting all into a denominational mold. The common mind was presented to the Protestant problem as, "A universal reason which makes possible unity of thought on the part of individuals. This common reason, or common mind, when applied to the Scriptures, would necessarily yield the same interpretation and in this way guarantee unity of thought and action."

When the Bible is once accepted as divine revelation, it becomes the very essence of the book that it can be read by men. In apply the same rules to it as to any other one acknowledges it to be an intelligible as any other literature.

1. Richardson: Memoirs, Vol. 1, p. 256
2. Merchemen: Christian Union Overture, p. 44
and as readable. Campbell suggests three ways of determining the meaning of a word, regardless of where it may be found. First, by using a dictionary where various testimony is brought to bear upon its meaning. Second, by its usage, and by the context in which it is used. Third, by observing the purpose of the speaker in parallel passages. By these rules the Scriptures may be opened to the ordinary intelligence without the aid of prophet or priest.

As a result of Thomas Campbell’s conviction that the Scriptures were the absolute authority in regard to the Christian life he began to advocate some anti-denominational views. "While engaged in Washington County in his regular ministration among the churches some suspicions began to arise in the minds of his ministerial brethren that he was disposed to relax too much the rigidity of their ecclesiastical rules, and to cherish for other denominations feelings of fraternity and respect in which they could not share." In this regard his "pleasings in behalf of Christian liberty and fraternity were in vain and his appeals to the Bible were disregarded."

Out of this unfortunate clash with the leaders of the denomination of which he was a member came the famous Declaration and Address. "Its sole purpose was to promote 'simple Evangelical Christianity', and for this end resolve to countenance and support such ministers, and such only as exhibited manifest conformity to the original standard, in conversation,

2. Richardson: Memoirs, Vol. 1, p. 223
3. Ibid., p. 225
4. For the entire text, cf. Memoirs of Christian Union Overture
doctrine, zeal, and diligence; such as practiced that simple, original form of Christianity expressly exhibited upon the sacred page; without inculcating anything of human authority, of private opinion or of inventions of men, as having any place in the constitution, faith or worship of the Christian Church; or anything as a matter of Christian faith or duty for which there cannot be expressly produced a 'thus saith the Lord,' either in expressed terms, or by approved precedent.

With the Declaration and Address as a starting point, the restoration movement adopted certain watchwords which emphasize their absolute reliance upon the Scriptures as interpreted by the common mind. Early in the movement Thomas Campbell said, "I dare not venture to trust my own understanding so far as to take upon me to teach anything as a matter of faith or duty but what is clearly expressly taught and enjoined by divine authority." Accordingly the principle was adopted, "where the Scriptures speak, we speak in matters of faith, but where the Scriptures are silent we are silent! "It was from the moment when these significant words were uttered and accepted that the more intelligent ever afterward dated the formal and actual commencement of the Reformation."

There are two parts to the above watchword which are equally important. Speaking where the Scriptures speak is

1. Leresheer: Christian Union Overture, p. 24
3. Ibid, p. 237
one thing to be achieved, that is to stand firm upon New Testament doctrine in matters of faith and obedience, but
it is quite another matter to keep quiet with the Scriptures, that is to require nothing as terms of Christian fellowship that is not taught in the Scriptures either by express command or divinely approved precedent of the Apostles. In this latter phase of the principle, the right of private judgement is truly developed. This right itself is good, even though it may be Protestant, but it is falsely applied when extended to the realm of Scripture interpretation. Where the Scriptures are silent in matters of Christian faith and practice, the Campbells were strict advocates of liberty of opinion. Out of this concept arose another one very similar in content, namely, 'The New Testament, and the New Testament alone is the only norm of Christian faith and practice'. Their conception of private judgement is seen in the following quotation: "Why circulate the Bible? Because it is the Book of God. Why circulate it without note or comment? Because private judgment is the right and duty of man."¹

The importance of keeping silent with the Scriptures is evident from the principles set forth in the preamble of the constitution of the Association of Washington. "Judgement rests with the individual; therefore we must think and act for ourselves; see with our own eyes; take all our measures directly from the Divine standard. The Divine word is equally binding upon all, so all lie under an equal obligation to be

¹. M.H. 1853 Campbell and Pendleton, Co-editors, p. 220
bound by it, and it alone, and not by any human interpretation of it. We desire rest from party spirit, and adopt such measures as would give rest to all our brethren through all the Churches as would restore unity, peace and purity to the whole church of God."

While he was still a Presbyterian trying to defend himself against the accusations of his brethren, Thomas Campbell said, "For what error or immorality ought I to be rejected, except it be that I refuse to acknowledge as obligatory upon myself, or to impose upon others, anything as of Divine obligation for which I cannot produce a 'thus saith the Lord'? This, I am sure, I can do, while I keep by his own word, but not quite so sure when I substitute my own meaning or opinion, or that of others, instead thereof."  

The above principle was pronounced un sound by a certain Mr. Riddle, a Presbyterian. Speaking to Campbell he said, "These words, (A thus saith the Lord for every matter of faith and duty), however plausible in appearance are not sound. For if you follow these out you must become a Baptist." "Why, sir," said Alexander, "Is there in the Scripture no precept for infant baptism?" "Not one sir," replied the Doctor." This particular fact came to the conviction of both father and son and forthwith they accepted the believer's immersion of the New Testament as the only Christian baptism. Their position was reached only after ordering all the treatises available on the subject of baptism in order to find out the

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2. Ibid, p. 296, 226
3. Ibid, p. 250
consensus of belief concerning the meaning of the text. This is a true example of the use of the common mind.

