

A PLEA FOR TRADITION.

TO Catholics the subject of Tradition must ever be an interesting one, as it constitutes the groundwork of much of their holy belief, and furnishes the principal line of demarcation between themselves and those who are not of the household of the true faith. But it calls for particular consideration now when the landmarks of faith are rapidly disappearing from many minds, and the principles of pseudo-philosophy are fast perverting the Christian concept of authority, leading up, in the long run, to intellectual anarchy and the deplorable moral status which must necessarily ensue. For the present religious aspect of the world is, indeed, a lamentable one to contemplate. Men's minds are rent by systems and counter-systems of religious opinion which have set a thinking world afloat upon a boundless sea of restlessness and of doubt. Some, and the majority, have long since seceded from the old order of things, and turned their backs upon scripture and tradition alike,—converts, we are told, to an agnostic propagandism which follows in the wake of naught but the bright light of pure, untrammelled human genius. The recent utterances of Professor Huxley, in the *Nineteenth Century*, sound the key-note of the painful situation for these, and come to us like the far-off wail of a shipwrecked mariner, driven by adverse winds over unfamiliar seas he knows not whither. In an article entitled "The Evolution of Theology," after rehearsing the rise and fall of various religious systems, from a tripod of his own fashioning he ventures, sibyl-like, upon the following exquisite bit of prophecy: "With the spread of true scientific culture, whatever may be the medium, historical, philological, philosophical or physical, through which that culture is conveyed, and with its necessary concomitant, a constant elevation of the standard of veracity, the end of the evolution of theology will be like its beginning; it will cease to have any relation to ethics. I suppose that, so long as the human mind exists, it will not escape the deep-rooted instinct to personify its intellectual conceptions. The science of the present day is as full of this particular form of intellectual shadow-worship as is the nescience of ignorant ages. The difference is that the philosopher who is worthy of the name knows that his personified hypotheses, such as law, and force, and ether, and the like, are merely useful symbols, while the ignorant and the careless take them for adequate expressions of reality" (*Nineteenth Century*, April, 1886). Thus speaks one of the Coryphæi of

modern rationalism, and his words may be accepted as a pretty fair embodiment of the general sentiment of his class.

There are others less precipitous, who still cling in a way to the ancient truth as they fancy they decipher it upon the open pages of the Bible, but repudiate tradition as a bugbear of "Romanism,"—as a braided tissue of the worst kind of fallacies wrought out of the whole cloth of superstition to ensnare the footsteps of the guileless searcher after truth. Begotten of the spirit of revolt and permeated with the rebellious principles of Protestant reform, they have pinned their hopes of Sion, so they tell us, to "the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible," understanding it, of course, not as it is explained by the reliable traditions of innumerable generations or the voice of a living church, but as each one's unguided, unilluminated judgment sees fit to construe it. In thus making the Bible, as interpreted by individual minds, its rule of faith, Protestantism represents human coöperation in the work of salvation as unnecessary and impossible. God speaks to each one, it maintains, immediately and in the privacy of his own heart. In these communications of his Holy Spirit, enough light is vouchsafed every one to know the way and the truth. Hence it is that there is no need of tradition to supplement, explain or corroborate the Scriptures, as they are themselves the deposit of all truth and, with the special aid of the Almighty which is never denied, sufficiently easy of interpretation. Much less is there need of an infallible authority, such as tradition would postulate, to mediate between the reader of the Scriptures and the Scriptures themselves—between the objective revelation and the subjectivity of the believer. We are every-day witnesses of the logical but disastrous outcome of this theory. The story of its workings will ever constitute one of the most dismal pages of human history. Through three hundred years of spiritual decadence their old-time grasp upon the fundamental truths of religion has gradually slackened. By a wholesale process of disintegration their position, once reputed formidable, has been undermined, till now they know their place no longer and the profoundest scientific scrutiny is scarce able to tell where Protestantism ends and Infidelity begins. With neither of these systems, agnostic or Protestant, can Catholicity have either kinship or sympathy, directly opposed as they both are to her express teaching, which, besides Scripture, admits tradition and the infallible interpretation of a living authority to a part-share, and no very small share either, in the Rule of her Faith.

