

The Authority of Scripture: Medieval Period

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The period we cover in this paper extends from the end of the patristic period, namely, from the time of the death of St Gregory (604) and St Isidore (636) in the west, and that of St John Damascene (749) in the East, to the time of the Reformation (1517).

The Basic Biblical Orientation of the Medieval Period

Biblical Fundamentalism

The men of the Middle Ages lived in the Bible and by the Bible. They believed that the Book of Scripture could be read in the light of what was written in the book of the world and the book of the soul. For them the Book of Scripture alone was capable of bringing out the full significance of man and his world. The world, man, salvation, the communion of saints formed a harmonious whole, all of them the work of the same divine wisdom. All of them formed a hierarchy with Scripture at its summit. There was a desire to bring all this together into a single work of knowledge, expression and praise. The Encyclopaedic programme of the twelfth century and the Summas are monuments of it. There was a strong tendency to regulate everything according to the sacred text. Thus we see in the Middle Ages a kind of biblical fundamentalism, which has taken different forms.¹

Everything was found in Scripture. Such a view was facilitated by the method of interpretation which included the use of symbolism, obligingly accommodating to all needs. It was quite common to extend the field of application of a statement by reasoned argument. It was looked upon as something normal, and not as overstepping the limits of the original statement.²

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¹ Jerusalem is the geographical centre of the world because 'operatus est salutem in medio terrae' (Ps. 74 (73):12); the monastic rule of not spitting or clearing one's nostrils in front of one in choir, because 'in conspectu angelorum psallam tibi' (Ps. 138 (137): 1), etc. are a few examples of it. For other examples of this kind—cf. F. Kropatscheck *Das Schriftprinzip der Lutherischen Kirche*, 1. *Die Vorgeschichte. Das Erbe des Mittelalters*. Leipzig, 1904, p. 7.

² The author who, at the beginning of the 12th century composed the 'De Assumptione B. Mariae Virginis', put under the name of St Augustine C. 1 (PL, 40, 1143-44) does not claim for himself 'tradition', but an invention of the 'mysticus intellectus' above and beyond the 'sola littera' by the (Christian) 'ratio'.

It was generally held that the Scripture contained all the truths of faith necessary for salvation. If a question was put concerning a non-scriptural doctrinal formulation, attempts were made to provide some scriptural reference, which was at least equivalent or indirect. In the Carolingian period, Rabanus Maurus wrote: 'Fundamentum, status et perfectio prudentiae, scientia est Scripturarum' for, 'quidquid veri a quocumque reperitur, a veritate verum esse per ipsam veritatem dignoscitur'. All truth is from God; though all will not be known until God is glorified. But this begins here below with the revelation of the Scriptures.³ John Scotus Erigena is the first to attempt a metaphysical explanation of the Christian faith and he says: 'Jesus suffices for all things and he is found in Scripture'.⁴

All knowledge comes from Scripture

For the men of the Middle Ages, all knowledge comes from Scripture, because in it is contained what God has told us of the conditions, the end, and the laws of our life.⁵

More than one theologian develops the theme in which the book of nature and the book of the soul cannot be truly deciphered and understood except in relation to the book of the Scriptures.⁶

All theology flows from Scripture

All theology flowed from sacred Scripture. The Masters commented on the sacred text. All the scholastics from Anselm right up to or well beyond the first half of the fourteenth century, based their whole approach to theology on the fundamental principle that Scripture is the source wherefrom we draw our knowledge of what has been revealed.⁷

Sufficiency of Scripture

St. Anselm says 'Nihil utiliter ad salutem praedicamus, quod sacra Scriptura, Spiritus Sancti miraculo fecundata, non protulerit aut intranse non contineat . . . sic itaque sacra Scriptura omnis veritatis, quam ratio colligit, auctoritatem continet, cum illam aut aperte affirmat, aut nullatenus negat'.⁸ Rupert of Deutz says: 'Let us search for wisdom, let us consult sacred Scripture itself, apart from which nothing can be found, nothing said which is solid or certain'.⁹ 'All that God has said or promised in sacred Scripture can be found

³ *De Cleric inst.*, III, 2; PL 107, 379-380.

