

Roman Catholic Doctrine Concerning the Rule of Faith

by Charles Hodge

The Roman Catholic doctrine concerning the Rule of Faith emphasizes the importance of both Scripture and tradition, and the infallible authority of the Church in interpreting Scripture.

Scripture: John 17:17, Galatians 1:8, Colossians 2:8, 2 Timothy 3:16

Topics: "Sola Scriptura", "Apostolic Tradition"

Description

Charles Hodge preaches against the Roman Catholic doctrine of tradition, highlighting the rejection of the Rationalists' view of human reason as the source of religious truth. He emphasizes the importance of the Scriptures as the sole authority for faith and practice, rejecting the Romanists' claim of an infallible Church teacher. Hodge argues that tradition is unreliable, leading to error and subverting the authority of the Scriptures, and that the obscurity of tradition makes it unsuitable as a rule of faith accessible to the people. He refutes the Romanists' claim that Protestants receive the New Testament on the authority of tradition, asserting that the Scriptures are believed based on internal evidence, external historical proof, and the witness of the Spirit.

Transcript

§ 1. Statement of the Doctrine.

1. ROMANISTS reject the doctrine of the Rationalists who make human reason either the source or standard of religious truth. It is one of their principles, that faith is merely human when either its object or ground is human. Faith to be divine must have truth supernaturally revealed as its object, and the evidence on which it rests must be the supernatural testimony of God.

2. They reject the Mystical doctrine that divine truth is revealed to every man by the Spirit. They admit an objective, supernatural revelation.

3. They maintain, however, that this revelation is partly written and partly unwritten, that is, the rule of faith includes both Scripture and tradition. Moreover, as the people cannot certainly know what books are of divine origin, and, therefore, entitled to a place in the canon; and as they are incompetent to decide on the meaning of Scripture, or which among the multitude of traditionary doctrines and usages are divine, and which are human, God has made the Church an infallible teacher by which all these points are

determined, whose testimony is the proximate and sufficient ground of faith to the people.

So far as the Romish doctrine concerning the Rule of Faith differs from that of Protestants, it presents the following points for consideration: First, The doctrine of Romanists concerning the Scriptures. Second, Their doctrine concerning tradition. Third, Their doctrine concerning the office and authority of the Church as a teacher.

§ 2. Roman Catholic Doctrine concerning the Scriptures.

On this subject Romanists agree with Protestants, (1.) In teaching the plenary inspiration and consequent infallible authority of the sacred writings. Of these writings the Council of Trent says that God is their author, and that they were written by the dictation of the Holy Spirit ("Spiritu sancto dictante.") (2.) They agree with us in receiving into the sacred canon all the books which we regard as of divine authority.

Romanists differ from Protestants in regard to the Scriptures, --

1. In receiving into the canon certain books which Protestants do not admit to be inspired, namely: Tobit, Judith, Sirach, parts of Esther, the Wisdom of Solomon, First, Second, and Third Books of the Maccabees (the Third Book of Maccabees, however, is not included in the Vulgate), Baruch, the Hymn of the Three Children, Susanna, and Bel and the Dragon. These books are not all included by name in the list given by the Council of Trent. Several of them are parts of the books there enumerated. Thus, the Hymn of the Three Children, Susanna, and Bel and the Dragon, appear as parts of the book of Daniel. Some modern theologians of the Romish Church refer all the apocryphal books to what they call "The Second Canon," and admit that they are not of equal authority with those belonging to the First Canon.¹ The Council of Trent, however, makes no such distinction.

Incompleteness of the Scriptures.

2. A second point of difference is that Romanists deny, and Protestants affirm, the completeness of the sacred Scriptures. That is, Protestants maintain that all the extant supernatural revelations of God, which constitute the rule of faith to his Church, are contained in his written word. Romanists, on the other hand, hold that some doctrines which all Christians are bound to believe, are only imperfectly revealed in the Scriptures; that others are only obscurely intimated; and that others are not therein contained at all. The Preface to the Romish Catechism (Quest. 12) says, "Omnis doctrinae ratio, quae fidelibus tradenda sit, verbo Dei continetur, quod in scripturam traditionesque distributum est." Bellarmin² says expressly, "Nos asserimus, in Scripturis non contineri expresse totam doctrinam necessariam, sive de fide sive de moribus; et proinde praeter verbum Dei scriptum requiri etiam verbum Dei non-scriptum, i. e., divinas et apostolicas traditiones." On this point the Romish theologians are of one mind; but what the doctrines are, which are thus imperfectly revealed in the Scriptures, or merely implied, or entirely omitted, has never been authoritatively decided by the Church of Rome. The theologians of that Church, with more or less unanimity, refer to one or the other of these classes the following doctrines: (1.) The canon of Scripture. (2.) The inspiration of the sacred writers. (3.) The full doctrine of the Trinity. (4.) The personality and divinity of the Holy Spirit. (5.) Infant baptism (6.) The observance of Sunday as the Christian Sabbath. (7.) The threefold orders of the ministry. (8.) The government of the Church by bishops. (9.) The perpetuity of the apostleship. (10.) The grace of orders. (11.) The sacrificial nature of the Eucharist. (12.) The seven sacraments. (13.) Purgatory. It lies in the interests of the advocates of tradition to depreciate the Scriptures, and to show how much the Church would lose if she had no other source of knowledge of divine truth but the written word. On this subject the author of No. 85 of the Oxford Tracts, when speaking

even of essential doctrines, says,³ "It is a near thing that they are in the Scriptures at all. The wonder is that they are all there. Humanly judging they would not be there but for God's interposition; and, therefore, since they are there by a sort of accident, it is not strange they shall be but latent there, and only indirectly producible thence." "The gospel doctrine," says the same writer, "is but indirectly and covertly recorded in Scripture under the surface."

Tradition is always represented by Romanists as not only the interpreter, but the complement of the Scriptures. The Bible, therefore, is, according to the Church of Rome, incomplete. It does not contain all the Church is bound to believe; nor are the doctrines which it does contain, therein fully or clearly made known.

Obscurity of the Scriptures.