Tradition may be either objective or subjective accordingly as we take it to mean the doctrines themselves which have been communicated or the living word of faith by which those doctrines

are to be interpreted and understood. In its broadest acceptation, therefore, objective tradition, with which alone we are concerned, may be taken to signify doctrines either written or spoken. In a more limited sense, the sense in which we are using it at present, it is applied to doctrines bearing upon faith and morals and communicated *viva voce* by their Divine Author to one or to many, as the case may be, and by them delivered to posterity. That there exist such traditions is an article of our faith, and the divinity of their origin is as little to be called in question as anything in the Old or New Testament. All along the line of the Church's history, besides the Scriptures, which bear intrinsic evidence of not containing the whole deposit of faith, we are met by a body of revealed truths taught by the Apostles and Disciples and received and revered as the Word of God no less than the Scriptures themselves. The Apostles learnt them in the school of their Divine Master or by special inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and scattered them far and wide throughout the countries in which they preached. Dying, they left them as rich legacies to the newly-founded churches, and to their successors in the ministry. These in turn transmitted them to others, and so on across the long generations to our own day.¹ Many of the most important tenets of our holy religion can boast no other origin. The number of the gospels and of the sacraments, the perpetual virginity of the Mother of God, and the validity of heretical baptism may be instanced as heirlooms of the early days inherited not from the page of the New Testament, but handed down from generation to generation with no sufficient claim upon our consideration other than the one we have just described. The existence of a body of objective, unwritten truths coëval with the very first appearance of the Church is as readily gathered from the method and precept of Christ's teaching, as it is clear from the subsequent practice of His Apostles. Christ Himself certainly wrote nothing, and we are not aware that He bade His Apostles do otherwise. Go and preach and teach was the summary of his prescription to them on this head, while the touchstone of the world's fidelity to Him was to be the readiness with which it would hearken to the living voice of His messengers.

¹ On this point it is well to remark with Hurter: "Ratio quare in primis adversarii traditionem adversentur putentque ea facile Christi doctrinam corrumpi, est quia obliviscuntur promissæ assistentiæ Christi et Spiritus Sancti, et quia semper somniant traditionem *oralem*: fama enim, inquit, crescit eundo et ex *orali* traditione oriuntur legendæ et mythi; orali quoque traditione corrupta fuit revelatio primitiva. Sed aliis interim omissis advertimus, traditionem Catholicam non eo sensu esse *oralem* ut tantum *ore* propagetur, tunc enim, præcisione facta a divina assistentia, sat esset *vaga* et *fluxa*; sed ea jam litteris est consignata, praxi concreta aliisque monumentis, ut infra videbimus, fluminis instar terminis certis fixisque conclusa et determinata, ut jam eundo crescere non possit et multiloquio corrumpi."—De Trad. Th. xviii., note 2.

"He that hears you hears me." Besides, if Christ *had* intended that the written word, and it alone, should embrace all the truth that goes to integrate the New Economy He was building upon the ruins of the old, it were passing strange that out of the depths of His wisdom it should never have occurred to Him to suggest to His followers, as God had done in the Old Law, the advisability of committing to manuscript at least the broad outlines of that magnificent constitution which He came to expound and which, as He said, was destined to revolutionize the world. Yet, the fact is, He did not, and herein we note a reason for the long delay in the compilation of the books of the New Testament. Three score years and more had elapsed after the Ascension before they were finally completed, and the third century was dead and gone ere the Church had definitively fixed upon her canon. Even when the Sacred Penmen did consent to write, they wrote, as Eusebius informs us, under a species of compulsion: Mark and John at the earnest solicitation of the Romans and the Bishops of Asia; Matthew because he was leaving the Hebrews to go to the Gentiles and deemed it a precautionary measure to leave behind some memorial of his doctrine and his preaching; Luke in order to correct a number of misstatements concerning the Redeemer and His mission which had gained currency and were doing infinite harm amongst the populace. Quite otherwise, though, was it with preaching. Scarcely were the doors of that "upper chamber" thrown open on the jubilant morn of Pentecost, when the Apostles sallied forth and began to preach right and left to the glad multitudes who trooped after them through the crowded thoroughfares of Jerusalem. Their Master had done this, and His mission had been transmitted to them. It was in this manner they were to instruct the nations in all those things whatsoever He had told them. If, then, it is true that the Apostles were faithful to their mission, and equally true that neither they nor their Master transcribed all they taught, all they preached or all they bore witness to, it follows with an almost palpable evidence that, apart from the written word, they left to their disciples, the bishops and teachers of the Church, a body of delivered truths equally as divine in their origin and essential in their dogmatic worth. When, then, the Council of Trent, in formulating and defining its famous decree upon the canon of Scripture, proposed to itself the conservation in the Church of the purity of the Gospel, it innovated nothing, as Protestants will insist it did.¹ It merely reënforced the pronouncement of generations by affixing the seal of Divine approbation to a truth which until then had been accepted without cavil or demur, to wit, that the doctrine which it sought to preserve

¹ Conc. Trid. Can. et Decret., 4 Sess.

intact was contained in written books and in unwritten truths which, received by the Apostles from the mouth of Christ or from the Holy Ghost, were transmitted by them to us.

