

THE
PRINCETON REVIEW.

OCTOBER, 1842.

No. IV.

ART. I.—*The works of Nathanael Emmons, D. D. late Pastor of the Church in Franklin, Mass., with a Memoir of his life.* Edited by Jacob Ide, D. D. Boston: Crocker & Brewster. 1842. Six volumes, 8vo.

Archibald Alexander with J. Addison Alexander x

EMMONISM, or Emmonsism, for the names are equally barbarous, denotes a theological system which took its name, if not its origin, in New England, during the latter half of the last century, and which may be regarded as a monstrous growth from the trunk of Calvinism; such, that if let alone, the supplanting fungus would leave at length no grace in the parent trunk. Or, if critics will allow us still further to mingle our metaphors, it is a frightful child of a comely parent, with just enough of the family likeness to make one avert the face in dread. Its great leading features are so repugnant to universal feeling, reason, and scripture, that, after having agitated for one generation the clergy of Connecticut, and vexed the souls of simple Christians, after having driven some to distraction and others to infidelity, it was in a fair way of dying a natural death, after bequeathing its least horrible but most seductive qualities to New Haven, when an attempt at revivification is made, in the shape of

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Charles Doane

- ART. IV.—1. *The Divine Rule of Faith and Practice; or a Defence of the Catholie Doctrine that Holy Scripture has been since the times of the Apostles the Sole Divine Rule of Faith and Practice, against the dangerous errors of the authors of the Tracts for the Times, and the Romanists, as, particuarly that the Rule of Faith is "made up of Scripture and Tradition together;" &c., in which also the doctrines of Apostolical Succession, the Eucharistic Sacrifice, &c., are fully discussed.* By William Goode, M. A., of Trinity College, Cambridge; Rector of St. Antholin, London. Philadelphia: Herman Hooker. 1842. Two volumes pp. 494 and 604.
2. *A Treatise concerning the Right use of the Fathers in the Decision of Controversies in Religion.* By John Daille, Minister of the Gospel in the Reformed Church at Paris. Presbyterian Board of Publication. Philadelphia. 1842.
3. *Not Tradition, but Scripture.* By Philip N. Shuttleworth, D. D. Warden of New College, Oxford, (late Bishop of Chichester). First American from the third London edition. Philadelphia: Hooker and Agnew. 1841. pp. 125.
4. *The Authority of Tradition in Matters of Religion.* By George Holden, M. A. Philadelphia: Hooker and Agnew. 1841. pp. 128.
5. *Tradition Unveiled.* By Baden Powell, of Oriel College, Oxford. Hooker and Agnew. 1841.

THE recent publication in England of so many works on Tradition, indicates a new and extended interest in the subject; and their republication in America, shows that the interest is as great here as it is in England. It is not difficult to account for this. The rapid increase of Romanism in some parts of the world; the revival of zeal and confidence among the Papists; and the advocacy of the leading principles of the church of Rome by the Oxford Tracts, have rendered this and kindred points the prominent subjects of religious discussion in Great Britain, and consequently, to a great extent in this country. We question whether at any period since the Reformation, or, at least, since the days of Archbishop Laud and the non-jurors, the public mind has been as much turned to these subjects as it is at present. This is no doubt principally owing to the publication of the

Oxford Tracts. It is enough to arouse a Protestant community, to hear the Reformation denounced as a schism; Protestantism decried as anti-Christian, and all the most dangerous errors of Romanism espoused and defended by members of the leading Protestant university of Europe. It is no wonder that this movement excites the joy of Papists, and the indignation of Protestants. It is no wonder that the press teems with answers to the artful and subtle effusions of men, who though sustained by a Protestant church, direct all their energies to obliterate her distinctive character and to undermine her doctrines. The wonder rather is that men, professing godliness, can pursue a course so obviously unfair; or that they are allowed to retain the stations which give them support and influence.

It is certainly time, when not only the Romanists are redoubling their efforts for the extension of their errors; but when they find their most efficient allies in our own camp, that Protestants should rouse themselves to a sense of their danger, and renew their protest against the false doctrines of Rome, and their testimony in behalf of the truth of God. It is conceded that the turning point in these controversies, is the Rule of Faith. Are the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments the only infallible rule of faith and practice? if so, Romanism and Puseyism, are confessedly without any adequate foundation. We say confessedly, first because their advocates admit that the whole controversy turns upon the authority due to tradition; and secondly, because in enumerating the doctrines which tradition is necessary to prove, they include the very doctrines by which they are distinguished from Protestants. "The complete rule of faith," says a distinguished Romanist, "is scripture joined with tradition, which if Protestants would admit, all the other controversies between us and them would soon cease."* "It may be proved," says Mr. Keble, "to the satisfaction of any reasonable mind, that not a few fragments yet remain,—very precious and sacred fragments of the unwritten teaching of the first age of the church. The paramount authority for example of the successors of the apostles in church government; the three fold-order established from the beginning; the virtue of the blessed eucharist as a commemorative sacrifice; infant baptism, and above all, the Catholic doctrine of the most Holy Trinity, as con-

* See Goode, vol. i. p. 90.

tained in the Nicene creed. All these, however surely confirmed from scripture, are yet ascertainable parts of the primitive unwritten system of which we enjoy the benefit.”* “Without its aid [i. e. of primitive tradition] humanly speaking, I do not see how we could now retain either real inward communion with our Lord through his apostles, or the very outward face of God’s church and kingdom among us. Not to dwell on disputable cases, how but by the tradition and the practice of the early church can we demonstrate the observance of Sunday as the holiest day, or the permanent separation of the clergy from the people as a distinct order? Or where, except in the primitive liturgies, a main branch of that tradition, can we find assurance, that in the Holy Eucharist, we consecrate as the apostles did, and consequently that the cup of blessing which we bless is the communion of the blood of Christ, and the bread which we break in the communion of the body of Christ.”† This, in the language of the sect, means, How but by tradition can we establish the doctrine of the real presence? Again the same writer says, “The points of Catholic consent, known by tradition, constitute the knots and ties of the whole system; being such as these: the canon of scripture, the full doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation, the oblation and consecration of the eucharist, the apostolical succession.” To these he afterwards adds, “baptismal regeneration,” and the doctrine “that consecration by apostolical authority is essential to the participation of the eucharist.”

After quoting these and many other passages from Mr. Keble’s sermon and from other writings of the Tractarians, Mr. Goode thus enumerates and classifies the doctrines, which according to their system depend on tradition alone, or upon scripture as explained by tradition. “Relating to points disused, 1. The non-literal acceptance of our Lord’s words respecting washing one another’s feet. 2. The non-observance of the seventh day as a day of religious rest.