3. The third point of difference between Romanists and Protestants relates to the perspicuity of Scripture, and the right of private judgment. Protestants hold that the Bible; being addressed to the people, is sufficiently perspicuous to be understood by them, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; and that they are entitled and bound to search the Scriptures and to judge for themselves what is its true meaning. Romanists, on the other hand, teach that the Scriptures are so obscure that they need a visible, present, and infallible interpreter; and that the people, being incompetent to understand them, are bound to believe whatever doctrines the Church, through its official organs, declares to be true and divine. On this subject the Council of Trent (Sess. 4), says: "Ad coercenda petulantia ingenia decernit (Synodus), ut nemo, suae prudentiae innixus in rebus fidei et morum ad aedificationem doctrinae Christiana pertinentium, Sacram Scripturam ad suas sensus contorquens contra eum sensum, quem tenuit et tenet sancta mater Ecclesia, cujus est judicare de vero sensu et interpretatione Scripturarum Sanctarum, aut etiam contra unanimem consensum patrum ipsam scripturam sacram interpretari audeat, etiamsi hujus modi interpretationes nullo unquam tempore in lucem edendae forent. Qui contravenerint, per ordinarios declarentur et poenis a jure statutis puniantur." Bellarmin⁴ says: "Non ignorabat Deus multas in Ecclesia exorituras difficultates circa fidem, debuit igitur judicem aliquem Ecclesiae providere. At iste iudex non potest esse Scriptura, neque Spiritus revelans privatus, neque princeps secularis, igitur princeps ecclesiasticus vel solus vel certe cum consilio et consensu coepiscoporum."

From this view of the obscurity of Scripture it follows that the use of the sacred volume by the people, is discountenanced by the Church of Rome, although its use has never been prohibited by any General Council. Such prohibitions, however, have repeatedly been issued by the Popes; as by Gregory VII., Innocent III., Clemens XI., and Pius IV., who made the liberty to read any vernacular version of the Scriptures, dependent on the permission of the priest. There have been, however, many Romish prelates and theologians who encouraged the general reading of the Bible. The spirit of the Latin Church and the effects of its teaching, are painfully manifested by the fact that the Scriptures are practically inaccessible to the mass of the people in strictly Roman Catholic countries.

The Latin Vulgate.

4. The fourth point of difference concerns the authority due to the Latin Vulgate. On this subject the Council of Trent (Sess. 4), says: "Synodus considerans non parum utilitatis accedere posse Ecclesiae Dei, si ex omnibus Latinis editionibus quae circumferentur, sacrorum librorum, quaedam pro authentica habenda sit, innotescat: statuit et declarat, ut haec ipsa vetus et vulgata editio, quae longo tot seculorum usu in ipsa Ecclesia probata est, in publicis lectionibus, disputationibus, praedicationibus et expositionibus

pro authentica habeatur et nemo illam rejicere quovis praetextu audeat vel praesumat." The meaning of this decree is a matter of dispute among Romanists themselves. Some of the more modern and liberal of their theologians say that the Council simply intended to determine which among several Latin versions was to be used in the service of the Church. They contend that it was not meant to forbid appeal to the original Scriptures, or to place the Vulgate on a par with them in authority. The earlier and stricter Romanists take the ground that the Synod did intend to forbid an appeal to the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, and to make the Vulgate the ultimate authority. The language of the Council seems to favor this interpretation. The Vulgate was to be used not only for the ordinary purposes of public instruction, but in all theological discussions, and in all works of exegesis.

§ 3. Tradition.

The word tradition (para,dosij) means, (1.) The art of delivering over from one to another. (2.) The thing delivered or communicated. In the New Testament it is used (a.) For instructions delivered from some to others, without reference to the mode of delivery, whether it be orally or by writing; as in 2 Thess. ii. 15, "Hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle;" and iii. 6, "Withdraw yourself from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us." (b.) For the oral instructions of the fathers handed down from generation to generation, but not contained in the Scriptures, and yet regarded as authoritative. In this sense our Lord so frequently speaks of "the traditions of the Pharisees." (c.) In Gal. i. 14, where Paul speaks of his zeal for the traditions of his fathers, it may include both the written and unwritten instructions which he had received. What he was so zealous about, was the whole system of Judaism as he had been taught it.

In the early Church the word was used in this wide sense. Appeal was constantly made to "the traditions," i. e., the instructions which the churches had received. It was only certain churches at first which had any of the written instructions of the Apostles. And it was not until the end of the first century that the writings of the Evangelists and Apostles were collected, and formed into a canon, or rule of faith. And when the books of the New Testament had been collected, the fathers spoke of them as containing the traditions, i. e., the instructions derived from Christ and his Apostles. They called the Gospels "the evangelical traditions," and the Epistles "the apostolical traditions." In that age of the Church the distinction between the written and unwritten word had not yet been distinctly made. But as controversies arose, and disputants on both sides of all questions appealed to "tradition," i. e., to what they had been taught; and when it was found that these traditions differed, one church saying their teachers had always taught them one thing, and another that theirs had taught them the opposite, it was felt that there should be some common and authoritative standard. Hence the wisest and best of the fathers insisted on abiding by the written word, and receiving nothing as of divine authority not contained therein. In this, however, it must be confessed they were not always consistent. Whenever prescription, usage, or conviction founded on unwritten evidence, was available against an adversary, they did not hesitate to make the most of it. During all the early centuries, therefore, the distinction between Scripture and tradition was not so sharply drawn as it has been since the controversies between Romanists and Protestants, and especially since the decisions of the Council of Trent.

Tridentine Doctrine.

That Council, and the Latin Church as a body, teach on this subject, -- (1.) That Christ and his Apostles taught many things which were not committed to writing, i. e., not recorded in the Sacred Scriptures. (2.) That these instructions have been faithfully transmitted, and preserved in the Church. (3.) That they

constitute a part of the rule of faith for all believers.

These particulars are included in the following extracts from the acts of the Council: "Synodus -- perspiciens hanc veritatem et disciplinam contineri in libris scriptis et sine scripto traditionibus, quae ex ipsius Christi ore ab apostolis acceptae, aut ab ipsis apostolis, Spiritu Sancto dictante, quasi per manus traditae, ad nos usque pervenerunt; orthodoxorum patrum exempla secuta, omnes libros tam Veteris quam Novi Testamenti, cum utriusque unus Deus sit auctor, nec non traditiones ipsas, tum ad fidem tum ad mores pertinentes, tanquam vel ore tenus a Christo, vel a Spiritu Sancto dictatas, et continua successione in Ecclesia Catholica conservatas, pari pietatis affectu et reverentia suscipit et veneratur."⁵

Bellarmin⁶ divides traditions into three classes: divine, apostolical, and ecclesiastical. "Divinae dicuntur quae acceptae sunt ab ipso Christo apostolos docente, et nusquam in divinis literis inveniuntur. . . . Apostolicae traditiones proprie dicuntur illae, quae ab apostolis institutae sunt, non tamen sine assistentia Spiritus Sancti et nihilominus non extant scriptae in eorum epistolis. . . . Ecclesiasticae traditiones proprie dicuntur consuetudines quaedam antiquae vel a praelatis vel a populis inchoatae, quae paulatim tacito consensu populorum vim legis obtinuerunt. Et quidem traditiones divinae eandem vim habent, quam divinae praecepta sive divina doctrina scripta in Evangeliiis. Et similiter apostolicae traditiones non scriptae eandem vim habent, quam apostolicae, traditiones scriptae. . . . Ecclesiasticae autem traditiones eandem vim habent, quam decreta et constitutiones ecclesiasticae, scriptae."