But if the method and practice of Christ and His Apostles will not suffice as a guarantee that there are certain divine traditions, we find the fact overwhelmingly set forth and championed in the express teaching of the Scriptures, in the general consent of the Fathers, and in the evident analogy obtaining between the old and new dispensation. The arguments from Scripture, if confirmatory rather than apodictic, are nevertheless vested with a contextual force not to be overlooked or despised. Thus St. Paul writes to his friend and familiar Timothy, bidding him "hold the form of sound *words*, which he has *heard* in faith and in the love which is in Christ Jesus."¹ Elsewhere to the same disciple he says: "The things thou hast *heard* by many witnesses (that is to say *orally*), the same deliver to faithful men, who shall be fit to teach others also."² To the same effect, though still more convincingly, he addresses the Thessalonians: "Brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you have learned, whether by *word* or by our epistle."³ He does not counsel them, you will notice, to write or to organize Bible societies, much less Salvation Armies, for the widespread dissemination of tracts, to the heavenly minstrelsy of fife and drum, but simply to hold fast what they have learned, whether by *word* or by letter, equalizing at one stroke the written and the spoken truth. St. John closes his Gospel by telling us that Jesus did other things "which, if they were written, every one, the world itself would not be able to contain the books that should be written."⁴ And St. Luke precludes the "Acts" by informing us that for forty days after his passion "Jesus continued to appear to his disciples, speaking to them of the kingdom of God."⁵ Yet of the sayings and doings of the Saviour after His resurrection the Evangelists have written but little, while it cannot reasonably be supposed, as Bellarmine remarks, that the Apostles failed to deliver, and in minute detail, to the Brethren all that they had seen and heard on those momentous occasions. Neither does it avail to say that they committed to writing only what was necessary, which will account for the frequency of their omissions. This statement militates against fact, since unquestionably there are many things of an eminently dogmatic character, and therefore very necessary, and in some instances even of faith, connected, for instance, with the institution of the sacraments, of which no vestige is traceable in the Scriptures. Nor can this be a matter of wonder. Having special purposes in view in the composition of their books, naturally enough they selected only such items as bore upon their immediate

¹ II Tim. 1:13. ² Ibid 11:2. ³ II Thess., 11:14. ⁴ John 21:25. ⁵ Acts 1:3.

aim. As a result, not one of them can be said to be complete, and grouped together they are still defective, showing nothing from Matthew to the *Amen* of the Apocalypse to indicate that any or all of them ever dreamt of setting forth an adequate Rule of Faith or of completing by new additions one already under way. For their own sakes it would be well for Protestants to realize this. For it will be a melancholy day, indeed, for them in particular, when tradition is wholly counted out of court in practice as in theory. Many of their favorite tenets have no other foundation, while the very canonicity of the Scriptures, by which they set such great store, is not demonstrable otherwise. Abolish tradition and the applicability of the Scripture becomes an impossibility; and with the downfall of Scripture there will not be enough left of Protestantism to start a conversation.

Whole volumes of evidence corroborative of the interpretation we have given the above texts are furnished by the works of the Latin and Greek Fathers and Doctors.¹ Their testimony is valu-

¹ In order that an ecclesiastical writer may be classified amongst the *Fathers*, four things are generally reputed necessary eminent learning, holiness and antiquity, together with an express or implied recognition by the Church of these endowments. "Patres vocat" (Ecclesia), says Mabillon, "eos, quos sanctitas, doctrina et antiquitas commendat; doctrina, inquam, scripturae et traditioni potius quam rationibus philosophicis inhaerens."—*Praef. ad Op. S. Bernardi*, § 2, n. 23. The idea of a *Doctor* differs from that of a Father in that it does not include the prerogative of antiquity, as in the case of SS. Bonaventure and Alphonsus Liguori, both of them doctors but not Fathers of the Church, because lights of a comparatively recent date. To a Catholic a moral unanimity of patristic teaching on any point of faith or morals is tantamount to an infallible declaration of the truth of said doctrine. The theological reason for this is evident. It flows from the nature of things, and is easily proved, that the deposit of truth, deeded by Christ and His Apostles to the world, can suffer neither change nor shadow of alteration, and must, therefore, as a matter of fact, be transmitted unalloyed to the end of time. As a consequence, it will outlive the vicissitudes of all generations and fall as pure and uncontaminated upon the ears of the last listener upon earth as it did of old, coupled with the Saviour's benediction, upon the devout villagers in the towns and hamlets of Judea. When, then, we find the Fathers, the admitted teachers of their respective ages, in several successive periods of time and in widely separated localities, pronouncing a truth divine, and the *Church*, with whom resides the right and duty to advert upon error wherever and whenever found, remaining approvingly silent, we are bound to conclude that the teaching of the Fathers on the point involved was indeed the universal belief of those days, and, therefore, unerringly true. Otherwise we are driven to the necessity of admitting, which were blasphemy, that the legitimate apostolic succession had connived at error, and consequently that the word and work of Christ had failed.—*Praevaluissent Portae Inferi*.