⁴ *De divis. naturae*, V; PL 122, 1010.

⁵ Cf. H de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale*, 1/1, Paris 1959, pp. 56 ff and 76 ff.

⁶ Cf. Yves M.-J. Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, London 1966, pp. 65-66, note 2, where he gives some of the key references which demonstrate the logical connections of this medieval (also patristic) synthesis.

⁷ Cf. P. De Vooght, *Les Sources de la doctrine chrétienne d'après les théologiens du XIV^e siècle et du début du XV^e, avec le texte intégral des XII premières questions de la 'Summa' inédite de Gerard de Bologne*, Paris, 1954, p. 149.

⁸ *De concordia praescientiae Dei cum lib. arb.* q.3, c. 6 (PL 158, 528 BC)

⁹ PL 169, 1985.

reaffirmed in the creed . . . ; as for anything that is outside the rule of holy Scripture, belief in it may not be demanded of a Catholic'.¹⁰

Hugo of St. Victor says: 'Scripturae Patrum in corpore textus non computantur, quia non aliud adjiciunt, sed id ipsum quod in supra dictis (scripturis) continetur explanando et latius manifestiusque tractando extendunt'.¹¹

St. Bonaventure: 'Et sicut omnes illae ab una luce habebant originem sic omnes istae cognitiones sacrae Scripturae ordinantur, in ea clauduntur et in illa perficiuntur et mediante illa ad eternam illuminationem ordinantur. Unde omnis nostra cognitio in cognitione sacrae Scripturae debet habere statum'.¹² St. Thomas Aquinas: 'Ea quae in Sacra Scriptura sunt posita oportet nos custodire sicut quandam optimam regulam veritatis, ita quod neque multiplicemus addentes, neque minoremus subtrahentes, neque pervertamus male exponentes'.¹³

From the above statement it is clear that the medieval theologians speak of a certain sufficiency of Scripture. They seem to stress that the explanations of the doctors and the council definitions only clarify what is said more or less clearly or obscurely in Scripture. Nevertheless, these theologians were faced with a number of articles pronounced by the Church but which could not be found to be stated in Scripture. They found no difficulty in saying that these articles originated either in unwritten traditions or in decisions taken by the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. But they were also able to find fairly easily some suggestions or some equivalent in Scripture. They had no difficulty in finding out everything in Scripture, since their principles of exegesis provided them with the necessary means. In a very real sense scripture contains everything, according to the medieval writers. In it God has given us everything necessary or useful for the conduct of our lives. It includes in itself the whole of saving truth.¹⁴ Throughout the Middle Ages, the Bible was the text-book for theological teaching, and its ceasing eventually to play this role entailed a subsequent decadence, in theological thought.

The Church: the place for an authentic reading of Scripture

However, the traditional position that the Church is the place where the reading of the Scripture is authentic remains that of the Middle Ages too, often also with a more precise insistence on the canonical and institutional structures of the Church.¹⁵ The teaching of the Church is the rule of faith. Our faith is concretely conditioned by the structures in which God has conveyed his revelation and which he has given to his covenant. St. Thomas Aquinas defines the

¹⁰ PL 170, 477-478.

¹¹ PL 176, 186 D.

¹² *De reductione art/ad theol.*, 7, Quaracchi, V. 322.

¹³ *De Div. nom.* c. 2, lect. 1.

¹⁴ Cf. H. De Lubac, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 56 ff, 672.

