

missionary work done before it had any Bible at all.

2. 'The whole of the New Testament came into existence after the Church had been planted.'

3. 'In the work of propagandism, the Bible was no part of the machinery; the notion of a missionary as a man who goes to the heathen with a Bible in his hand to teach them was inconceivable to an early Christian.'

4. 'There quickly grew up an oral Gospel (which was) long preserved in the Church and was sufficient for its needs. Even after it took written shapes it was generations before it superseded the old method of promulgation.'

5. 'It must not be conceived that these various documents (the books of the New Testament) came at once into circulation and use. They did not do so for more than a hundred years.'

6. 'The idea of gathering them into a book did not for a long time occur to any body.'

7. 'Each little M.S. (of a N.T. book) was the treasure of some particular church and was jealously guarded. It was passed about among a few reverent hands, and when it had become worn and creased was locked up among the monuments. To make copies was a tedious and expensive business which few of the poor churches could bear. The books, so made, if their contents were considerable, were very bulky affairs. So late as the time of Constantine; when fifty copies of the New Testament were made to the Imperial order, it required two government wagons with six yoke of oxen each to transport them from Cæsarea to Constantinople.'

8. 'The oldest list extant of the books of the New Testament was made in A.D. 170 and it is incomplete. It includes the four gospels, 13 of St. Paul's Epistles, two of St. John and St. Jude.'

9. 'But the time came when the Church must decide what books were 'sacred' and what ones were not. In the fury of persecution, it became the common test of the Christian to try if he would give up his 'Scripture' to be burned. Under stress of this peril the question had to be determined what books one might innocently give up, and which ones must be held on to at the cost of his life. This was finally settled by the Council of Carthage A.D. 397-300 years after the last of them had been written,—and from that day until now the Church has never called in question the authenticity of the 'New Covenant.'

Let me ask your readers to consider how serious a statement this is. The Church—as established, its organization complete and the greater part of its missionary work done before it had any Bible at all, the whole of the New Testament Canon having come into existence after the Church was planted. In the propagation of the Gospel, the Bible was no part of the machinery; to an early Christian, the notion of a missionary as a man who goes to the heathen with a Bible in his hand to instruct them was inconceivable. The oral gospel was sufficient for the Church's need, and it was generations before the written Gospel superseded it; in fact the Books of the New Testament did not come into circulation (these are my capitals) for more than a hundred years after they were written. The idea of gathering them into a book did not for a long time occur to anyone. Few of the poorer churches were supplied with copies of any of the books. The first serious attempt to separate the inspired books from the apocryphal was at the time of the Diocletian persecution, A.D. 303; and what were the books of the New Testament was only finally settled by the Council of Carthage A.D. 397, three hundred years after the last of the books was written.

Can it be reasonably disputed that this statement does seriously disparage the position of authority which the Scripture held in the primitive Church? There is no concealment about the impression desired to be made; it is put forward candidly enough; it is, that the Holy Scriptures cannot be of such importance and authority as 'Protestant Christianity' (the writer should have said 'Anglican Christianity') makes them to be, since the Church got on for so long a time very well without them. Moreover, the Article tells us, that the Church of the fourth—the very end of the fourth century literally 'made the New Testament'; for down to that time the Christian people were quite at sea as to what were and what were not inspired books; then the Church stepped in with her authority, and by a decree of a Council settled the matter once for all—gave to the Scriptures by her decree the authority, whatever it is, which they have.

Now quite apart from any criticism of these details (all of which I have demonstrated to be erroneous, and to these disproofs no answer has been attempted). I am prepared to maintain that this view of the *origines* of the New Testament is both injurious to the Holy Scriptures, and, taken as a whole, conveys an impression entirely erroneous. The impression it leaves of the place which the Holy Scriptures occupied in the early Church is not true to fact, and does not represent the mind of the Catholic Church of those early ages, or indeed of any age until the Roman apostasy.