As we said, this line of argument will suit a Catholic well enough, but passes no muster with a Protestant, as it calls up the Ghost of Infallibility and knocks the props from under his comfortable theory of private interpretation of the Scriptures. Hence, in treating with him we are forced to shift the ground of argumentation and appeal to the Fathers no longer as witnesses to the divine character of what is narrated, but as profane historians vouching for the truth of contemporaneous fact. Applying this latter criterion to the matter in hand, we discover a marvellous *consensus* or agree-

able at least in so far as it affords us the evidence of ordinary historical criteria.¹ This much Protestants concede, and it is even worthy of note that since the movement inaugurated by Pusey, the trend of Ritualism has certainly been towards an increased esteem and study of this department of sacred learning. It will be remembered as the armory from which Mr. Pusey, in particular, recruited so largely for his attacks in the "Eirenicon." But, unfortunately for Mr. Pusey and his cause, Dr. Newman had been there before him and taken a more scholarly survey of the field.²

ment amongst the Fathers of the first four centuries regarding this fact, viz., that the faithful at large accepted certain traditions as divine, and valued them no less than they did the Scriptures themselves. Any well-read Protestant knows this. Why not, then, proceed a degree farther in the natural development of the argument and confess that the united testimony of such eminently Christian historians is, to say the least, as irrefragable and deserving of acceptance as would be, for instance, the combined testimony of Strabo, Cæsar, Tacitus and Pliny certifying to an occurrence in the history of Gaul. That we have such unanimity of teaching is easily shown. We cite as many writers as are necessary to bear out the statement, with the date of each one's death appended, copied from the *Patrology of Migne*: St. Ignatius, A.D. 107; St. Polycarp, A.D. 166; Hegesippus, A.D. 181; St. Irenæus, A.D. 202; Clement of Alexandria, A.D. 217; Tertullian, A.D. 245; Origen, A.D. 254; St. Cyprian, A.D. 258; Eusebius of Cæsarea, A.D. 340; St. Basil, A.D. 379; St. Cyril of Jerusalem, A.D. 386; St. Gregory Nazianzen, A.D. 392; St. Epiphanius, A.D. 402; St. Chrysostom, A.D. 407; St. Jerome, A.D. 420; St. Augustine, A.D. 430.

¹ It is of prime importance for the right interpretation of the Fathers that we know exactly when they are vouching for the divinity of a doctrine and when, on the contrary, they are merely playing the *role* of private personages rehearsing ordinary historical events. Theologians lay down three rules to guide us in making the distinction, which it may be well to recount briefly. *First*. If the Fathers of any one period are unanimous in their assertion of the divine origin of a doctrine, or the majority maintain it, the others taking no exception to their position, the doctrine in question may be assumed as having been divinely delivered and the testimony of the Fathers on that point as consequently true. *Secondly*. If they give us to understand in plain terms, as St. Jerome frequently does in his reply to Helvidius, that their object in writing is none other than to set forth against the heretics, who dared to impugn it, the unadulterated truth as it came from Christ and His Apostles. For a similar reason, when any one of them is the admitted champion of the Church's teaching in his day on some point, he is setting forth without doubt the divine truth on that point. Such was the case with SS. Basil and Gregory of Nyssa in their controversy with Eunomius; of SS. Jerome and Augustine as against Pelagius; of St. Cyprian against the Novatians, and of St. Athanasius against Arius. *Thirdly*. If the truth in question is broached in their sermons and instructions to the people, especially to those preparing for reception into the Church. On such occasions it is not to be supposed that they would advance anything as of faith unless indeed it did pertain to the deposit of truth. The logic of these rules is self-evident and calls for no comment.—Cf. De Vivo, *Universa Revelatio*, v. iii., l. ii., p. 1154; Franzelin, *De Traditione*, Th. 14.