¹⁵ Cf. J. Beumer, *Das Katholische Schriftprinzip in der theologischen Literatur der Scholastik bis zur Reformation*, Schol 16 (1941), pp. 24-52; *Heilige Schrift und Kirchliche Lehrautorität*, Schol 25 (1950), pp. 40-72.

determining motive of faith in these terms: 'The adherence of faith is given to all the articles of faith because of . . . the first Truth as it is proposed to us in Scripture, properly understood according to the Church's teaching'.¹⁶ Where this teaching has not yet been formally expressed, it nevertheless exists in some virtual or latent manner in the 'sensus Ecclesiasticus'. This 'Ecclesiastical sense' should be understood both under the subjective aspect of the spiritual instinct and under the objective aspect of communion or unanimity, both of which are made active by the influence of the Holy Spirit.

The medievals understood the 'Church' not only as the totality of the Christian community, but also as a fundamentally spiritual reality, the mystery of the Bride, unceasingly turning from sinfulness to purity, striving to live a life of perfect fidelity towards the spouse, and of openness to his Spirit. They understood it as the totality of men who are converted to Jesus Christ, and in whom the Spirit is at work.¹⁷

We find in the Medieval theologians both the assertion that all is contained in Scripture and also the assertion that the Church believes certain things by unwritten tradition. When one attempts to harmonize the two statements, one comes to the position: 'Totum in Scriptura, totum in Traditione'—'All is in Scripture, all in Tradition'.¹⁸ The Church holds no truth from Scripture alone and none from tradition alone, without Scripture. Thus more clearly than they admitted a material sufficiency of Scripture, the Medieval theologians affirmed its formal insufficiency. They held that Scripture does not itself suffice to yield its true meaning, it must be read within the Church, within Tradition.

Authority and Inspiration of Scripture

Though strictly speaking, the problem of the authority of Scripture is distinct from that of its inspiration, the two are so closely connected that they cannot be treated in absolute isolation. The authority of the Scripture is ultimately based on its inspiration. Following St Paul and the Fathers of the Church, the Medieval authors also repeat the phrase 'the Scriptures are inspired by God' and attribute the authority of the Scripture to this inspiration. Often they substitute for the word 'inspire' the word 'dictate' (dictare) which was a word reserved by the Rabbis for the Torah.¹⁹ Though the word 'inspiration' in itself has a broader meaning and is sometimes applied to writings other than the Scripture, still they make a distinction, when speaking of the Scripture. To make this specific distinction, they make use of the formula: 'God is the author (auctor) of the Sacred Books'.

¹⁶ *ST* II-IIae, q.5, a.3, ad 2.

¹⁷ See the numerous references given in H. de Lubac, *Méditation sur l'Eglise*, Paris, 1953, pp. 82 ff; P. Camelot *Le Sens de l'Eglise chez les Pères latins* in *NRT* 83 (1961), pp. 367-81.

¹⁸ Cf. Yves M. J. Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, p. 413.

¹⁹ Cf. St. Isidore in *PL* 83, 750, St. Thomas in *Illum*, d 12, q. 1, a 2.

This expression which appears towards the end of the patristic age²⁰ becomes classical in the Middle Ages and is sanctioned by the Councils. When speaking of the human writer of the sacred books they speak of him as the instrument of God²¹. From this they draw the conclusion that it is an idle question to ask to which author a particular book is to be attributed, because God is its author and the writer is only his pen.²² From all these they conclude that the scripture is the word of God.

During this period several solemn pronouncements also were made by the Church on this point, and the Church repeatedly stated that the Scriptures are sacred, because God is their author. The 'Statuta Antiqua' prescribed that the Bishop elect is to be asked before his ordination: 'Si Novi et Veteris testamenti, i.e., Legis et Prophetarum et Apostolorum, unum eundemque credat auctorem et Deum'. Leo IX and Innocent III refer to God as the one and the same author of the NT and of the OT.²³ The profession of Michael Palaeologus in the IInd Council of Lyon (1274), offered to Gregory X, reads: 'Credimus etiam novi et Veteris Testamenti, Legis ac Prophetarum et Apostolorum, unum esse auctorem Deum ac Dominum omnipotentem'.²⁴ Eugenius IV in his Bull 'Cantate Domini' (1441) says: 'Sacrosancta Romana Ecclesia unum atque eundem Deum Veteris et Novi Testamenti, hoc est Legis et Prophetarum atque Evangelii profitemur auctorem, quoniam eodem Spiritu Sancto inspirante utriusque Testamenti sancti locuti sunt'.²⁵