“Relating to ordinances in use among us, 1. Infant baptism. 2. The sanctification of the first day of the week. 3. The perpetual obligation of the eucharist. 4. The identity of our mode of consecration in the eucharist with the apostolical. 5. That consecration by apostolical authority is essential to the participation of the eucharist. 6. The separation of the clergy from the people as a distinct order. 7.

* Keble Sermon on Tradition, p. 32. † *Ib.* p. 38.

The three-fold order of the priesthood. 8. The government of the church by bishops. 9. The apostolical succession.

“Of points purely doctrinal, 1. Baptismal regeneration. 2. The virtue of the eucharist as a commemorative sacrifice. 3. That there is an intermediate state, in which the souls of the faithful are purified, and grow in grace; that they pray for us, and that our prayers benefit them.

“Of points concerning matters of fact, and things that do not immediately belong either to the doctrines or the rites of Christianity, 1. The canon of the scripture. 2. That Melchizedek’s feast is a type of the eucharist. 3. That the book of Canticles represents the union between Christ and his church. 4. That wisdom, in the book of Proverbs refers to the Second Person of the Trinity. 5. The alleged perpetual virginity of the mother of our Lord.”

“It is impossible,” says Mr. Goode, “not to see that, among all these points the stress is laid upon those which concern the government and sacraments of the church; and our opponents being persuaded that patristical tradition delivers their system on these points . . . are very anxious that this tradition should be recognised as a divine informant; and in the zealous prosecution of this enterprize, are desirous further of impressing it upon our minds, that almost all the other points relating either to doctrine or practice, yea even the fundamentals of the faith, must stand or fall according as this recognition takes place or not.”* This is true. The writers of the Tracts, knowing and admitting, that their peculiar doctrines, that is, doctrines which they hold in common with the Romanists, and which distinguished both from Protestants, cannot be proved except by tradition, are led to assert not only that the doctrines peculiar to Episcopalians, but even some of the fundamental doctrines of the gospel rest on the same unstable foundation. If we understand the fundamental principles of Romanism and of the Oxford Tracts they are the following. The sacraments are the only ordinary channels of communicating the grace of the Holy Spirit and the benefits of Christ’s merits; that participation of these sacraments is therefore the great means of salvation; that the sacraments have this efficacy only when administered by duly ordained ministers, (except that the Papists admit the validity of lay baptism in

* Goode, vol. ii. p. 18.

cases of necessity); that ordination confers the Holy Spirit and imparts the power and authority to consecrate the bread and wine in the eucharist so that they become the body and blood of Christ, and when offered, are a propitiatory sacrifice effectual for the remission of the sins of the living and the dead; and that the right to ordain and the power to confer the Holy Spirit belongs exclusively to prelatical bishops as the successors of the apostles. These, as it seems to us, are the bones, or as Mr. Keble would say, the knots and ties of the whole system. This is the foundation of the whole fabric of Papal and priestly domination and delusion. Bishops are the successors of the apostles "in all the plenitude of their power;" "what Christ was in his own house, such now are they. The authority which he possessed in his human nature, he transfers to them;"* they alone have the right to confer the authority and power to administer the sacraments which are the appointed channels of grace; hence they are the dispensers of salvation; those whom they excommunicate, justly or unjustly, perish; those whom they receive and retain in communion of the church are saved. Every thing depends on them. They are in the place of Christ. That such a system should find favour with the clergy, human nature would lead us to expect; and that it should be adopted by the people, experience teaches us not to be surprised at. It is the easiest of all methods of salvation; the least self-denying, the most agreeable to the indolent and depraved heart. But as it is contrary to the word of God, men adopt it at their peril; and its very attractiveness is a reason why its falsehood and its dangerous tendency should be exposed.

As the advocates of this system urge its acceptance on the ground of tradition, it is not surprising that so large a portion of the works written against the system, are directed against tradition as a rule of faith. All the books mentioned at the head of this article, with one exception, are the productions of clergymen of the church of England, and were written in answer to the Oxford Tracts. The work of Daille on the Use of the Fathers, is an old book, which has retained its place as a standard for nearly two centuries, and is the store house whence modern writers draw not a few of their arguments and illustrations. Its publication by our Board in an improved form, thus rendering it easily

* *Mason's Tract on Catholic Unity*, p. 10.

accessible at a cheap rate, is an important service to the church, and we heartily recommend it to the careful study of our fellow ministers. The works of the bishop of Chichester, of Professor Powell, and of Mr. Holden have been already noticed in our pages, and are here mentioned again only with a view of renewing our recommendation to our readers to sustain the publisher in his laudable enterprize to disseminate such reasonable books.

Mr. Goode's book, which is dedicated to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London, is devoted to the refutation of the Oxford Tracts. It gives at length the doctrine on tradition taught in those writings; proves that it is identical with the Popish doctrine on the same subject; demonstrates that patristical tradition is not "a practically infallible witness of the oral teaching of the apostles, nor receivable as a divine informant;" he vindicates the claim of holy scripture as the sole divinely-revealed rule of faith and practice, and sole infallible judge of controversies, and consequently in the credenda of religion the sole authority which binds the conscience to belief in what it delivers. He vindicates the fulness and sufficiency of the divine revelation as contained in the scriptures, and in doing this examines at length the doctrines which the Tractarians affirm tradition is necessary to establish. He then shows that his doctrine on this whole subject is the doctrine of the fathers themselves, as well as that of the church of England. He pronounces the appeal made by the Tractators in their *Catena Patrum*, to the opinions of the English divines in support of their doctrines, "one of the most unaccountable, and painful, and culpable (however unintentional) misrepresentations with which history supplies us." He convicts them of the grossest unfairness in quoting in support of their views distorted fragments of works written in direct and avowed opposition to them. He accuses them of borrowing not merely their arguments, but in a great degree their learning at second hand from the Romanists; and brings forward cases of egregious blunders in their quotations from the fathers. He shows that the famous tract No. 90, designed to show that the thirty-nine articles are consistent with the Tridentine decrees, is little else than the reproduction of a work written by a Jesuit more than two centuries ago.*

* The title of this work is, "Deus, natura, gratia, sive, Tractatus de Predestinatione, de meritis, et peccatorum remissione, seu de justificatione et denique de