² In this connection it is interesting to recall Cardinal Newman's noble tribute to the *Fathers*. It comes to us out of "the long ago" freighted with thoughts of memorable days and conjures up the rare spectacle of a genius swaying the destiny of troubled times as with giant tread he followed in the lead of God's "kindly light"—himself a light and lamp to the footsteps of millions. "I am not ashamed," he says, "still to take my stand upon the Fathers, and do not mean to budge. The history of their times is not yet an old almanac to me. Of course I maintain the value and

Now, Eusebius, the earliest ecclesiastical historian, tells us that St. Ignatius, the second bishop of Antioch (A.D. 68) and the disciple of St. Peter, when being led through Asia into captivity, cautioned the people on his route to avoid heretics and "*to hold fast to the traditions of the Apostles,*" which traditions, confirmed by his own testimony, for the surer information of posterity, he deemed it necessary to commit to writing.¹ And St. Chrysostom says: "It is plain that all things were not delivered in writing, but many otherwise, and are equally to be believed. Wherefore let us hold fast the traditions of the Church. It is tradition, let that suffice."² Again, "there is need of tradition," writes St. Epiphanius, "for we cannot expect to find everything in the Scriptures. . . . Our boundaries are fixed, and the foundation and the structure of faith. We have the *traditions of the Apostles* and the Holy Scriptures and the succession of doctrine diffused all around;"³ while St. Jerome admits that many things in the Church have had their origin only in tradition, and adds that "their binding force is no less than that of the written law."⁴ Tertullian furnishes us with a striking passage still more clearly bodying forth the same point. "What will you gain," he asks, "by recurring to Scripture, when one denies what the other asserts? Learn rather who it is who possesses the faith of Christ; to whom the Scriptures belong; from whom, by whom, and when the faith was delivered by which we are made Christians. For where shall be found the true faith, there will be the genuine scriptures; there the true interpretation of them; and there *all Christian traditions* . . . to know what the Apostles taught, that is, what Christ revealed to them, recourse must be had to the churches which they founded and which they instructed by *word of mouth* and by their epistles. For it is plain that all doctrine, which is conformable to the faith of these mother churches, is true; being that which they received from the Apostles, the Apostles from Christ, and Christ from God."⁵ St. Irenæus

authority of the 'Schola,' as one of the *loci theologici*; still I sympathize with Petavius in preferring to its "contentious and subtle theology" that "more elegant and fruitful teaching which is moulded after the image of erudite antiquity." The Fathers made me a Catholic, and I am not going to kick down the ladder by which I ascended into the Church. It is a ladder quite as serviceable for that purpose now as it was twenty years ago." (A letter to the Rev. E. B. Pusey, D.D., on his recent "Eirenicon." Introduction.)

¹ Hist. Eccles., l. iii., c. 36, p. 130.

² In Epist. ii. ad Thessal., c. ii. 14. Homily 4.

³ Adv. Hæres., lxi., t. 1, p. 511; xxxv., t. 1., p. 475.

⁴ Adv. Luciferianos, p. 139, B. "Etiam si scripturæ auctoritas non subesset, totius orbis in hanc partem consensus instar præcepti obtineret. Nam et multa alia quæ per traditionem in Ecclesiis observantur, auctoritatem sibi scriptæ legis usurpaverunt," etc. This observation, though made by the Luciferian in the Dialogue, is endorsed by the orthodox speaker.

⁵ De Præscript. Hæret., 19, 21.

is yet more explicit. "Had these Apostles," he says, "left us nothing in writing, must we not in that case have followed the rule of doctrine which they delivered to those to whom they entrusted their churches? To this rule many barbarous nations submit who, deprived of the aid of letters, have the words of salvation written on their hearts and carefully guard the doctrine which has been delivered."¹ Not to multiply examples, it may be stated that the works of SS. Cyprian, Dionysius, Hilarius, Basil, Ambrose and Augustine, as well as those of Eusebius and Origen, abound in passages of similar import. It was reserved for the enlightened framers of the *Augsburg Confession* and of the *Thirty-nine Articles* of the Anglican Creed to make the following humorous discovery: "Holy Scripture," says the Creed, "containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of the faith or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation."² As a specimen of pious inconsistency, it is curious to observe that in the Thirty-fourth Article of the same creed the equivalently opposite doctrine is broached. Therein we read: "Whosoever, through his private judgment, willingly and purposely, doth openly break the traditions and ceremonies of the Church, which be not repugnant to the Word of God, and be ordained and approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly," etc. The fitness of an "open rebuke" for a mere violation of ceremonial rite, when the whole dogmatic position is a matter of choice, is a piece of clerical legislation we fail to understand, and we must leave the solution of our difficulty to the inventiveness of those with whom paradoxes are the order of the day.³

Amongst the arguments usually invoked in substantiation of the direct opposite of the first of the above statements, none is more interesting than the one drawn from the historical conduct of God's providence in His treatment of the human race in the successive ages of the world. From Adam to Abraham, from Abraham to Christ, from Christ to the consummation of the world, there has been and there can be but one true faith animating the earth. How variable soever its external form may sometimes have seemed to be, yet was it always essentially one and the same, characterized by unity of origin and identity of aim. The boundless harmony of one and the same great mind was ever the soul

¹ Adv. Hæres., l. iii., c. 4. This doctrine of the Fathers is amply supported by the conciliar decree of Nice and Chalcedon. Cf. Labbe, vv. 2, 4, 7.