The meaning of the expression 'auctor'

In all the above statements, the meaning of *auctor* is ambiguous. The latin word *auctor* has a very broad meaning such as 'initiator', 'instigator', 'guarantee', etc. Hence it was discussed whether the word *auctor* was used in the sense of the author of the two economies of salvation or of the books of the two testaments. Some hold that the word *auctor* means 'founder' or 'establisher' rather than 'author' of the books. For them the word 'Testaments' means the 'Covenants' rather than the two categories of Scripture.²⁶ In fact the background of these statements seems to go back to the Marcionite and Manichean heresies which rejected both the economy and the books of the OT in which it is given. Besides, the Fathers of the Church such as Irenaeus and Origen attributed to God the Father of all, in explicit words, the books of both testaments.²⁷ Hence we may conclude that the word

²⁰ It is found for the first time in St. Gregory the Great (PL 75, 517) and then in St. Isidore (PL 83, 750) in the patristic age.

²¹ Cf. St. Thomas, *Quodl.*, VII a.14, ad 15; a.16; St. R. Bellarmine, *De Verbo Dei*, 1, 2, etc.

²² St. Thomas, *Exp. II cant.*, Proem.

²³ Cf. *Ench. Bibl.* No. 26-27.

²⁴ *Ench. Bibl.* n. 28F.

²⁵ *Ench. Bibl.* No. 32.

²⁶ Cf. A. Bea, art 'Inspiration' in DBS, vol. 4, col. 497.

²⁷ Cf. for example *Adver. Haer.* IV, 10, 1; II, 1; cf. A. Merk S. J 'De Inspiratione S. Scripturae' in *Institutiones Biblicae scholis accommodatae*, vol. 1, Rome, 1951, pp. 17-18.

auctor for the men of the Middle Ages meant the author of both the salvific economies and the Books of the Old and New Testaments.

Author: One who is responsible for the books

The meaning is made more precise later in the council of Florence (1441) in which the divine inspiration of the Sacred writers is explicitly stated and the list of the books also given.²⁸ Even at this stage the term *Auctor* does not seem to be taken in the literary sense of the term as we use it today. 'Author' is the one responsible for the work, perhaps in our sense of an editor, the subject to whom should be attributed the credit for the value of something. God is the author of all truth. It is in this sense, primarily, that he is the *auctor* of the sacred books and only secondarily, in the sense of a form of literal dictation of words. *Auctor* indicated the origin, more in its qualitative and spiritual aspect than in its genetic aspect as an event. This in fact, derives from the concept of *autoritas* in the Medieval period, which was an extremely rich concept and one which was widely in use. It indicated the value which some thing or statement derived from its source, considered less historically as a factor of temporal genesis than according to its place in the great hierarchy of the world, and thus, for the part of infallible truth it represented, in virtue of its function of status.²⁹

There was clearly only one true *auctor*, one absolute *autoritas*, God. But all that to which God gave the gift of being true, as expressing his truth and his will, became thereby an *autoritas*, whose exact position in time there was no need to plot with exactitude. The essential thing was, that part of divine truth which it incorporated for us.

These ideas naturally found application in the realm of the Sacred Scriptures which is dominated by the idea of the communication to man of the uncreated divine truth. God is the one personally responsible for it, its *auctor*, not without human co-operation, but with the latter completely subordinated to him, to such an extent that it benefits from the absolute guarantee attached to the first truth. Briefly, the Medieval Period was too absorbed in the idea of the divine origin of the sacred books to pay sufficient attention to the activity of the human factor.