The theory of the traditionists is, that the holy scriptures are both defective and obscure. They contain, indeed, all the essential doctrines of the gospel, but they give, in many cases, mere hints or notices of them, which could not be understood unless explained and developed by tradition. "It is a near thing," says tract 85, "that they are in scripture 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 should be but latent there, and only indirectly producible thence." The same writer says, the gospel doctrine "is but indirectly and covertly recorded in scripture under the surface." But besides these doctrines which are essential to salvation, there are others which are highly important which are not in the scriptures at all, which we are bound to believe. These doctrines we must learn from tradition; it is, therefore, "partly the interpretation, partly the supplement of scripture."†

The authority due to tradition is the same as that which belongs to the written word of God. In the language of the Council of Trent, "Traditiones non scriptas pari pietatis affectu, et reverentia cum scriptura esse recipiendas." So Mr. Keble says, that consentient patristical tradition is "God's unwritten word, demanding the same reverence from us." Dr. Pusey says, "we owe faith to the decisions of the church universal." "Our controversy with Rome," he says, "is not on a priori question on the value of tradition in itself, or at an earlier period of the church, or of such traditions as, though not contained in scripture, are primitive, universal, and apostolical, but it is one purely historical, that the Romanist traditions not being such, but on the contrary repugnant to scripture, are not to be received."

The ground on which this authority is ascribed to tradition is, that it is a practically infallible informant of the oral instructions of Christ and his apostles. "Let us understand," says Mr. Newman, "what is meant by saying that antiqui-

sanctorum invocations. Ubi ad trutinam fidei Catholicae examinatur confessio Anglicana, &c. Accessit paraphrastica expositio reliquorum articulorum confessionis Anglicae." It was written by an English convert to Popery, named Christopher Davenport, and after his conversion called Francis a Sancta Clara, and designed to prove the English articles to be conformable to the Tridentine doctrines. "And for learning and ingenuity our modern reconciler," says Mr. Goode "is not to be compared to him. But in all the most important points, the similarity between the two is remarkable."

† Newman's Lectures, p. 298.

ty is of authority in religious questions. Both Romanists and ourselves maintain as follows: that whatever doctrine the primitive ages unanimously attest, whether by consent of fathers, or by councils, or by the events of history, or by controversies, or in whatever way, whatever may fairly and reasonably be considered the universal belief of those ages, is to be received as coming from the apostles." This is the ground commonly taken both by Romanists and the Oxford writers. Certain doctrines are to be received not on the authority of the fathers, but upon their testimony that those doctrines were taught by the apostles. Both however rely more or less on the gift of the Holy Spirit communicated by the imposition of hands, who guides the representative church into the knowledge of the truth, and renders it infallible. "Not only" says Mr. Newman, "is the church catholic bound to teach the truth, but she is ever 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 a human rule. She is indefectible in it, and therefore not only has authority to enforce it, but is of authority in 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."* Hence he says, "That when the sense of scripture as interpreted by reason, is contrary to the sense given to it by Catholic antiquity, we ought to side with the latter." Page 160.

Such being the high office of tradition, it is a matter of great moment to decide how we are to ascertain what tradition teaches. The common answer to this question is, Catholic consent; whatever has been believed always, every where, and by all, must be received as derived from the apostles.

Such then is the theory. The scriptures are obscure and defective. They contain only covertly and under the surface even, some of the essential doctrines of the gospel, and some important doctrines they do not contain at all. The oral teaching of the apostles was sufficient to explain these obscurities and to supply these defects, and was of course of equal authority with their written instructions. This oral teaching has been handed down to us by the church catholic, which is a divinely appointed and divinely guided

* Lectures on Romanism, &c., p. 225.

witness of the truth. To her decisions therefore we owe faith. And as every particular church may err, our security is in adhering to the church universal, which is practically infallible.

It rarely if ever happens that any theory on any subject gains credence among any number of competent men, which has not a great deal of truth in it. And of the two great causes of the long continued and extensive prevalence of faith in tradition as a divine informant, one no doubt is, that there is so much truth in the theory as above propounded, and the other is, that men find tradition to teach what they are anxious to believe. The principal elements of truth in the above theory, are first, that the testimony of God is the only adequate foundation of faith in matters of religion; second, that as much confidence is due to the oral teachings of the apostles as to their written instructions; and third, that the fact that all true Christians in every age have believed any doctrine, admits of no other satisfactory solution, than that such doctrine was derived from the apostles.

The application of these principles and the arguments founded upon them by the traditionists, are, however, full of fallacy and unfairness. They speak of the church catholic being, in virtue of the promise of God, indefeetible, and practically infallible, as far as concerns fundamental truth. This every one will admit, if you take the word church in its scriptural sense. The church is the body of true believers; the company of faithful men. That this company cannot err in essential doctrines; that is, that all true Christians will, by the grace of God, ever believe all that is essential to their salvation, we have no disposition to dispute. And moreover, that the promise of our Lord secures the continued existence of his church, or in other words, a continued succession of true believers, we also readily admit. And we are consequently ready to acknowledge that if you can ascertain what this church (i. e. true Christians,) has ever, every where, and universally believed, you have a practically infallible rule, for determining as far as fundamentals are concerned, what is the true faith. But of what avail is all this? How are you to ascertain the faith of all true believers in every age and in every part of the world? They have never formed a distinct, visible society, even in any one age or place, much less in all ages and places. They are scattered here and there in all visible churches, known and numbered by no eye but his who searches the

heart. You might as well attempt to collect the suffrages of all the amiable men who have ever lived, as to gather the testimony of all the people of God to any one doctrine. And if it could be done what would it amount to? You would find they agreed in receiving the doctrines which lie on the very face of scripture, and in nothing else. You would find that the plain testimony of God had been universally understood and received by his people. This would not be a source of new information, though it might be a consolation, and a confirmation of our faith.

The first fallacy and unfairness of traditionists then is, confounding the true church, or the company of faithful men, with the external and visible church. As it is an acknowledged impossibility to ascertain the opinions of the sincere people of God, they appeal to the promiscuous mass of professing Christians organized in different societies in various parts of the world. This proceeding is obviously fallacious and unfair. There is no promise of God, securing any or every external church from apostacy, even as to fundamental truth. As far as we know, every external organization connected with the Jewish church had apostatized in the days of Ahab; the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal, were hid even from the sight of Elias. During the prevalence of the Arian heresy, the great majority of the churches had departed from the faith; Popes and councils decided in favor of Pelagianism, and in the ages before the Reformation if the voice of the external church, or the mass of professing Christians is to be taken as the voice of the true people of God, and a practical and infallible witness of the truth, we shall have the Bible completely superceded, and the whole mass of Popish error and superstition firmly established. The rule of the traditionists, therefore, which is true in relation to "the faith of God's elect," is as false and fallacious as possible in its application to the external church.