² Article vi.

³ A summarized and instructive account of the main divergences between the Catholic system and the system put forth in the Thirty-nine Articles may be read in Lingard's "Hist. of England," vol. iv., Amer. Edit., note N.

and secret of its constitution, while the logic of its destiny was none other than the infinite consistency of Everlasting Truth in endless accord with itself. Call it Patriarchal, Mosaic or Christian, it was ever "the Tabernacle of God with men," whose phases were but links of one and the same great chain leading up by progressive stages to the consummation of all religion—the Vision of Truth in the plenitude of Everlasting Life. For the work of redemption was not confined to the thirty-three years of the Saviour's brief abode by the roadsides and lake-shores of Galilee. Already in the dawn of ages, while men were as yet groping in the haze of prophecy, the spirit of his unwritten Gospel was at work upon the earth preparing the way, in the gift of faith, for the long expected coming of the *Shiloh* of God. Neither shall it cease to be the abundant source of the world's life and happiness and the renovating principle of its energies until He come again, throned upon the clouds of heaven, to judge the living and the dead. It cannot be reasonably supposed, then, that the economy of God's dispensation in one era would be wholly at variance with that adopted by Him at another. In fact, Christ cautions us very plainly against indulging any such supposition. "I came," he says, "not to destroy the Law, but to fulfil and perfect it." When, then, we discover in the patriarchal times traditions of a Creator, of angels, of a future life, of a Redeemer, and of other paramount truths not graven on stone, but whispered to Adam amidst the trees of Paradise, or, in vision, to subsequent prophets; when, in the day-spring of Israel's glory, alongside of the written law of Sinai, we still meet a body of traditions constituting a large and valuable portion of the Hebrew dogmatic code; when, later still, "in the fulness of time," in the advent of the promised *Emmanuel*, when all changes deemed necessary were to be made, we yet discover, as we have already shown, no alteration on this head either in the conduct or teaching of the Saviour; when we discover all this and give it reflection, it begets a smile to hear the solemn deans and deacons of the Anglican persuasion, or of any other persuasion, in grave synodical council assembled, declaring that the theory of divine tradition is a huge bugaboo dug out of the ground during the Middle Ages, for which we can proffer neither Scriptural parallel nor warrant. St. Paul bids us beware even of an angel, radiant with the light of God's sweet face, who would venture upon a doctrine other than the one he had propounded. How much greater reason have we not to look dubiously upon the sanctimonious decrees of any such comedy of convocation flying straight in the face of facts which reach from Paradise to Calvary. We affirmed that there was ample parallel and warrant in the Old Law for the stand we are taking upon the grounds of analogy.

We might illustrate this assertion by cumulative evidence without end from Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy and the Psalms, and cited at length by commentators who, like Bellarmine and Franzelin, have discussed this subject *ex professo*. But the requirements of a brief paper must make a few suffice. Of the period before the Deluge, when writing was certainly not a very fine art, we know but little, but even that little introduces us to three men, Enos, Henoch and Noah, who are commemorated as having been "guardians of the divine religion and preachers of justice." In the Patriarchal Age after the Deluge, Jehovah's superb testimony to the fidelity of Abraham was, "I know that he will command his children, and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord and do judgment and justice."¹ And yet again in the lovely death canticle of Moses we are invited to "remember the days of old; think upon every generation: ask thy father and he will declare for thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee;"² while David in one of his rapturous outpourings unfolds the principle of tradition in the most obvious terms. "We have heard, O Lord, with our ears," sings the prophet; "our fathers have declared to us the work thou hast wrought in their days and in the days of old. How great things have we heard and known, and our fathers have told us; they have not been hidden from their children in another generation; declaring the praises of the Lord, and his power and his wonders which he hath done; and he set up a testimony in Jacob, and made a law in Israel. How great things he commanded our fathers, that they should make the same known to their children, that another generation might know them, that children should be born, and should rise up and declare them to their children."³