Petrus a Soto, quoted by Chemnitz⁷ says, "Infallibilis est regula et catholica. Quaecumque credit, tenet, et servat Romana Ecclesia, et in Scripturis non habentur, illa ab apostolis esse tradita; item quarum observationum initium, author et origo ignoretur, vel inveniri non potest, illas extra omnem dubitationem ab apostolia tradita esse."

From this it appears, 1. That these traditions are called unwritten because not contained in the Scriptures. They are, for the most part, now to be found written in the works of the Fathers, decisions of councils, ecclesiastical constitutions, and rescripts of the Popes.

2. The office of tradition is to convey a knowledge of doctrines, precepts, and institutions not contained in Scripture; and also to serve as a guide to the proper understanding of what is therein written. Tradition, therefore, in the Church of Rome, is both the supplement and interpretation of the written word.

3. The authority due to tradition is the same as that which belongs to the Scriptures. Both are to be received "pari pietatis affectu et reverentia." Both are derived from the same source; both are received through the same channel; and both are authenticated by the same witness. This authority, however, belongs properly only to traditions regarded as divine or apostolical. Those termed ecclesiastical are of less importance, relating to rites and usages. Still for them is claimed an authority virtually divine, as they are enjoined by a church which claims to have been endowed by Christ with full power to ordain rites and ceremonies.

4. The criteria by which to distinguish between true and false traditions, are either antiquity and catholicity, or the testimony of the extant Church. Sometimes the one, and sometimes the other is urged. The Council of Trent gives the former; so does Bellarmin, and so do the majority of Romish theologians. This is the famous rule established by Vincent of Lerins in the fifth century, "quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus." On all occasions, however, the ultimate appeal is to the decision of the Church. Whatever the Church declares to be a part of the revelation committed to her, is to be received as of divine authority, at the peril of salvation.

§ 4. The Office of the Church as Teacher.

1. Romanists define the Church to be the company of men professing the same faith, united in the communion of the same sacraments, subject to lawful pastors, and specially to the Pope. By the first clause they exclude from the Church all infidels and heretics; by the second, all the unbaptized; by the third, all who are not subject to bishops having canonical succession; and by the fourth, all who do not acknowledge the Bishop of Rome to be the head of the Church on earth. It is this external, visible society thus constituted, that God has made an authoritative and infallible teacher.

2. The Church is qualified for this office: first, by the communication of all the revelations of God, written and unwritten; and secondly, by the constant presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit preserving it from all error in its instructions. On this point the "Roman Catechism,"⁸ says: "Quemadmodum haec una Ecclesia errare non potest in fidei ac morum disciplina tradenda, cum a Spiritu Sancto gubernetur; ita ceteras omnes, quae sibi ecclesiae nomen arrogat, ut quae Diaboli spiritu ducantur, in doctrinae et morum perniciosissimis erroribus versari necesse est." And Bellarmin,⁹ "Nostra sententia est Ecclesiam absolute non posse errare nec in rebus absolute necessariis nec in aliis, quae credenda vel facienda nobis proponit, sive habeantur expresse in Scripturis, sive non."

3. The Church, according to these statements, is infallible only as to matters of faith and morals. Its infallibility does not extend over the domains of history, philosophy, or science. Some theologians would even limit the infallibility of the Church, to essential doctrines. But the Church of Rome does not make the distinction, recognised by all Protestants, between essential and non-essential doctrines. With Romanists, that is essential, or necessary, which the Church pronounces to be a part of the revelation of God. Bellarmin -- than whom there is no greater authority among Romish theologians -- says that the Church can err "nec in rebus absolute necessariis nec in aliis," i. e., neither in things in their own nature necessary, nor in those which become necessary when determined and enjoined. It has been disputed among Romanists, whether the Church is infallible in matters of fact as well as in matters of doctrine. By facts, in this discussion, are not meant facts of history or science, but facts involved in doctrinal decisions. When the Pope condemned certain propositions taken from the works of Jansenius, his disciples had to admit that those propositions were erroneous; but they denied that they were contained, in the sense condemned, in the writings of their master. To this the Jesuits replied, that the infallibility of the Church extended in such cases as much to the fact as to the doctrine. This the Jansenists denied.

The Organs of the Church's Infallibility.

4. As to the organs of the Church in its infallible teaching, there are two theories, the Episcopal and Papal, or, as they are designated from their principal advocates, the Gallican and the Transmontane. According to the former, the bishops, in their collective capacity, as the official successors of the Apostles, are infallible as teachers. Individual bishops may err, the body or college of bishops cannot err. Whatever the bishops of any age of the Church unite in teaching, is, for that age, the rule of faith. This concurrence of judgment need not amount to entire unanimity. The greater part, the common judgment of the episcopate, is all that is required. To their decision all dissentients are bound to submit. This general judgment may be pronounced in a council, representing the whole Church, or in any other way in which agreement may be satisfactorily indicated. Acquiescence in the decisions of even a provincial council, or of the Pope, or the several bishops, each in his own diocese, teaching the same doctrine, is sufficient proof of consent.

The Transmontane Theory.

According to the Papal, or Transmontane theory, the Pope is the organ through which the infallible judgment of the Church is pronounced. He is the vicar of Christ. He is not subject to a general council. He is not required to consult other bishops before he gives his decision. This infallibility is not personal, but official. As a man the Pope may be immoral, heretical, or infidel; as Pope, when speaking *ex cathedra*, he is the organ of the Holy Ghost. The High-Priest among the Jews might be erroneous in faith, or immoral in conduct, but when consulting God in his official capacity, he was the mere organ of divine communication. Such, in few words, is the doctrine of Romanists concerning the Rule of Faith.

In the recent Ecumenical Council, held in the Vatican, after a protracted struggle, the Transmontane doctrine was sanctioned. It is, therefore, now obligatory on all Romanists to believe that the Pope, when speaking *ex cathedra*, is infallible.

§ 5. Examination of the Romish Doctrine.