Of course, the complete proof of these assertions is too large for your space; but consider the force of these facts, which will not be challenged: 1. The pains taken by St. Paul to secure the immediate circulation of his letters, in connection with the evidence which his own writings supply of the close intercommunion of all even the most widely separated churches of his day: 2. The wide range of country to which St. Peter addresses his letters, and through which of course they were at once dispersed—side by side with the incidental notice he supplies that his readers were already in possession of St. Paul's letters, and that they were accepted throughout the Church as inspired Scripture: 3. The evidence borne by the two great Versions, the Syriac and the Latin,—each of them a collected New Testament,—to the early and universal circulation of the books throughout the Church; the Syriac version made in Palestine within the Apostolic age, revised and completed shortly after: the Latin version made coincidentally with the earliest introduction of Christianity into North Africa; 'received definite shape before, publicly revised at latest not long after the middle of the second century,' (and if the New Testament was thus early collected into a book and translated for church use in Syriac and Africa, much more early must it have been so collected and used in the churches which read it in the original Greek): 4. The fact recorded by Eusebius, that the missionaries to the heathen in the time of Trajan (A.D. 98 to 117) carried with them the written Gospels and delivered them to their converts, 'which falls in (says Canon Westcott) with the traditions which affirm that the preaching of Christianity was even in the earliest times accompanied by the circulation of written Gospels.' 5. The fact, finally, that the earliest heretics, including Simon Magus himself, used and argued from the New Testament books, showing the recognized position and authority which the New Testament held even at this very early period in the Church. These facts alone, taken together, form a body of evidence entirely inconsistent with the statement made in the article as to the position occupied by the Christian Scriptures 'for generations,' as to their non-circulation 'for more than a hundred years' and as to their non use in the propagation of the Gospel in the early days.

With your permission, I will consider the details of my critic's criticisms in your next issue.

HENRY ROE,
Bishop's College, Lennoxville, 5th March, 1890.

THE AGE FOR CONFIRMATION.

SIR,—In your brief report of the able paper read before the Diocesan Sunday school Association in Montreal by Ven. Archbishop Roe, on February 17, the last clause reads: "He deprecated the growing tendency of presenting candidates to the Bishop at too young an age, before their minds were sufficiently sound to be impressed with the truths they should receive at that period." Now, Sir, I think that any tendency among the instructors of our children, to present at a younger age than has been customary for many years past, is not to be deprecated but rather to be commended.

The tendency to postpone confirmation of a child of God, to years which are neither those of innocent childhood nor self-conscious adolescence, was born of want of due appreciation of the necessity of Confirmation as a principle of doctrine and misconception of the chief object of the Sacrament of Confirmation. Bishops used to visit for Confirmation at intervals of as long as three or four years. Hence if a child was thirteen and missed Confirmation then the rite was postponed till sixteen. Undue stress was laid upon the churches addendum to the principle of Confirmation, which is the assumption of the Christian vows made by surety in infancy, and the first object of the Rite, viz., the strengthening of the spiritual life by the gift of the Holy Ghost, was consequently put into the shade. If we look for authority as to the most convenient (I use the word in its ecclesiastical sense) age for Confirmation, we shall find it to favor that age which has too long been regarded as miniature; I mean about say twelve years or even younger.

The Prayer Book clearly states that the child not the young man or woman, shall be brought, not shall come, to the Bishop to be confirmed by him, not to confirm his vows, so soon, not long after, he shall be able to say The Creed, The Lord's Prayer, and The Ten Commandments, and be otherwise instructed in the Church Catechism.

There are no children of the Church, who have had any pains taken in their Christian instruction, but can fulfil these conditions before the age of twelve years.

Confirmation is confessedly, by Apostolic authority, a *principium* of the Doctrine of Christ; it is not as is The Holy Eucharist, a summit of perfection in the Christian life; and it is a foundation on which the Church has placed the due reception of the Sacrament of The Lord's Supper. The argument that a child is too young for Confirmation, because unable to understand as fully as the staid adult, that Rite and what it involves, is the parallel argument to that on which Anti-pædo, Baptists, deny the Sacrament of Baptism to infants. As a matter of fact a child of twelve is more receptive of the spiritual appreciation of the love of Christ, than he will generally prove to be when the environments of sinful companions and their influence, have begun at the age of fifteen years to steel the heart, by the entrance of worldliness, against the softening influence of Gospel truths.

The Prayer Book lays down therefore simple conditions which are practical to be fulfilled by the young children. Why should we be wiser than the Church, and interpose barriers which she has not set up?

Can our children be too young to serve the Lord, or too young to be fitting recipients of the graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit?

Let us now look around and see if the fruits of the postponement of the Confirmation of our children have been such as to commend its continuance. Where are our Church children today? Thousands who could have been brought to Confirmation at the age of twelve have refused to come when a few years more have found them at the age, when puberty has in its first flash of carnal influence, made them impatient of that loving control which the Church

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