But besides this, the voice of all professing Christians, every where and at all times, it is impossible to ascertain. And if it could be ascertained, the points of agreement would not include one half of the doctrines admitted to be fundamental. It is notorious that neither the doctrines of the Trinity, nor of the atonement, nor of regeneration, has been received every where, always, and by all; much less have all so far agreed in their explanations of these doctrines as to retain what all admit to be essential to their

integrity. To meet the former of these difficulties, that is, to obviate the difficulty arising from the impossibility of gathering the faith of the whole visible church, traditionists insist that we are bound to take the testimony of the pastors or rulers of the church. But in the first place, the pastors are not the church, and the promises given to the church were consequently not given to them. The declaration that the church shall never perish, does not mean that the great body of its pastors shall never become unfaithful. Again, though the number of pastors is so much less than that of the whole church, the impossibility of gathering their united testimony to any one truth is not less clear and decided. This cannot be done in any one age, much less in all ages and places. Who can gather the opinions of all the present ministers of the church of England? Their public creed does not express their opinions, for they differ fundamentally in their explanation of that creed. Some are virtually Romanists; some are Pelagians; some are Calvinists; some we know have been Socinians. Mr. Newman tells us, "In the English church, we shall hardly find ten or twenty neighbouring 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."* And on the same page, speaking of the laity, he says, "If they go to one church they hear one doctrine, in the next that comes, they hear another; if they try to unite the two, they are obliged to drop important elements in each, and waste down and attenuate the faith to a mere shadow." The leading modern advocate of tradition therefore assures us that we cannot gather the faith of the English clergy, even as "to elementary and necessary doctrines" from their public creeds; that they do not in fact agree, and that it is impossible to find out what they believe. All this is said of a church with which we are contemporary; in an age of printing, of speaking, of assemblies, and of every other means of intercommunion and publication of opinions; an age of censuses and statistics, when the colour of every man's eyes may almost be ascertained and published to the world. And yet this same man would have us believe that he can tell what all pastors, every where be-

* Lectures, p. 395.

lied, seventeen centuries ago, not in one church, but in all churches! If the creed of the church of England does not express the faith of the English clergy, how are we to know that the creeds of the ancient church expressed the faith of the clergy of the early centuries? The difficulty is greatly increased by the consideration, that there was no one creed which all the clergy were then obliged to adopt and subscribe as at the present day. What is now called the apostles creed, was only the creed of the church of Rome, and did not assume its present form before the fourth century. Irenaeus, Tertullian and Origen have left formulas of doctrine for which they claim the consent of all the churches, but even these afford very imperfect evidence of the consent of all the pastors. In the first place, the testimony of a few men as to what all other men believe, is of no decisive weight. Let Dr. Pusey, or Mr. Newman, state the faith of the English church, and it will be one thing; let the Bishop of Chester state it, and it will be quite a different thing. In the second place, these creeds contain some things which are incorrect, and in all probability the faith of a very small part of the existing church. Thus Origen says the whole church believed, that the scriptures "have not only a sense which is apparent, but also another which is concealed from most. For those things which are described are the outlines of certain mysteries and the images of divine things." He says, it is not clearly discerned whether the Holy Spirit is to be considered "as begotten or not," or as Jerome says the words were, "made or not made." Origen himself, believed him to be a creature. Tertullian's exposition of the Trinity, if understood according to his own sense of the terms, is as little orthodox as that of Origen. Here then the very earliest creeds now extant, for which the faith of all churches was claimed, are yet infected with acknowledged error. They did not and could not represent the faith of all the pastors of the age of their authors, much less the faith of all who had preceded them.

But suppose we should admit that the early creeds ought to be taken as expressing the sense of the whole ancient church, what should we gain by it? They contain nothing beyond the simplest doctrines of the scripture, and that in such general terms as decide nothing against Arianism, Pelagianism, and various other forms of error. They have no relation to the points in dispute between Papists and Pro-

testants, or between Oxford and the English Reformers. They yield no support to the baptismal regeneration, the sacrifice of the mass, or episcopal grace. As far as the creeds are concerned they are an insufficient and uncertain evidence of catholic consent; and if admitted decide nothing as to any one of the questions between Protestants and traditionists.

Appeal however is made to the decisions of councils. These bodies, called together by public authority and representing all parts of the church, are regarded as bearing trust-worthy testimony as to the Catholic faith. But to this argument it has been fairly objected that the church catholic does not admit of being represented. The delegates from the several provinces can at best represent only the majorities in the bodies deputing them. The minorities whether large or small must be unrepresented. Experience teaches us that truth is not always with the many. What would have been the fate of orthodoxy had it been put to the vote under Constantius or Valens? What would have become of Protestantism, had all churches sent delegates to Trent, and the cause of God been confided to the decision of the urn? Our objection, however, now is, that no general council can so represent the church as to give us satisfactory evidence of the faith of all its members. Another objection is that the councils called general are not deserving of the name. They have in no case been either a full or fair representation of the existing church. Take that of Nice for example. We should be glad to believe that Christendom was, as to the main point, there fully represented. But what are the facts. There were present at that council about three hundred and eighteen bishops; of these seventeen were from the little province of Isauria; while there was but one from all Africa, but one from Spain, and but one from Gaul. Is it not absurd to say that one bishop could represent the faith of a whole province, and that one acting without authority and without delegation? Suppose the attempt to be now made to hold a general council, and an invitation to be issued to all bishops and presbyteries to assemble at a given time and place. Suppose further that Mr. Newman should attend from England, bishop Hughes from America, the Abbe Genoude from France, could the assent of these volunteer delegates, with any show of reason, be taken as proving what was the faith of the church of England, or of the church of God in these United States?

Yet this was the way in which councils were generally called. The reigning emperor issued his summons, and those who had the inclination or ability, attended; those who were disinclined to the object of the council, or unable to travel, remained at home. It is obvious that such councils could not give a fair expression to the voice of the church. It may be said indeed that however imperfect the representation, the acquiescence of all parts of the church in their decisions, affords proof of unanimity of faith. There would be some force in this suggestion, had we any evidence of such acquiescence. We know however that decisions in councils were in almost all important cases more or less resisted; and the struggle continued until one party or the other obtained the advantage, and then, by excommunicating the dissentients, the voice of the whole church was claimed for the majority. This has been the course of Rome from the beginning. Refusing to recognise as a part of the church all who do not adhere to her, she boasts of having the suffrage of the whole church in her favour.