Hundreds of volumes have been written in the discussion of the various points included in the theory above stated. Only a most cursory view of the controversy can be given in such a work as this. So far as Romanists differ from us on the canon of Scripture, the examination of their views belongs to the department of Biblical literature. What concerns their doctrine of the incompleteness and obscurity of the written word, and the consequent necessity of an infallible, visible interpreter, can better be said under the head of the Protestant doctrine of the Rule of Faith. The two points to be now considered are Tradition and the office of the Church as a teacher. These subjects are so related that it is difficult to keep them distinct. Tradition is the teaching of the Church, and the teaching of the Church is tradition. These subjects are not only thus intimately related, but they are generally included under the same head in the Catholic Symbols. Nevertheless, they are distinct, and involve very different principles. They should, therefore, be considered separately.

§ 6. Examination of the Doctrine of the Church of Rome on Tradition.

A. Difference between Tradition and the Analogy of Faith.

1. The Romish doctrine of tradition differs essentially from the Protestant doctrine of the analogy of faith. Protestants admit that there is a kind of tradition within the limits of the sacred Scriptures themselves. One generation of sacred writers received the whole body of truth taught by those who preceded them. There was a tradition of doctrine, a traditionary *usus loquendi*, traditionary figures, types, and symbols. The revelation of God in his Word begins in a fountain, and flows in a continuous stream ever increasing in volume. We are governed by this tradition of truth running through the whole sacred volume. All is consistent. One part cannot contradict another. Each part must be interpreted so as to bring it into harmony with the whole. This is only saying that Scripture must explain Scripture.

2. Again, Protestants admit that as there has been an uninterrupted tradition of truth from the protevangelium to the close; of the Apocalypse, so there has been a stream of traditionary teaching flowing through the Christian Church from the day of Pentecost to the present time. This tradition is so far a rule of faith that nothing contrary to it can be true. Christians do not stand isolated, each holding his own creed. They constitute one body, having one common creed. Rejecting that creed, or any of its parts, is the rejection of the fellowship of Christians, incompatible with the communion of saints, or membership in the body of Christ. In other words, Protestants admit that there is a common faith of the Church, which no man is at liberty to reject, and which no man can reject and be a Christian. They acknowledge the authority of this common faith for two reasons. First, because what all the competent readers of a plain

book take to be its meaning, must be its meaning. Secondly, because the Holy Spirit is promised to guide the people of God into the knowledge of the truth, and therefore that which they, under the teachings of the Spirit, agree in believing must be true. There are certain fixed doctrines among Christians, as there are among Jews and Mohammedans, which are no longer open questions. The doctrines of the Trinity, of the divinity and incarnation of the eternal Son of God; of the personality and divinity of the Holy Spirit; of the apostasy and sinfulness of the human race; the doctrines of the expiation of sin through the death of Christ and of salvation through his merits; of regeneration and sanctification by the Holy Ghost; of the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and of the life everlasting, have always entered into the faith of every recognized, historical church on the face of the earth, and cannot now be legitimately called into question by any pretending to be Christians.

Some of the more philosophical of the Romish theologians would have us believe that this is all they mean by tradition. They insist, they say, only on the authority of common consent. Thus Moehler, Professor of Theology at Munich, in his "Symbolik, oder Darstellung der Dogmatischen Gegensätze," says, "Tradition, in the subjective sense of the word, is the common faith, or consciousness of the Church."¹⁰ "The ever-living word in the hearts of believers."¹¹ It is, he says, what Eusebius means by by *evkklhqiaspikon fro,nhma*; what Vincent of Lerins intends by the *ecclesiastica intelligentia*, and the Council of Trent by the *universus ecelesicae sensus*. "In the objective sense of the word," Moehler says that "Tradition is the common faith of the Church as presented in external, historical witnesses through all centuries." "In this latter sense," he tells us, "tradition is commonly viewed when spoken of as a guide to the interpretation of the rule of Faith."¹² He admits that in this sense "Tradition contains nothing beyond what is taught in Scripture; the two as to their content, are one and the same."¹³ Nevertheless, he acknowledges that in the Church of Rome many things were handed down from the Apostles which are not contained in the Scriptures. This fact he does not deny. He admits that such additional revelations, or such revelations in addition to those contained in the written word, are of the highest importance. But he soon dismisses the subject, and devotes his strength to the first-mentioned view of the nature and office of tradition, and holds that up as the peculiar doctrine of Romanism as opposed to the Protestant doctrine. Protestants, however, admit the fact and the authority of a common consciousness and a common faith, or common sense of the Church, while they reject the real and peculiar doctrine of Rome on this subject.

B. Points of Difference between the Romish Doctrine and that of Protestants on Common Consent.

The points of difference between the Protestant doctrine concerning the common faith of the Church and the Roman Catholic doctrine of tradition are : -- First. When Protestants speak of common consent of Christians, they understand by Christians the true people of God. Romanists on the other hand, mean the company of those who profess the true faith, and who are subject to the Pope of Rome. There is the greatest possible difference between the authority due to the common faith of truly regenerated, holy men, the temples of the Holy Ghost, and that due to what a society of nominal Christians profess to believe, the great majority of whom may be worldly, immoral, and irreligious.

Secondly. The common consent for which Protestants plead concerns only essential doctrines; that is, doctrines which enter into the very nature of Christianity as a religion, and which are necessary to its subjective existence in the heart, or which if they do not enter essentially into the religious experience of believers, are so connected with vital doctrines as not to admit of separation from them. Romanists, on the contrary, plead the authority of tradition for all kinds of doctrines and precepts, for rites and ceremonies, and ecclesiastical institutions, which have nothing to do with the life of the Church, and are entirely outside of the sphere of the promised guidance of the Spirit. Our Lord, in promising the Spirit to guide his people

into the knowledge of truths necessary to their salvation, did not promise to preserve them from error in subordinate matters, or to give them supernatural knowledge of the organization of the Church, the number of the sacraments, or the power of bishops. The two theories, therefore, differ not only as to the class of persons who are guided by the Spirit, but also as to the class of subjects in relation to which that guidance is promised.

Thirdly. A still more important difference is, that the common faith of the Church for which Protestants contend, is faith in doctrines plainly revealed in Scripture. It does not extend beyond those doctrines. It owes its whole authority to the fact that it is a common understanding of the written word, attained and preserved under that teaching of the Spirit, which secures to believers a competent knowledge of the plan of salvation therein revealed. On the other hand, tradition is with the Romanists entirely independent of the Scriptures. They plead for a common consent in doctrines not contained in the Word of God, or which cannot be proved therefrom.