These are but a few selections at random out of multitudes that might be advanced; but to the moral we have drawn from them no Protestant will subscribe. For though his advocacy of the Bible and the tenacity with which he clings to the "Rock of Ages" are truly commendable, yet the legend upon his banner is to-day what it was in the halcyon days of the edifying Luther—"Away with the Pope, for the Papacy is an institution of the devil." And the fact is, and right here let us score one for their shrewdness, once Protestants give Catholics the least ground for the assertion of this doctrine they run foul of Leo XIII. in the very next step of the argument. For the fundamental error of Protestantism on the Rule of Faith, as we have already hinted, is to be looked for really in its utter misapprehension of the true nature of Church authority. Repudiating with unqualified scorn the bare idea of an infallible

¹ Genesis xviii. 19.

² Deuteronomy xxxii. 7.

³ Psalm lxxvii. 3-7.

teacher resident amongst men to guard and guide, tradition of whatever kind ceases to have for them any deeper significance than what attaches to an ordinary historical event. And in this they are quite logical. For how can they, out of the intricate mass of material which has come down to them, discriminate between what is of purely apostolic or ecclesiastical origin, and, therefore, obnoxious to change and abrogation, and what is, on the other hand, divine and consequently invariable?¹ Left to individual resources, they have absolutely no means of doing so, and are driven in their perplexity to take refuge in the forlorn subterfuges of private interpretation and inspiration.² Quite otherwise is it with a Catholic. He is permeated with a deep-rooted conviction that the declarations of his Church are unfailing criteria of divine evidence, and that in all cases she is fully qualified to winnow the false from the true. He is satisfied that she is the living, visible representative of God, and, therefore, whatever has been endorsed by her as of faith, the same is necessarily celestial in its origin. Thus his firm persuasion is grounded, not upon idle whim or fancy, but upon the express word of Truth itself. He "subpœnas" the very Scriptures in evidence that Christ's intent was not only to institute "an apostolate as an authoritative organ in order to the first promulgation of the Gospel, but also a perpetual apostolic succession." That the Apostles were divine ambassadors vested with infallibility, he finds demonstrated in the words of Christ at the Last Supper: "I will ask the Father and He will give you another Paraclete that he may abide with you forever." ". . . The Paraclete whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all

¹ Amongst the many questions mooted by theologians on the subject of tradition, not the least interesting is that of the *Criteria*, by which we may distinguish those that are divine from those that are not so. Even to enumerate them would tempt us too far a-field for present purposes, which merely regard the *fact* of divine traditions, but their sufficient discussion may be read in any theology of note.—Cf. Bellarmine, *De Controversiis*, t. 1, l. iv., c. ix.; Billuart, *De Regulis Fidei*, diss. ii., art. 1.

² One of the baneful results of private interpretation of the Scripture was strikingly illustrated in the recent Andover muddle. The pillars of Congregationalism in Massachusetts, instead of edifying their coreligionists by fostering amity and good-will, as St Paul counsels elders to do, took to reading and discussing Scripture till they found themselves decidedly at variance upon the subject of final retribution. The real difficulty is that the old wheel is slipping another cog. The progressionists are clamorous for doctrinal changes, while the conservatives, a whit more logical, are too apprehensive of final results to tolerate further concessions. They are keen enough to foresee that if hell is thrown out and a purgatory substituted, purgatory itself will next be eliminated, leaving us nothing but the millennium and heaven. And how delightful that would be! A free s'ing here, and for all eternity nothing else to do but to ride a cloud and pick a harp and hymn the praises of modern progress as exemplified by the Solons of New England orthodoxy! Perhaps if the luminaries of Andover would take to reading the Fathers, as Newman did, they would discover an exit out of their present complications without having to ruffle, by needless intellectual cross-swordings, the even tenor of their Sabbath ways.

things and bring all things to your mind whatsoever I have said to you.”¹ And in those other words uttered by Christ towards the close of His memorable sojourn amongst men: “Behold, I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world.”² Not that He was actually to remain with *them*, but through them and their successors with the lawful pastors of the Church unto the lapse of all time.