A still more decisive proof that councils cannot be relied upon as expressing the faith of the whole church, is that they contradict each other. The council of Nice decided against Arianism; a much larger council within twenty-five years, decided in its favour.* The church was thrown into a state of violent contention. At one period or in one part of the empire the orthodox prevail; in others, the Arians. Each party had their councils; each at different times could claim the majority of the whole church; one bishop of Rome was with the orthodox, another with the Arians, and thus the conflict was continued with various success for more than three hundred years. How then can catholic consent be claimed for the Niceue creed? If catholic consent means the consent of all, everywhere, and at all times, it is a gross imposition and absurdity to claim it for a creed with regard to which for a long time Christendom was nearly equally divided.

The heresy of Eutyches, respecting the person of Christ, was first condemned by a council held at Constantinople,

* The council which met for the western church at Ariminum and for the eastern at Seleucia, "which," says Bishop Stillingfleet, "make up the most general council we read of in church history. For Bellarmine owns that there were six hundred bishops in the western part of it. So that there were many more bishops assembled there than were in the councils of Nice; there was no exception against the summons nor against the bishops present."

A. D. 448; then approved by the second general council at Ephesus, in 449; and then again condemned by the council of Chalcedon, in 451. Pelagianism was condemned in Africa, sanctioned in Palestine, approved by the council of Diospolis, pronounced to be according to scripture, in the first instance, by the bishop of Rome, afterwards repudiated by the same bishop, and finally condemned by the council of Ephesus, A. D. 431. Even with regard to the canon of scripture we have council against council; that of Laodicea excluding the apocrypha, that of Carthage including them in the list of inspired books. It is therefore a plain historical fact, that even those councils, which have most deserved the name of general, have not agreed, and therefore can neither be regarded as infallible, nor as any conclusive evidence of catholic consent.

There is another objection to the notion that the faith of the church universal can be gathered from the decisions of councils, which ought not to be overlooked. The authority of tradition is, both by Romanists and the writers of the Oxford Tracts, defended mainly on the ground of its apostolic origin. The fact that all Christians have received any doctrine is held to be proof that it was derived from the apostles; and to ascertain what all the early Christians believed, we are referred to the decisions of the ancient general councils. But unfortunately, there was no council having the least pretension to be called general, held during the first three centuries. How is this chasm to be got over? We can understand how an assembly even at the present day, with the scriptures before them, can give a judgment as to the doctrines of Christianity, which shall be entitled to all the deference due to their opinion. But since the world began has any such thing been known as the transmission of unwritten doctrines unchangod for three hundred years? Without a miracle, for which we have neither promise nor evidence, the thing is impossible. Would it be possible for the present clergy of Germany to bear trust-worthy testimony to the unwritten teaching of Luther and Melancthon? Does there exist now in England any knowledge of the doctrines of the Reformers, not to be gathered from their writings? Would not the claim of an English convocation to enforce any doctrine, not contained in their Articles, Liturgy, or Homilies, on the ground of traditionary knowledge of the oral teaching of Cranmer or Latimer, be received with ridicule by the whole church? How then can we

believe that the council of Nice had any tradition or knowledge of the oral teaching of the apostles worthy of confidence? If a tradition cannot be traced up historically to the times of the apostles, it can, on the very principles, though not according to the practice, of our opponents, be of no authority. The prevalence of an opinion in the church three hundred years after the apostles, is no proof that it was derived from the apostles, any more than the prevalence of Arminianism in the church of England, or of Rationalism in Germany, proves that these forms of error were derived from the Reformers. It is therefore not from the decisions of councils that we can gather catholic consent.

The only other important source of knowledge of the faith of the early church, is the writings of the fathers. It has been assumed that the consent or agreement of the early Christian writers in the belief of any doctrine, is to be considered satisfactory evidence of the derivation of such doctrine or usage from the apostles. Traditionists have generally felt the necessity of some caution in laying down this rule. {It is so obvious that the fathers differ among themselves, and that the same father differs in many cases from himself, that we are cautioned carefully to distinguish between what they deliver as teachers, which is often erroneous, from what they delivered as witnesses. It is necessary that we should have not only their unanimous consent, but also their unanimous testimony that the doctrine taught is part of the faith of the church. We do not say that traditionists adhere to these limitations, for they do not, but they feel the necessity of stating them to secure even the semblance of authority for their rule.

The question then is, whether the unanimous consent of the fathers is proof of the apostolic origin of any doctrine? This question as far as it has any bearing on the present controversy, must be understood of doctrines, not clearly contained in the scriptures. Their unanimous consent to the being of a God, to the divine mission of Christ, to the fact that he was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; that he rose again on the third day and ascended into heaven, cannot be considered as in any degree increasing our assurance that these doctrines and facts are contained in the New Testament. It is not for such purposes that their testimony is required. But is their consent a warrant to us of the oral teaching of the apostles? Must we believe what they hap-

pen to agree in believing? We think this a most unreasonable demand, for, in the first place, the consent of some sixteen writers, is very insufficient evidence of the faith of the whole Christian church for three hundred years, and it is only as witnesses for catholic consent that their writings are assumed to be of any authority. The fact that the remains of the first three centuries are so scanty, creates of itself almost an impossibility that we should find in them any fair or full representation of the whole church during that long period. Would any man dream of extracting from some ten or twenty works, many of them mere fragments, taken at hazard from the whole list of English divines, any knowledge of the doctrines of the English Reformers, which is not to be found in their authentic writings? Would it not be considered in the highest degree absurd, to maintain that the interpretation of the thirty-nine articles, must be regulated by the consent of these fragments? Suppose all these remains of English theology were of one school, say the Laudean, what view should we then be forced to take of the English articles? Or suppose that some were of the school of Whitgift, some of that of Laud, and some of that of Hoadly, contradicting each other on almost all points, each accusing the others of departure from the faith of the church, would it not be a perfectly hopeless task, to attempt to gather from their conflicting statements, the meaning of the articles? Yet this, and even worse than this, is the rule of faith which traditionists would impose upon the church. We say worse, for the supposed fragments of English writers, would at least be all genuine, in a language we understand, relating to controversies with which we are familiar. The remains of the first centuries have no one of these advantages. They are confessedly more or less mutilated and corrupted. It is really a matter of surprise to read the frequent and loud complaints made by the fathers of the frauds to which they were subjected. Spurious writings were issued on all occasions; the writings of distinguished men curtailed or interpolated to serve the purposes of a party. We hear not only of the gospel of St. Thomas, of the epistle to the Laodiceans, of the acts of Paul and Thecla, but complaints are made of the name of one father being put to the writings of another to give them currency. This is a difficulty and an evil which Romanists themselves are forced to admit. On