Fourthly. Protestants do not regard "common consent" either as an informant or as a ground of faith. With them the written word is the only source of knowledge of what God has revealed for our salvation, and his testimony therein is the only ground of our faith. Whereas, with Romanists, tradition is not only an informant of what is to be believed, but the witness on whose testimony faith is to be yielded. It is one thing to say that the fact that all the true people of God, under the guidance of the Spirit, believe that certain doctrines are taught in Scripture, is an unanswerable argument that they are really taught therein, and quite another thing to say that because an external society, composed of all sorts of men, to whom no promise of divine guidance has been given, agree in holding certain doctrines, therefore we are bound to receive those doctrines as part of the revelation of God.

C. Tradition and Development.

The Romish doctrine of tradition is not to be confounded with the modern doctrine of development. All Protestants admit that there has been, in one sense, an uninterrupted development of theology in the Church, from the apostolic age to the present time. All the facts, truths, doctrines, and principles, which enter into Christian theology, are in the Bible. They are there as fully and as clearly at one time as at another; at the beginning as they are now. No addition has been made to their number, and no new explanation has been afforded of their nature or relations.

The same is true of the facts of nature. They are now what they have been from the beginning. They are, however, far better known, and more clearly understood now than they were a thousand years ago. The mechanism of the heavens was the same in the days of Pythagoras as it was in those of La Place; and yet the astronomy of the latter was immeasurably in advance of that of the former. The change was effected by a continual and gradual progress. The same progress has taken place in theological knowledge.

Every believer is conscious of such progress in his own experience. When he was a child, he thought as a child. As he grew in years, he grew in knowledge of the Bible. He increased not only in the compass, but in the clearness, order, and harmony of his knowledge. This is just as true of the Church collectively as of the individual Christian. It is, in the first place, natural, if not inevitable, that it should be so. The Bible, although so clear and simple in its teaching, that he who runs may read and learn enough to secure his salvation, is still full of the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God; full of ta. ba,qh tou/ qeou/, the profoundest truths concerning all the great problems which have taxed the intellect of man from the beginning.

These truths are not systematically stated, but scattered, so to speak, promiscuously over the sacred pages, just as the facts of science are scattered over the face of nature, or hidden in its depths. Every man knows that there is unspeakably more in the Bible than he has yet learned, as every man of science knows that there is unspeakably more in nature than he has yet discovered, or understands. It stands to reason that such a book, being the subject of devout and laborious study, century after century, by able and faithful men, should come to be better and better understood.

And as in matters of science, although one false theory after another, founded on wrong principles or on an imperfect induction of facts, has passed away, yet real progress is made, and the ground once gained is never lost, so we should naturally expect it to be with the study of the Bible. False views, false inferences, misapprehensions, ignoring of some facts, and misinterpretations, might be expected to come and go, in endless succession, but nevertheless a steady progress in the knowledge of what the Bible teaches be accomplished. And we might also expect that here, too, the ground once surely gained would not again be lost.

But, in the second place, what is thus natural and reasonable in itself is a patent historical fact. The Church has thus advanced in theological knowledge. The difference between the confused and discordant representations of the early fathers on all subjects connected with the doctrines of the Trinity and of the person of Christ, and the clearness, precision, and consistency of the views presented after ages of discussion, and the statement of these doctrines by the Councils of Chalcedon and Constantinople, is as great almost as between chaos and cosmos. And this ground has never been lost. The same is true with regard to the doctrines of sin and grace. Before the long-continued discussion of these subjects in the Augustinian period, the greatest confusion and contradiction prevailed in the teachings of the leaders of the Church; during those discussions the views of the Church became clear and settled. There is scarcely a principle or doctrine concerning the fall of man, the nature of sin and guilt, inability, the necessity of the Spirit's influence, etc., etc., which now enters into the faith of evangelical Christians, which was not then clearly stated and authoritatively sanctioned by the Church. In like manner, before the Reformation, similar confusion existed with regard to the great doctrine of justification. No clear line of discrimination was drawn between it and sanctification. Indeed, during the Middle Ages, and among the most devout of the schoolmen, the idea of guilt was merged in the general idea of sin, and sin regarded as merely moral defilement. The great object was to secure holiness. Then pardon would come of course. The apostolic, Pauline, deeply Scriptural doctrine, that there can be no holiness until sin be expiated, that pardon, justification, and reconciliation, must precede sanctification, was never clearly apprehended. This was the grand lesson which the Church learned at the Reformation, and which it has never since forgot. It is true then, as an historical fact, that the Church has advanced. It understands the great doctrines of theology, anthropology, and soteriology, far better now, than they were understood in the early post-apostolic age of the Church.

Modern Theory of Development.

Very distinct from the view above presented is the modern theory of the organic development of the Church. This modern theory is avowedly founded on the pantheistic principles of Schelling and Hegel. With them the universe is the self-manifestation and evolution of the absolute Spirit. Dr. Schaff¹⁴ says, that this theory "has left an impression on German science that can never be effaced; and has contributed more than any other influence to diffuse a clear conception of the interior organism of history."

In his work on the "Principles of Protestantism,"¹⁵ Dr. Schaff says that Schelling and Hegel taught the world to recognize in history "the ever opening sense of eternal thoughts, an always advancing rational development of the idea of humanity, and its relations to God." This theory of historical development was adopted, and partially Christianized by Schleiermacher, from whom it has passed over to Dr. Schaff, as set forth in his work above quoted, as well as to many other equally devout and excellent men.

The basis of this modified theory is realism. Humanity is a generic life, an intelligent substance. That life became guilty and polluted in Adam. From him it passed over by a process of natural, organic development (the same numerical life and substance) to all his posterity, who therefore are guilty and polluted. This generic life the Son of God assumed into union with his divine nature, and thus healed it and raised it to a higher power or order. He becomes a new starting-point.

The origin of this new form of life in Him is supernatural. The constitution of his person was a miracle. But from Him this life is communicated by a natural process of development to the Church. Its members are partakers of this new generic life. It is, however, a germ. What ever lives grows. "Whatever is done is dead." This new life is Christianity. Christianity is not a form of doctrine objectively revealed in the Scriptures. Christian theology is not the knowledge, or systematic exhibition of what the Bible teaches.

It is the interpretation of this inner life. The intellectual life of a child expressed itself in one way, of a boy in another way, and of a man in another and higher way. In each stage of his progress the man has views, feelings, and modes of thinking, appropriate to that stage. It would not do for a man to have the same views and thoughts as the child. Yet the latter are just as true, as right, and as proper, for the child, as those of the man for the man. It is thus with the Church.