Inspiration and Inspired Writings

It is a much quoted principle in the Middle Ages, that Scripture must be explained under the guidance of that same Spirit who dictated it³⁰. The holy Fathers and Doctors, who benefited from this 'influence',

²⁸ cf. R. F. Smith 'Inspiration and Inerrancy', in JBC, p. 503, 66:18 where he thinks that even in the councils of Florence and Trent the term 'author' is used in reference to God's work as founder of the two economies.

²⁹ Cf. M. D. Chenu, *Introduction à l'étude de St. Thomas d' Aquin*, Paris 1950, pp. 109 ff; *La Théologie au douzième siècle*, Paris 1957, pp. 351 f.

³⁰ Abelard, *Sic et Non*, Prol. (PL 178, 1339 B); Stephen of Tournai, *Epist.*, 251 (PL 211, 517); St. Thomas Aquinas, *Comm. in Rom.*, c. 12, lect' 2; *Quodl XII*, 26; *ST II-II*q.173, a 2; q. 176, a.2, ad 4. etc.

so that they were able to explain the Scripture properly, must also be shown a respect analogous to that which we owe to the Sacred Scripture. The Book of the Scripture cannot reveal its significance except in the Church, with her teaching, life, and the writings of the doctors she has approved.

In this context we may place two series of statements, typical of the Middle Ages:

1. The attributing of all true and holy determinations of the life of the Church to a 'revelatio', 'inspiratio', 'suggestio', of the Holy Spirit.³¹

2. The practice of including the fathers, the Conciliar Canons, Pontifical decrees and the more outstanding treatises of theologians, in the 'Scriptura Sacra'³² or again, without distinguishing, in the 'Divina Pagina'.³³

St Thomas Aquinas however, reacted against the vagueness of the categories implied in these statements. On the one hand he reserved with increasing precision the words 'revelare', 'revelatio', and 'inspiratio' to biblical revelation and to scriptural inspiration.³⁴ On the other hand he distinguished clearly, the 'auctoritas' of Scripture from that which is due to the Fathers and doctors.³⁵ Unfortunately, St. Thomas did not then command the attention he received as a doctor of Catholic theology in later periods. So this lack of precision pervades most of the theological works of the period right up to the modern times.

The Church of the Apostles and the S. Scripture

The preference given to the consideration of the transcendent and real cause of truth envisaged in itself and apart from time, tended to diminish the difference between the Church of the post-apostolic period and the Church of the apostles in its relation to the S. Scripture. Here again St Thomas stands against this common tendency and completely subordinates the whole post-Apostolic Church to the given fact of the prophets, Christ and the apostles.³⁶ Durandus says:

³¹ These three words are very closely linked in meaning.

³² Examples: Lanfranc refers to Leo, Augustine and Gregory: *Liber de Corpore et Sanguine Domini* c. 17 (PL 150, 429A, 435 C); Anselm of Laon cited St. Augustine as 'Scripture': *Anselmi Laudunensis, et Randulphi fratris ejus, sententiae*, ed. G. Lefevre, Evreux, 1895, p. 29 etc.

³³ From the early Middle Ages onwards, the word included, besides scripture itself, its explanations and even its theology. Cf. J. de Ghellinck, 'Pagina et Sacra Pagina. Hist. d'un mot et transformation de l'object primitivement designe' in *Melanges A. Pelzer*, Louvain 1947, pp. 25-59.

³⁴ Cf. J. de Guilbert 'Pour une etude methodique des loca parallela de S-Thomas' BLE, 1914, pp. 472 ff.

³⁵ cf. *st* I q.1, a 8, ad 2.

³⁶ Cf. St. Thomas, in *IV Sent*; d. 17 q.3, a.1 sol. 5; d. 27, q.3. a.3, ad.2; *ST* III q.64, a.2, ad.3.