It is not so difficult to master a principle and proclaim it as a rule for others to follow. The true test comes in the personal application. The Campbells, along with many of their Presbyterian brethren, had already rejected their infant baptism by accepting immersion. But when Alexander's first child was born, the subject of infant sprinkling was opened to him in a new way. In order to settle the question once for all he again consulted all available literature to find the true meaning of the words used in the New Testament text. Here again is the application of the common mind. As a result he found that neither sprinkling, nor the sprinkling of infants was enjoined or practiced by the Apostles. Therefore he rejected it as unchristian, since the immersion of the Scriptures was instituted for the remission of sins, and nowhere was it indicated that infants were sinners.

As in the subject of baptism so in all matters pertaining to the Christian life they consulted the best authorities available to determine exactly what the Scriptures said. This is in perfect keeping with the idea of the common mind which we have been tracing through the centuries.

When the principle of the common mind is applied to the Scriptures the resultant faith is neither Roman Catholic nor Protestant in its entirety; since it antedates both systems. It is Catholic, however, in the true sense of the term. In a dialogue Mr. Campbell is quoted as saying, "I have often
been called a heretic; but most undeservedly, as I think and as you would think, methinks, if you would but hear me. I am a Catholic, not in the papistical sense, but in the true sense of the word. I preach, teach and practice nothing in the name of the Lord, that is not universally admitted as an article in the Christian Faith.1 When asked about the peculiar practice of immersion, only be replied that, "All Christendom, Catholic and Protestant, agree that such an immersion is baptism. All Christians say that what I practice is Christian immersion; but only a part agree with you."2

"It is both interesting and striking to note that the belief of the Campbells in the authority of the common mind is in reality the Protestant doctrine of infallibility as opposed to the Catholic doctrine of the inerrancy of the Vatican. Catholic Modernists, like Loisy and Tyrrell, claim that Roman dogma means the same at bottom as the Protestant. In other words, the Vatican ought to represent the collective mind of the Church as a whole instead of the views of a smaller coterie or of a single individual, the Pope. Father Tyrrell, in his recently published Letters, expresses this interpretation again and again. The Pope, he says, is simply the spokesman of the united sentiment of the Church. Since this sentiment speaks the voice of the common mind of Catholic Christendom, it is as nearly infallible as is possible for human beings."

1. M. H. 1832, Vol. 1, p. 404f
2.
we can ask for no greater degree of inerrancy. Tyrrell's view, it will be observed, is substantially the same as that of Thomas Campbell with the exception that the latter would not have approved of the Catholic form of expression. Still, if the Vatican actually embodied the common mind of Christendom as a whole, the Campbells, no doubt, would have accepted its interpretations. Of course as Tyrrell is regretfully forced to admit, the Vatican does not even reflect the common mind of Catholic Christendom. The best proof of this fact is found in the excommunication of the Modernists by the papal decree. Tyrrell himself was not allowed to be buried in consecrated ground and his doctrines were put on the Index. Nevertheless, the striking confirmation of the underlying philosophy of the Campbells by the brilliant protagonists of Roman Catholic Modernism is exceedingly significant. If the Vatican should ever approach the doctrine of infallibility urged by Tyrrell and Loisy, it will come desperately close to furnishing a basis for union upon which all Christians can stand.\footnote{1. Kershner: Christian Union Overture. p. 79f}
SUMMARY

We have noted how the restoration movement was effected by various factors. The Rationalists brought more emphasis to bear upon the Scriptures, by their rash criticisms and adverse doctrines. The Common Sense school of philosophy and the divided condition of the church added greatly to the weight of influence causing the Campbells to take the stand which they did.

Absolute authority of the Scriptures, as opposed to human authority stressed by Roman Catholics and practised by Protestants, was taken as essential to the Christian faith. As a consequence the watchwords of the reformation were designed to exalt the Scriptures. This section was

The idea of the common mind in the interpretation of Scripture was developed fully in the nineteenth century, and applied by the Restorationists as never before in the history of Christianity.

The intelligent will only know what the ten
CONCLUSION

From the foregoing discussion the following points are evident:

1. That there is a collective reason among men which carries them farther in civilization than 'the flashlight program of individual genius'.

2. It was to this common reason that God appealed when he revealed himself to the world through that man whom he appointed, even Jesus Christ. Herein lies the challenge of

3. The canonical Scriptures were selected from a large field of literature, as the divinely inspired Books declaring God's message to the world. This selection was made by means of the common intelligence to which God appealed.

4. The Gospel has never, in nineteen centuries, been without its true advocates who comprise that group among the intelligent which is known as the Faithful. They not only know what the text declares, but are partakers of its benefits.

5. By virtue of its historical achievement the common mind may still be trusted to correctly interpret the Scriptures.
The appearance of the Restoration movement upon the stage of Christian history marks the beginning of a new era. "The days of divinely rational authority are yet to come." These words were written less than two decades ago. Meanwhile the denominational cry for unity has grown in volume, while the emphasis upon doctrine has constantly receded. This might be held by some to indicate that Christianity no longer has an appeal to men, but to us it means that both Romanism and Protestantism are weakening, especially the latter. The human mind seems to be more open to the Scriptures at the present time than ever before in the history of the Church. Herein lies the challenge of the Gospel which is still the power of God unto salvation to all who believe.

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