It passes through these stages of childhood, youth, and manhood, by a regular process. During the first centuries the Church had the indistinctness, vagueness, and exaggeration of views and doctrines, belonging to a period of infancy. In the Middle Ages it had a higher form. At the Reformation it advanced to the entrance on another stage. The form assumed by Christianity during the mediaeval period, was for that period the true and proper, but not the permanent form. We have not reached that form as to doctrine yet. That will be reached in the Church of the future.

Development as held by some Romanists.

There is still another and very different form of the doctrine of development. It does not assume the Mystical doctrine of the indwelling of the substance of Christ, in the soul, the development of which works out its illumination in the knowledge of the truth, and finally its complete redemption. It admits that Christianity is, or includes a system of doctrine, and that those doctrines are in the Scriptures; but holds that many of them are there only in their rudiments. Under the constant guidance and tuition of the Spirit, the Church comes to understand all that these rudiments contain, and to expand them in their fulness. Thus the Lord's Supper has been expanded into the doctrine of transubstantiation and the sacrifice of the mass; anointing the sick, into the sacrament of extreme unction; rules of discipline into the sacrament of penance, of satisfactions, of indulgences, of purgatory, and masses and prayers for the dead; the prominence of Peter, into the supremacy of the Pope. The Old Testament contains the germ of all the doctrines unfolded in the New; and so the New Testament contains the germs of all the doctrines unfolded, under the guidance of the Spirit, in the theology of the mediaeval Church.

Although attempts have been made by some Romanists and Anglicans to resolve the doctrine of tradition into one or other of these theories of development, they are essentially different. The only point of analogy

between them is, that in both cases, little becomes much. Tradition has made contributions to the faith and institutions of the Christian Church; and development (in the two latter forms of the doctrine above mentioned) provides for a similar expansion.

The Real Question.

The real status quaestionis, on this subject, as between Romanists and Protestants, is not (1) Whether the Spirit of God leads true believers into the knowledge of the truth; nor (2) whether true Christians agree in all essential matters as to truth and duty; nor (3) whether any man can safely or innocently dissent from this common faith of the people of God; but (4) whether apart from the revelation contained in the Bible, there is another supplementary and explanatory revelation, which has been handed down outside of the Scriptures, by tradition. In other words, whether there are doctrines, institutions, and ordinances, having no warrant in the Scriptures, which we as Christians are bound to receive and obey on the authority of what is called common consent. This Romanists affirm and Protestants deny.

D. Arguments against the Doctrine of Tradition.

The heads of argument against the Romish doctrine on this subject are the following: --

I. It involves a natural impossibility. It is of course conceded that Christ and his Apostles said and did much that is not recorded in the Scriptures; and it is further admitted that if we had any certain knowledge of such unrecorded instructions, they would be of equal authority with what is written in the Scriptures. But Protestants maintain that they were not intended to constitute a part of the permanent rule of faith to the Church. They were designed for the men of that generation. The showers which fell a thousand years ago, watered the earth and rendered it fruitful for men then living. They cannot now be gathered up and made available for us. They did not constitute a reservoir for the supply of future generations. In like manner the unrecorded teachings of Christ and his Apostles did their work. They were not designed for our instruction. It is as impossible to learn what they were, as it is to gather up the leaves which adorned and enriched the earth when Christ walked in the garden of Gethsemane. This impossibility arises out of the limitations of our nature, as well as its corruption consequent on the fall. Man has not the clearness of perception, the retentiveness of memory, or the power of presentation, to enable him (without supernatural aid) to give a trustworthy account of a discourse once heard, a few years or even months after its delivery. And that this should be done over and over from month to month for thousands of years, is an impossibility. If to this be added the difficulty in the way of this oral transmission, arising from the blindness of men to the things of the Spirit, which prevents their understanding what they hear, and from the disposition to pervert and misrepresent the truth to suit their own prejudices and purposes, it must be acknowledged that tradition cannot be a reliable source of knowledge of religious truth. This is universally acknowledged and acted upon, except by Romanists. No one pretends to determine what Luther and Calvin, Latimer and Cranmer, taught, except from contemporaneous written records. Much less will any sane man pretend to know what Moses and the prophets taught except from their own writings.

Romanists admit the force of this objection. They admit that tradition would not be a trustworthy informant of what Christ and the Apostles taught, without the supernatural intervention of God. Tradition is to be trusted not because it comes down through the hands of fallible men, but because it comes through an infallibly guided Church. This, however, is giving up the question. It is merging the authority of tradition into the authority of the Church. There is no need of the former, if the latter be admitted. Romanists, however, keep these two things distinct. They say that if the Gospels had never been written, they would know by

historical tradition the facts of Christ's life; and that if his discourses and the epistles of the Apostles had never been gathered up and recorded, they would by the same means know the truths which they contain. They admit, however, that this could not be without a special divine intervention.

No Promise of Divine Intervention.

2. The second objection of Protestants to this theory is, that it is unphilosophical and irreligious to assume a supernatural intervention on the part of God, without promise and without proof, merely to suit a purpose, -- Deus ex machina.

Our Lord promised to preserve his Church from fatal apostasy; He promised to send his Spirit to abide with his people, to teach them; He promised that He would be with them to the end of the world. But these promises were not made to any external, visible organization of professing Christians, whether Greek or Latin; nor did they imply that any such Church should be preserved from all error in faith or practice; much less do they imply that instructions not recorded by the dictation of the Spirit, should be preserved and transmitted from generation to generation. There is no such promise in the Word of God, and as such preservation and transmission without divine, supernatural interposition, would be impossible, tradition cannot be a trustworthy informant of what Christ taught.

No Criterion.

3. Romanists again admit that many false traditions have prevailed in different ages and in different parts of the Church. Those who receive them are confident of their genuineness, and zealous in their support. How shall the line be drawn between the true and false? By what criterion can the one be distinguished from the other? Protestants say there is no such criterion, and therefore, if the authority of tradition be admitted, the Church is exposed to a flood of superstition and error. This is their third argument against the Romish doctrine on this subject. Romanists, however say they have a sure criterion in antiquity and universality. They have formulated their rule of judgment in the famous dictum of Vincent of Lerins: "Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus."

Common Consent not a Criterion.

To this Protestants reply, -- First, That they admit the authority of common consent among true Christians as to what is taught in the Scriptures. So far as all the true people of God agree in their interpretation of the Bible, we acknowledge ourselves bound to submit. But this consent is of authority only, (a) So far as it is the consent of true believers; (b) So far as it concerns the meaning of the written word; and, (c) So far as it relates to the practical, experimental, or essential doctrines of Christianity. Such consent as to matters outside of the Bible, or even supposed to be in the Bible, if they do not concern the foundation of our faith, is of no decisive weight. The whole Christian world, without one dissenting voice, believed for ages that the Bible taught that the sun moves round the earth. No man now believes it.