Furthermore, this same truth he discovers underlying the concept of a universal Church such as Christ came to establish. It was His object to construct upon the ruins of ancient narrowness and provincialism an order of things commensurate with the earth itself in the changes which it meditated, and in the salutary influences which it proposed to exert. It was to supplant Paganism and eliminate from the Old Law its types and shadows and exclusive ceremonial, substituting in their stead the gorgeous realities of a wider and holier dispensation. For this reason it was to infuse into the civilization which it came to establish an element of reform, based not upon the circumscribed and effete philosophies of the past, but upon the infinite truth of God and the common needs of human nature. It was to penetrate all times and climes and tribes and peoples of the earth, bearing with it upon the high-tide of its advance the seeds of a lasting and universal progress—a progress which was to give cast and coloring to the language, institutions, opinions, ideas, sentiments, manners and impressions, not of one nation only, but of all men in every age of the world’s history. Such was the expansiveness of its nature and the exalted summons of its destiny, foreshadowed from the outstart in the solemn injunction of Christ to his Apostles: “Go, teach *all* nations.” Yet, far-reaching and magnificent as this scheme was, it would have miscarried had provision not been made to preserve amongst men that oneness of faith which alone could identify them with Christ as Christ is identified with God. And because in the present nature of things such widespread community of belief is not feasible without a corresponding unity of interpretation, there arose an absolute need of an infallible authority to voice upon earth the truth of God uttered in eternity. The Church of Christ, therefore, is necessarily one in its teaching and postulates the prerogative of infallibility, being, as St. Paul very appropriately styles it, “the pillar and ground of truth,” and holding the promise of invincibility by the banded powers of earth and hell. Whatever, then, it declares of faith is undeniably of faith. Now, nothing is of faith except it come of God through the Apos-

¹ John xiv. 16, 26.

² Matthew xxviii. 20.

tles. For the Church is not governed by new revelations, but remains firm and fixed in those received from the beginning, being built, as the Ephesians were instructed, "upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone."¹ This teaching of an infallible authority, so familiar and consolatory to Catholic minds, but upon whose enlargement we cannot enter, is not so very illogical in itself that a Protestant honestly in quest of truth may not arrive at it perforce of unaided effort. Cardinal Newman in his "Arians of the Fourth Century," written before his conversion, bears the following luminous testimony to the verity of this statement. "Surely," says the Cardinal, "the sacred volume was never intended to *teach* us our creed; however certain it is that we can prove our creed from it when it has once been taught us, and in spite of individual producible exceptions to the general rule. From the very first the rule has been, as a matter of fact, for the Church to teach the truth and then appeal to the Scripture in vindication of its own teaching. And, from the first, it has been the error of heretics to neglect the information provided for them, and to attempt of themselves a work to which they are unequal—the eliciting of a systematic doctrine from the scattered notices of the truth which Scripture contains."²

Why, then, if we find a sanction for tradition in the example of Christ and His Apostles, in the words of Scripture and the Fathers, in the typical aspect of the Old Law, yea, and in the ethical concept of religion, why, we ask, does Protestantism deny us the right to wheel it into active service upon the field of modern controversy? The reason is not far to seek. Protestantism could not allow it without stultifying herself in the premises by confessing, after three hundred years of blasphemy and blunder, that she was a vile travesty from the outset. Protestantism could not allow it without precipitating the day of her destiny by anticipating the natural operation of forces destined in their own due time to effect her irreparable ruin. And so she lives on, or rather drags out a lonesome existence from which the light of God's love and man's hope have fled forever; while the Church, crowned with the diadem of truth, grows young as the years grow old, nourished from within and supported by the life-sustaining word of God—beautiful symbol of that other Word, *genitum non factum*, sprung from the bosom of His Father in the twilight of uncreated ages. Her very perpetuity is a standing contradiction of the oft-revamped calumny, that in her overestimate of tradition she has minimized

¹ Ephesians ii, 20.

² The Arians of the Fourth Century, c. i., § iii., 2.

Scripture. True, indeed, she accepts neither one nor the other as the sole principle of her guidance. Taught by the unerring Spirit of God and walking in the footsteps of apostolic times, she treats them as coördinate and supplementary, subordinating them both alike to the infallible dictate of her own divine guidance. She distinguishes between them. True, but the distinction is one which involves no diversity of authority, nor always even a diversity of subject. She credits them both alike with the inspiration of God, and sees no reason why the same truth may not be communicated to the world by a twofold channel of transmission. But, as a matter of historical fact and as a parting tribute to honesty and fair play, let it be acknowledged that the tender and jealous solicitude with which she has cherished the venerable deposit of God's written word through eighteen centuries of human perturbation; her loud and reiterated protest against the liberties taken with it by the modern schools of lax interpretation; her solemn warnings to her children to beware of those who have wrested its meaning to their destruction; her very unwillingness to divorce it from tradition or allow it to have any other sanction than the one she alone can supply—all this and more is evidence sufficient, if any were needed, that she stands acquitted of the charge so often trumped up and flaunted in her face. All this and more is evidence sufficient, if any were needed, that, as far as depends upon her, all things may pass away and be changed, but the truth of the Lord shall endure. *Veritas prævalebit.*