'Credimus Scripturam esse inspiratam, quia Ecclesia, quae regitur a Spiritu Sancto, hoc approbat. Hoc autem quod dictum est de approbatione Scripturae per Ecclesiam intelligitur solem de Ecclesia quae fuit tempore apostolorum . . . Unde Evangelia, quae per Ecclesiam illam approbata sunt, non possunt nunc reprobari'.³⁷

Scripture and the Church: two authorities forced into competition

With Henry of Ghent (+1293) there begins an age of theological criticism. As a result of the development and discussions in theological criteriology and of the critique of religious knowledge, the problem was raised regarding the relation between the Church and Scripture in terms of the primacy of one over the other. It is Henry of Ghent who initiated this regrettable step by posing the question in these terms: Must we believe the 'auctoritates' (=the dicta, the texts) of sacred Scripture rather than those of the Church, or vice versa?³⁸ His only answer was to distinguish various acceptations of the word 'Church'. Gérard of Bologna rejected even the hypothesis of such an opposition: He wanted a new formulation of the problem.³⁹ And everywhere one comes across the well-known text of St Augustine: 'Ego evangelio non crederem nisi me catholicae Ecclesiae commoveret auctoritas'.⁴⁰ Some spoke of the Church's authority as the basis for the authority of Scripture because the church 'eas ita recipit et approbat'. Thus Pierre d'Ailly⁴¹ and Alfonso Tostato.⁴² Others said that 'auctoritas papae ex Scripturarum auctoritate pendet, non contra'. Thus Reginald Pecock⁴³ and Wessel Gansfort.⁴⁴ Consequently at the approach of the modern time, the time of the Reformation, the question was often posed in terms of this false alternative, which ought to have been rejected, but which was seized upon by the Reformers: Is the Church above Scripture, or Scripture above the Church? The two realities were conceived of as separate from, and competing with, each other.

The extent of the Inspiration of Scripture

At the Renaissance period, Erasmus judges faulty many of the citations which one finds in the NT. Hence he concludes that the Holy Spirit has, under certain circumstances, abandoned the scriptural authors to their own memories, without any disadvantage for the

³⁷ In III *Sent.* d. 24, q. 1.

³⁸ In *Sent. Prol.*; a. lo q. 1.

³⁹ Cf. *Summa*, q. 5, a. 1, ed De Vooght, pp. 356 f.

⁴⁰ *Contra Epist. Manichaei quam vocant Fundamenti* I, 4, 5, (PL, 42, 175).

⁴¹ *Epistola ad novos Hebraeos* ed. Tschackert, Gotha, 1877, p. 11, pp. 7, 27 ff.

⁴² *Defensorium*, 2a pars, c. 23, in the vol. *Opera Varia*, Venice, 1615, col. 1 and 2.

⁴³ *The Book of Faith*, ed. J. I. Morison, Glasgow, 1909.

⁴⁴ Cf. A. Humbert, *Les Origines de la Théologie moderne*, Paris, pp. 84-90.

Gospel.⁴⁶ This view was shared by some others too, according to the testimonies of Maldonatus⁴⁶ and Melchior Cano.⁴⁷

But the Medieval tradition, as a whole, has taken the stand that there is no word of the Scripture, which is not the word of God.⁴⁸ Thus for example St Thomas⁴⁹ and Suarez.⁵⁰ The opinion of Erasmus is qualified by Melchior Cano as 'impious'⁵¹ and by S. Bellarmine as 'heresy'.

The clearest statement in this regard is perhaps to be found in St Thomas Aquinas. As his Master St Albert the Great, he also seems to reduce the inspiration to the gift of prophecy⁵² and describes the psychological process according to the principles of Aristotelian philosophy. The fundamental principle regarding inspiration is expressed in these words: 'Auctor principalis Scripturae est Spiritus Sanctus, homo fuit auctor instrumentalis'.⁵³ It is while explaining prophecy, that he speaks about the divine action in the human author. He applies the notion of instrumental cause to the Scriptural writers in as far as they are responsible for their actions, namely persons endowed with intellect and will: 'Movetur a Deo ad Movendum se'. Inspiration does not dispense one from his efforts, which are normally needed to write a book.