Secondly, Common consent as to Christian doctrine cannot be pleaded except within narrow limits. It is only on the gratuitous and monstrous assumption that Romanists are the only Christians, that the least plausibility can be given to the claim of common consent. The argument is really this: The Church of Rome receives certain doctrines on the authority of tradition. The Church of Rome includes all true Christians. Therefore, the common consent of all Christians may be claimed in favour of those doctrines.

But, thirdly, admitting that the Church of Rome is the whole Church, and admitting that Church to be unanimous in holding certain doctrines, that is no proof that that Church has always held them. The rule requires that a doctrine must be held not only *ab omnibus*, but *semper*. It is, however, a historical fact that all the peculiar doctrines of Romanism were not received in the early Church as matters of faith. Such doctrines as the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome; the perpetuity of the apostleship, the grace of orders; transubstantiation; the propitiatory sacrifice of the Mass; the power of the priests to forgive sins; the seven sacraments; purgatory: the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary, etc., etc., can all be historically traced in their origin, gradual development, and final adoption. As it would be unjust to determine the theology of Calvin and Beza from the Socinianism of modern Geneva; or that of Luther from the theology of the Germans of our day; so it is utterly unreasonable to infer that because the Latin Church believes all that the Council of Trent pronounced to be true, that such was its faith in the first centuries of its history. It is not to be denied that for the first hundred years after the Reformation the Church of England was Calvinistic; then under Archbishop Laud and the Stuarts it became almost thoroughly Romanized; then it became to a large extent Rationalistic, so that Bishop Burnet said of the men of his day, that Christianity seemed to be regarded as a fable "among all persons of discernment." To this succeeded a general revival of evangelical doctrine and piety, and that has been followed by a like revival of Romanism and Ritualism. Mr. Newman¹⁶ says of the present time: "In the Church of England, we shall hardly find ten or twenty neighboring clergymen who agree together; and that, not in non-essentials of religion, but as to what are its elementary and necessary doctrines; or as to the fact whether there are any necessary doctrines at all, any distinct and definite faith required for salvation." Such is the testimony of history. In no external, visible Church, has there been a consent to any form of faith, *semper et ab omnibus*.

The Latin Church is no exception to this remark. It is an undeniable fact of history that Arianism prevailed for years both in the East and West; that it received the sanction of the vast majority of the bishops, of provincial and ecumenical councils, and of the Bishop of Rome. It is no less certain that in the Latin Church, Augustinianism, including all the characteristic doctrines of what is now called Calvinism, was declared to be the true faith by council after council, provincial and general, and by bishops and popes. Soon, however, Augustinianism lost its ascendancy. For seven or eight centuries no one form of doctrine concerning sin, grace, and predestination prevailed in the Latin Church. Augustinianism, Semi-Pelagianism, and Mysticism (equally irreconcilable with both), were in constant conflict; and that, too, on questions on which the Church had already pronounced its judgment. It was not until the beginning of the sixteenth century that the Council of Trent, after long conflict within itself, gave its sanction to a modified form of Semi-Pelagianism.

The claim, therefore, for common consent, as understood by Romanists, is contrary to history. It is inconsistent with undeniable facts. This is virtually admitted by Romanists themselves. For with them it is common to say, We believe because the fifth century believed. But this is a virtual admission that their peculiar faith is not historically traceable beyond the fifth century. This admission of a want of all historical evidence of "common consent" is also involved, as before remarked, in their constant appeal to the authority of the Church. What the Church says is a matter of faith, we, the traditionists affirm, are bound to believe, has always been a matter of faith. The passage from "Petrus a Soto," quoted above, puts the case very concisely: "*Quaecunque credit, tenet et servat Romana ecclesia, et in Scripturis non habentur illa ab Apostolis esse tradita.*" The argument amounts to this. The Church believes on the ground of common consent. The proof that a thing is a matter of common consent, and always has been, is that the Church now believes it.

Inadequacy of the Evidences of Consent.

The second objection to the argument of Romanists from common consent in support of their traditions, is, that the evidence which they adduce of such consent is altogether inadequate. They appeal to the ancient creeds. But there was no creed generally adopted before the fourth century. No creed adopted before the eighth century contains any of the doctrines peculiar to the Church of Rome. Protestants all receive the doctrinal statements contained in what is called the Apostles' creed, and in those of Chalcedon and of Constantinople, adopted A. D. 681.

They appeal also to the decisions of councils. To this the same reply is made. There were no general councils before the fourth century. The first six ecumenical councils gave no doctrinal decisions from which Protestants dissent. They, therefore, present no evidence of consent in those doctrines which are now peculiar to the Church of Rome.

They appeal again to the writings of the fathers. But to this Protestants object, -- First. That the writings of the apostolic fathers are too few to be taken as trustworthy representatives of the state of opinion in the Church for the first three hundred years. Ten or twenty writers scattered over such a period cannot reasonably be assumed to speak the mind of the whole Church.

Secondly. The consent of these fathers, or of the half of them, cannot be adduced in favour of any doctrine in controversy between Protestants and Romanists.

Thirdly. Almost unanimous consent can be quoted in support of doctrines which Romanists and Protestants unite in rejecting. The Jewish doctrine of the millennium passed over in its grossest form to the early Christian Church. But that doctrine the Church of Rome is specially zealous in denouncing.....

Fourthly. The consent of the fathers cannot be proved in support of doctrines which Protestants and Romanists agree in accepting. Not that these doctrines did not then enter into the faith of the Church, but simply that they were not presented.

Fifthly. Such is the diversity of opinion among the fathers themselves, such the vagueness of their doctrinal statements, and such the unsettled *usus loquendi* as to important words, that the authority of the fathers may be quoted on either side of any disputed doctrine. There is no view, for example, of the nature of the Lord's supper, which has ever been held in the Church, for which the authority of some early father cannot be adduced. And often the same father presents one view at one time, and another at a different time.

Sixthly. The writings of the fathers have been notoriously corrupted. It was a matter of great complaint in the early Church that spurious works were circulated; and that genuine works were recklessly interpolated. Some of the most important works of the Greek fathers are extant only in a Latin translation. This is the case with the greater part of the works of Irenaeus, translated by Rufinus, whom Jerome charges with the most shameless adulteration.