this point Mr. Goode remarks, "Above one hundred and eighty treatises, professing to be written by authors of the first six centuries, are repudiated by the more learned of the Romanists themselves, as, most of them rank forgeries, and the others not written by those whose names they bear; though, be it observed, they have been quoted over and over again by celebrated controversial writers of the Romish communion, in support of their errors against Protestants." An evil still greater than forgery, because more difficult to detect, is interpolation. Many of the early Greek works are extant only in a latin translation, which is so corrupt as to be unworthy of credit. This is the case with the work of Irenaeus, and with the translations by Ruffinus, whom Jerome charges with the most shameless adulteration of his authors. This is a subject which cannot be treated without going into details which our limits forbid. It is however a notorious fact that the remains of the early ages have come down to us in a most corrupted state, and that it is a task of great difficulty, if not of absolute impossibility to separate what is genuine from what is spurious. What a rule of faith is here!

But besides this difficulty, the writings of the fathers are on various accounts hard to be understood; not only because of the language on which they are written, but from the principles on which their authors proceeded. They relate also in a great degree to controversies with which we have no immediate concern, being directed against Paganism, or obsolete heresies. These are the writings which are to remove the obscurities of scripture, and supply its deficiencies. We might as well take the waters of the Thames, after it has traversed all London, to purify the limpid river at its source.

Besides all this, the fathers are not trustworthy, as witnesses of the faith of the early church. They are too credulous. This is proved by the fact, that they claim the support of tradition for acknowledged error or for opposing doctrines. Some say they derived it from the successors of the apostles, that our Lord was fifty years old at the time of his death; others, on the same authority, assure us that his ministry continued but for one year; Origen, as we have seen, claims the tradition of all the churches in support of the allegorical sense of the historical parts of scripture; he says tradition leaves it doubtful whether the sun, moon and stars have souls or not. Papias, who flourished

about ninety years after Christ, says, "As the elders remember, who saw John the disciple of the Lord, that they heard from him what the Lord taught about those times, and said, The days shall come in which vines shall exist, each containing 10,000 shoots, and in each shoot shall be 10,000 arms, and in each true shoot shall be 10,000 branches, and on every branch 10,000 clusters, and in every cluster 10,000 grapes, and every grape, when pressed, shall give 25 firkins of wine," &c. &c. &c. This account is endorsed by Irenaeus, who quotes Papias "as a hearer and companion of Polycarp." The eastern churches affirmed that the observance of Easter on the fourteenth day of the moon, had been delivered to them by the apostle John; the Romans and those in the western parts said that their usage was delivered by the apostles Peter and Paul. Cyprian insisted that those who had been baptized by heretics and schismatics, should be rebaptized, and appeals to the catholic faith and church in his support. Stephen, the bishop of Rome, said, "The apostles forbade that those who came over from any heresy should be baptized, and delivered this to posterity to be observed." Augustin says, it is the "Catholic faith," that all unbaptized infants are lost, though he is suspected of being himself the father of the doctrine. Many claim the authority of the church for the notion that the angels have bodies. Some say that tradition taught that all souls are immediately created, others that they are derived, *ex traduce*. So in all their disputes, each party appealed to tradition in its own behalf, and condemn all others. The heretics, especially, driven by argument from the scriptures, were distinguished by their appeals to patristical tradition. Irenaeus says, "When they are reprov'd by the scriptures they immediately begin to accuse the scriptures themselves, as if they were not correct, nor of authority, and that they are not consistent; and that the truth cannot be found out from them by those who are ignorant of tradition." The same complaint is made by other fathers.

The thing to be proved is, that certain doctrines are derived from the oral teaching of the apostles. The proof is that the fathers say so. We answer, their saying so is not sufficient proof. They are too few, too far removed from the apostles; their testimony is hard to get at, since so many writings are attributed to them which they never wrote, and since their genuine writings are so much corrupted; besides, their testimony when obtained is not decisive, because they

testify to what cannot be true. They say they received doctrines from the apostles, which every body must admit to be false ; and they make the claim for conflicting statements. No court, civil or ecclesiastical, would decide any cause involving the value of a straw on such testimony.

To all this it may be said, that admitting all that has been urged, still where the fathers do all concur, there we have ground to believe they are right, often as they are individually wrong. To this we answer, that the consent of the few writers of the first three centuries is as nothing compared with the whole church which they are assumed to represent. But further, their consent can be fairly pleaded for nothing which is now a matter of dispute. They agree in nothing but the plainest and simplest biblical facts and doctrines. Hear what even Bishop Taylor, one of the witnesses quoted by Mr. Keble in his *Catena Patrum* in favour of tradition, says on this subject. "Catholic consent," he says, "cannot be proved in any thing but in the canon of scripture itself; and, as it is now received, even in that, there is some variety." Again. "There is no question this day in contestation in the explication of which all the old writers did consent. In the assignation of the canon of scripture, they never did consent for six hundred years together; and when by that time the bishops had agreed indifferently, and but indifferently, upon that, they fell out in twenty more; and except it be the apostles' creed and articles of that nature, there is nothing which may, with any colour, be called a consent, much less tradition universal."* This want of consent of the fathers of the first three centuries; their silence or their conflicting statements on all questions having any bearing on present controversies, is so obvious and notorious, that it is virtually conceded even by traditionists themselves. The author of tract 85, says, in reference both to the canon of scripture and to "Catholic doctrines," "We believe mainly because the church of the fourth and fifth unanimously believed." "We depend for the canon and creed upon the fourth and fifth centuries. . . . Viewing the matter as one of moral evidence, we seem to see in the testimony of the fifth, the very testimony which every preceding century gave, ACCIDENTS EXCEPTED, such as the present loss of documents once extant, or the then existing misconceptions which the want of intercourse

* See his *Liberty of Prophesying*, Sec. v. viii.