Though all the faculties of the writer are involved, inspiration falls mainly on the intellect, because to write a book is mainly an intellectual work. God strengthens the light of their intellect by infusion of a supernatural light.⁵⁴ In inspiration, the Holy Spirit penetrates deep into the intellect of the Scriptural authors, not only to inspire them with the intention of writing, but also with the thoughts to be written and the speculative judgements to be formed. It projects a new light on the things naturally known so that they get a divine and infallible certitude that they have the truth and they judge things rightly.⁵⁵ According to St Thomas, it is not necessary that the sacred author be conscious of his inspiration.

As to the will, God gives a physical (not moral) but free move to the will of the author. He can resist it, but practically will not resist.⁵⁶ This is something common to all the so-called efficacious graces. As to the material execution, the Spirit exercises vigilance so that things are written correctly.

⁴⁶ *In Math.* 2, 6 and 27. 9; edited by Leyde, vol. VI, p. 13 and 140.

⁴⁸ *In Math.* 27. 9.

⁴⁷ *De loc. Theol.* II, 17.

⁴⁸ This presupposes, of course, authentic texts.

⁴⁹ *De Pot.* IV, 1; *Quodl.* XII, 26 etc.

⁵⁰ *De Fide*, V, 3, 12 and 14.

⁵¹ *De loc. Theol.* II, 17.

⁵² Cf. e.g. *De Verit.* q. 12, a. 13.

⁵³ *Quodlib.* 7, a. 14, ad 5.

⁵⁴ Cf. *ST II a—II ae*, q. 173, a. 2; 1, q. 12, a. 13 and q. 105, a. 3.

⁵⁵ Cf. *ST II a—II ae*, q. 174, a. 2 ad 3; a. 3; cf. q. 171, a. 3, ad. 2, q. 173, a. 2.

⁵⁶ Cf. *ST I a—II ae*, q. 10, a. 4 in c and ad 3.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion we might say that the Medieval period was marked by a kind of Biblical Fundamentalism. All knowledge, all truth, all theology flowed from Scripture. Scripture includes in itself the whole saving truth.

However, the reading of the Scripture is authentic only if it is done in the Church which is the community of those who believe in Jesus Christ and in whom the Spirit is at work. Thus the Medieval Theologians, while admitting the material sufficiency of scripture, affirm its formal insufficiency.

The medieval exegesis, with its lack of historical and critical sense, seems to have, in practice, ignored the human author. The human activity was limited to the writer, and that as being instrumental to the Holy Spirit, the principal cause. Thus little attention was given to the anthropological element in the Bible. The Bible was the Word of God and God spoke with the fulness of Truth in the least word of Scripture. Even when the literal meaning of a passage seemed to exclude any spiritual message, allegorical exegesis readily discerned a deeper meaning beneath the letter.

The authority of Scripture is based ultimately on the fact that the sacred books are inspired by God. 'God is the author of the Sacred Books' is the classical expression of the Middle Ages. The word 'auctor' in the beginning seems to refer to God as the author of the OT and NT economies of Salvation and of the Books which contain them. This approach to the inspiration and the authority of Scripture seems to be a healthier approach, in comparison with the later speculations on inspiration, centered on the writer and the writings. It is also closer to the present trend which emphasizes the sociological and Ecclesiological dimensions of Scriptural inspiration.

The integral notion that the Bible took its rise from within the life of the People of God, the Church, and that it is within the life of the Church that the Bible is to be read, studied, understood and expounded, seems gradually, towards the end of the Middle Ages, to give way to the unfortunate dichotomy between the Scripture and the Church, resulting in the view which considered them as two authorities forced into competition with one another.