Another objection to the argument from consent is, that it is a Procrustean bed which may be extended or shortened at pleasure. In every *Catena Patrum* prepared to prove this consent in certain doctrines, it will be found that two or more writers in a century are cited as evincing the unanimous opinion of that century, while double or fourfold the number, of equally important writers, belonging to the same period, on the other side, are passed over in silence. There is no rule to guide in the application of this test, and no

uniformity in the manner of its use.

While, therefore, it is admitted that there has been a stream of doctrine flowing down uninterruptedly from the days of the Apostles, it is denied, as a matter of fact, that there has been any uninterrupted or general consent in any doctrine not clearly revealed in the Sacred Scriptures; and not even in reference to such clearly revealed doctrines, beyond the narrow limits of essential truths. And it is, moreover, denied that in any external, visible, organized Church, can the rule, *quod semper, quod ab omnibus*, be applied even to essential doctrines. The argument, therefore, of Romanists in favor of their peculiar doctrines, derived from general consent, is utterly untenable and fallacious. This is virtually admitted by the most zealous advocates of tradition. "Not only," says Professor Newman,¹⁷ "is the Church Catholic bound to teach the truth, but she is divinely guided to teach it; her witness of the Christian faith is a matter of promise as well as of duty; her discernment of it is secured by a heavenly, as well as by a human rule. She is indefectible in it; and therefore has not only authority to enforce it, but is of authority to declaring it. The Church not only transmits the faith by human means, but has a supernatural gift for that purpose; that doctrine which is true, considered as an historical fact, is true also because she teaches it." The author of the Oxford Tract, No. 85, after saying, "We believe mainly because the Church of the fourth and fifth centuries unanimously believed,"¹⁸ adds, "Why should not the Church be divine? The burden of proof surely is on the other side. I will accept her doctrines, and her rites, and her Bible -- not one, and not the other, but all, -- till I have clear proof that she is mistaken. It is I feel God's will that I should do so; and besides, I love these her possessions -- I love her Bible, her doctrines, and her rites; and therefore, I believe."¹⁹ The Romanist then believes because the Church believes. This is the ultimate reason. The Church believes, not because she can historically prove that her doctrines have been received from the Apostles, but because she is supernaturally guided to know the truth. "Common consent," therefore, is practically abandoned, and tradition resolves itself into the present faith of the Church.

Tradition not available by the People.

4. Protestants object to tradition as part of the rule of faith, because it is not adapted to that purpose. A rule of faith to the people must be something which they can apply; a standard by which they can judge. But this unwritten revelation is not contained in any one volume accessible to the people, and intelligible by them. It is scattered through the ecclesiastical records of eighteen centuries. It is absolutely impossible for the people to learn what it teaches. How can they tell whether the Church in all ages has taught the doctrine of transubstantiation, the sacrifice of the Mass, or any other popish doctrine. They must take all such doctrines upon trust, i. e., on the faith of the extant Church. But this is to deny that to them tradition is a rule of faith. They are required to believe, on the peril of their souls, doctrines, the pretended evidence of which it is impossible for them to ascertain or appreciate.

5. Romanists argue that such is the obscurity of the Scriptures, that not only the people, but the Church itself needs the aid of tradition in order to their being properly understood. But if the Bible, a comparatively plain book, in one portable volume, needs to be thus explained, What is to explain the hundreds of folios in which these traditions are recorded? Surely a guide to the interpretation of the latter must be far more needed than one for the Scriptures.

Tradition destroys the Authority of the Scriptures.

6. Making tradition a part of the rule of faith subverts the authority of the Scriptures. This follows as a natural and unavoidable consequence. If there be two standards of doctrine of equal authority, the one the

explanatory, and infallible interpreter of the other, it is of necessity the interpretation which determines the faith of the people. Instead, therefore, of our faith resting on the testimony of God as recorded in his Word, it rests on what poor, fallible, often fanciful, prejudiced, benighted men, tell us is the meaning of that word. Man and his authority take the place of God. As this is the logical consequence of making tradition a rule of faith, so it is an historical fact that the Scriptures have been made of no account wherever the authority of tradition has been admitted. Our Lord said, that the Scribes and Pharisees made the word of God of no effect by their traditions; that they taught for doctrines the commandments of men. This is no less historically true of the Church of Rome. A great mass of doctrines, rites, ordinances, and institutions, of which the Scriptures know nothing, has been imposed on the reason, conscience, and life of the people. The Roman Catholic religion of our day, with its hierarchy, ritual, image and saint worship; with its absolutions, indulgences, and its despotic power over the conscience and the life of the individual, is as little like the religion of the New Testament, as the present religion of the Hindus with its myriad of deities, its cruelties, and abominations, is like the simple religion of their ancient Vedas. In both cases similar causes have produced similar effects. In both there has been a provision for giving divine authority to the rapidly accumulating errors and corruptions of succeeding ages.

7. Tradition teaches error, and therefore cannot be divinely controlled so as to be a rule of faith. The issue is between Scripture and tradition. Both cannot be true. The one contradicts the other. One or the other must be given up. Of this it least no true Protestant has any doubt. All the doctrines

peculiar to Romanism, and for which Romanists plead the authority of Scripture, Protestants believe to be anti-scriptural; and therefore they need no other evidence to prove that tradition is not to be trusted either in matters of faith or practice.

The Scriptures not received on the Authority of Tradition.

8. Romanists argue that Protestants concede the authority of tradition, because it is on that authority they receive the New Testament as the word of God. This is not correct. We do not believe the New Testament to be divine on the ground of the testimony of the Church. We receive the books included in the canonical Scriptures on the twofold ground of internal and external evidence. It can be historically proved that those books were written by the men whose names they bear; and it can also be proved that those men were the duly authenticated organs of the Holy Ghost. The historical evidence which determines the authorship of the New Testament is not exclusively that of the Christian fathers. The testimony of heathen writers is, in some respects, of greater weight than that of the fathers themselves. We may believe on the testimony of English history, ecclesiastical and secular, that the Thirty-Nine Articles were framed by the English Reformers, without being traditionists. In like manner we may believe that the books of the New Testament were written by the men whose names they bear without admitting tradition to be a part of the rule of faith.

Besides, external evidence of any kind is a very subordinate part of the ground of a Protestant's faith in the Scripture. That ground is principally the nature of the doctrines therein revealed, and the witness of the Spirit, with and by the truth, to the heart and conscience. We believe the Scriptures for much the same reason that we believe the Decalogue.

The Church is bound to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made it free, and not to be again entangled with the yoke of bondage, -- a bondage not only to human doctrines and institutions,

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