among the churches occasioned. The fifth century acts as a comment on the obscure text of the centuries before it, and brings out a meaning which with the help of the comment any candid person sees to belong to them. And in the same way as regards the Catholic creed, though there is not so much to account for. Not so much, for no one, I suppose, will deny that in the fathers of the fourth century, it is as fully developed and as unanimously adopted as it can be in the fifth." This is the precise doctrine of the Romanists. The obscurities and deficiencies of scripture are to be explained or supplied by the writings of the first three centuries; the obscurities and deficiencies of those centuries are to be made good by the writings of the fourth and fifth; those of the fourth and fifth, by the tenth and twelfth, those of the tenth and twelfth by the fifteenth and sixteenth. Thus we have the whole accumulated mass of superstition and error sanctioned by apostolic authority and imposed upon the church. It is as plain as it can be that we have here the concession of the failure of the whole theory. The theory is that the oral teachings of the apostles are a part of our present rule of faith; that catholic consent is our warrant for believing certain doctrines to be part of that oral teaching; catholic consent is the consent and testimony of the whole church at all times. But it is admitted that the first three centuries do not testify to what are called Catholic doctrines. This fact is accounted for by loss of documents and misconceptions of the churches. To account for a fact is to admit it. It is admitted, therefore, that the first three centuries do not consent to or testify Catholic doctrines. To say that the first three do, because the fourth and fifth do, is so unreasonable as to give the whole matter the air of insincerity and imposture. Is the rationalism of the present German churches an exponent of the faith of those churches during the preceding century? Is the Socinianism of the modern clergy of Geneva a proof that Calvin and Beza were Socinians? Or are the Pelagianism and infidelity of the English church during a large part of the 18th century, when, according to Bishop Butler, Christianity itself seemed to be regarded as a fable "among all persons of discernment," to be considered as proving the faith of that church in the preceding centuries? Here is a church, a true church, an episcopal church, an apostolic church, to which all the promises ever made to an external church belong in all their plenitude, sunk so low as scarcely to

retain the semblance of belief; and even now, according to Mr. Newman, you cannot find any ten or twenty of its neighboring clergy who agree even in the elementary and necessary doctrines of the gospel. With what colour, then, of reason, or even honesty, can it be maintained that all the superstitions and false doctrines of the fifth century are to be taken as part of the faith of the first three centuries, and of the apostles themselves? Of all rules by which to determine what men must believe in order to be saved, this would seem to be the most absurd. We believe, say the Tractarians, not because the apostles believed, not even because the early church believed, but because the fifth century believed.

This, however, is not the only way in which traditionists abandon their own theory. They believe many doctrines for which catholic consent cannot be pleaded, and they reject many in which the early church were to a very great degree unanimous. With regard to the first class, we of course do not believe that the consent of the three centuries can be fairly claimed, for prelatical episcopacy. We might, without undue confidence, say we know that it cannot be so claimed; not only because such consent, according to Bishop Taylor, can be claimed for nothing except such principles of the faith as are contained in the apostles' creed, but because it is notorious that the identity of the office of bishop and presbyter was maintained by many in the early church, and that presbyters had the right of ordaining bishops even after the introduction of prelacy. Mr. Goode himself, while he holds episcopacy to be of apostolical origin, admits that its necessity cannot be proved. "If," he says, "in any church, a presbyter be appointed by his co-presbyters to be bishop, or superintendent or president of that church, and perform the usual duties of the episcopal function, we cannot prove either by scripture, or by the consent of the apostolically-primitive church, that his acts are by apostolic ordinance invalid." Again: "Supposing the apostles to have appointed the first bishops in twelve churches, I want to know where we are informed that when the bishop of one of them died, the church of the deceased bishop depended upon the will and pleasure of the remaining eleven bishops for a president, and could not appoint and create, to all intents and purposes, its own president, out of its own body of presbyters."* As for the popish

* Vol. ii. pp. 58, 59.

doctrine of orders, episcopal grace, the sacrificial character of the eucharist, &c., it is, as we have already seen, virtually admitted, that they cannot be sustained by the consent of the first centuries. They rest upon the fifth, even in the creed of their advocates.

But besides these false doctrines which are not only not in the scriptures, but anti-scriptural, there are important and even fundamental scriptural doctrines for which not even the general consent of fathers can be produced. The early fathers were accustomed to use the language of the Bible in their religious discourses, and unless driven to explanations by the errors of opposers, they seldom so defined as to render their testimony available against the subtle heretics of later time. They spoke of Christ as God, they prayed to him, they worshipped him; but the Arians were willing to do all this. And if the doctrine of the essential equality of the Father and Son in the adorable Trinity is to depend upon tradition, it cannot be proved at all. It is also a notorious fact that the divinity of the Holy Spirit, plainly as it is taught in scripture, is not a doctrine for which catholic consent can be claimed. Jerome says, "Many, through ignorance of the scriptures, assert that the Father and Son are often called Holy Spirit. And while we ought clearly to believe in a Trinity, they, taking away the third person, imagine it not to be a hypostasis of the Trinity, but a name." Basil says, the question concerning the Holy Spirit was "passed over in silence by the ancients, and owing to its not being opposed, was left unexplained." And he therefore proceeded to discuss it "according to the mind of scripture." A doctrine which the ancients passed over in silence, they cannot be cited to prove. If, therefore, tradition is our rule of faith; if we are to believe nothing for which catholic consent cannot be produced, we shall have to give up even the essential doctrines of the gospel.

The traditionists moreover depart from their own theory, or rather, show that they proceed in a perfectly arbitrary manner, by rejecting many doctrines for which a much greater degree of unanimity among the fathers can be produced than for those which they adopt. Mr. Keble says, We know with certainty that "Melchizedek's feast was a type of the blessed Eucharist," "from the constant agreement of the early church." In proof, he refers to Cyprian, Augustine, Jerome, and the Roman liturgy, as "representing the sense of the western church," and to Chrysostom

for the Greek. This is proof of the constant agreement of the early church! One man in the first three hundred years of the church, and one for the whole Greek church, and this is taken as fulfilling the condition, quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus! Why, twice the amount of evidence of antiquity and catholicity may be produced for the grossest heresies or the greatest absurdities. This is only an illustration of the coolness with which catholicity is claimed for any doctrine which suits the feelings of the writer. It cannot be denied that three times as much evidence can be produced of a general belief in the early church of the unlawfulness of oaths, of the necessity of infant communion, of the establishment of a glorious visible kingdom at Jerusalem, of the re-appearance of Enoch and Elias to wage war with antichrist, and for other doctrines and usages which modern traditionalists unhesitatingly reject. It is true, therefore, what Bishop Taylor says, that "it is not *honest*" to press the authority of the fathers, unless we "are willing to submit in all things to the testimony of an equal number of them, which I am certain neither side will do." It is a sheer impossibility to prove any thing by the rule of the traditionalists as they state it, because catholic consent is absolutely unattainable. The rule is worthless as it stands; and if they choose to assume catholic consent in one instance on a certain amount of testimony, let them assume it in others, on the same degree of evidence, before they attempt to urge it upon others as "the unwritten word of God."

The advocates of tradition as a part of the rule of faith are therefore chargeable with great fallacy and unfairness. They lay down a rule which, according to its obvious meaning, commands the assent of all men. They say what all true Christians, in all ages and every where have believed, must, as far the essential doctrines of the gospel are concerned, be regarded as part of the faith once delivered to the saints. This is undoubtedly true; but they immediately and artfully substitute for true Christians, the external visible church, with regard to which it is not true that it cannot err even in fundamental doctrines. And further, though the consent of all visible churches, at all times and places, would not be conclusive proof of the truth of any doctrine, it would be a very strong proof, they assume such consent on the most insufficient evidence; evidence which they themselves reject in its application to the church at the

present time, and, in many cases in its application to the ancient church. If an ancient church had a creed, that creed expressed the faith of all its members. The church of England has a creed which is no index, according to these same writers, to the faith of its clergy. If a delegate attended an ancient council from Africa or Gaul, he fairly represented his province and committed his brethren to the decisions of the council. The delegate of the church of England sanctions Calvinism at the Synod of Dort, and he is a mere individual, misrepresenting and dishonoring the church to which he belonged. Some half dozen fathers in the course of as many centuries testify to one doctrine, and it is "catholic consent;" twenty or thirty testify to another doctrine, and it is set down to the "misconceptions of the churches." Antiquity is said to be necessary to prove a tradition apostolical, but if the first of these three centuries are silent on the subject or opposed to the tradition, we may suppose loss of documents or misinformation. We must believe what the fifth century believed, and take for granted that the preceding centuries agreed with it. This boasted rule therefore turns out to be no-rule at all. It cannot from its nature be applied, and therefore we must take the opinion of one age, as evidence of antiquity, universality and catholicity.

One of the most natural and uniform effects of making tradition a part of the rule of faith, is to destroy the authority of the Bible. Our Saviour charged the Pharisees with making the word of God of none-effect by their traditions. The Talmud has superseded the Law of Moses among the modern Jews; and the whole system of Popery is sustained on the authority of the church teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. Chillingworth well says, "He that would usurp an absolute lordship and tyranny over any people, need not put himself to the trouble and difficulty of abrogating and disannulling the laws, made to maintain the common liberty; for he may frustrate their intent and gain his own design as well, if he can get the power and authority to interpret them as he pleases, and add to them what he pleases, and to have his interpretations and additions stand for laws; if he can rule his people by his laws, and his law by his lawyers."* This is the avowed office of tradition, as the interpretation and supplement of scripture. It

* Chillingworth's works, American edition, p. 105.

undertakes to explain the sense and to supply the defects of the word of God; and in doing this it effectually supersedes its authority. "When the sense of scripture as interpreted by reason," says Mr. Newman, "is contrary to that given it by catholic antiquity, we ought to side with the latter." This is practically saying, that when scripture and tradition clash, we must side with tradition. This must in practice be its meaning. For to say when scripture interpreted by reason gives a certain sense, can mean only, when we believe it to convey that sense. That is, we must give up what we believe to be the meaning of the word of God, to the authority of tradition, which is but another name for the authority of man. If the Bible says, we are justified by faith in Jesus Christ; and tradition says, we are justified by baptism; then the Bible is made to mean not the faith of the individual, but of the church. If the Bible says, Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God; and tradition says, Whosoever is baptized is born again; then the Bible is made to mean, that baptism conveys the Holy Spirit in every case, where there is not the special impediment of mortal sin. If the Saviour says, Come unto me all ye who are heavy laden and I will give you rest; and tradition says, there is no remission of sin, without priestly absolution; then our Lord is made to mean, we must come unto him through the priest. If the Bible requires repentance, and tradition penance; then repentance means penance. The Bible addresses its instructions, its promises, its threatenings to every reader, according to his character. It speaks to him that reads it, promising to the penitent believer pardon of sin, the aid of the Holy Spirit, and the light of God's countenance; tradition says there are no promises but to the church, and there is no church where there is not a certain form of government. Thus through the whole system of divine truth, the Bible yields to tradition; the voice of God is drowned in that of men; the merits of Christ is abstracted by the priest, who for bread gives us a stone, and for an egg, scorpions.

The writings of the traditionists are consequently filled with irreverent depreciation of the scriptures. They are said to contain even essential truths only by a sort of accident; it is a wonder that they are all there, and though there, they are latent, hid under the surface, intimated by mere hints and notices. "The Bible," it is said, "does not carry its own interpretation." The texts of scripture "may im-

ply the catholic doctrine, but they need not; they are consistent with any of several theories, or at any rate other persons think so." The answers which Unitarians make to Trinitarians in defence of their claim to be considered orthodox, are said to be resistless, if we grant that the Bible is "the sole authoritative judge in controversies of faith." Certain individuals, says Mr. Newman, may not be injured by this principle, but "the body of men who profess it are, and ever must be injured. For the mass of men, having no moral convictions, are led by reasoning, and by mere consistency of argument, and legitimately evolve heresy from principles which, to the better sort of men may be harmless." In the same tone Dr. Hook says, "I believe it to be only on account of their being bad logicians, that they are not Socinians. I believe that they ought to be, if consistent, both Dissenters and Socinians. If they accuse church principles of tending to popery, we think that their opinions must lead logical and unprejudiced minds to Socinianism."* According to the traditionists, therefore, men may, and the mass of them must, legitimately evolve heresy from the Bible, which, if taken by itself, "must lead logical and unprejudiced minds to Socinianism." It is thus that men allow themselves to speak of the word of God, in order to exalt tradition. Nay, worse than this, they seem willing to destroy all faith, that they may introduce their system of priestly and ecclesiastical domination. For, unable to meet the obvious objection, that if the Bible is obscure, so are the fathers; if the latent doctrines of the scriptures are hard to find, so is catholic consent; they say that doubt is essential to faith;† that we have, at most, only probability to show for revelation at all, or even for the existence of an intelligent Creator.‡ They assert that there is but "a bal-

* This is quoted by Mr. Goode, vol. i. p. 487, as said of those who hold that "the Bible is the sole, infallible rule of faith."

† "Evidence complete in all its parts," says Mr. Keble, "leaves no room for faith." Sermon on Tradition, p. 82. Newman says, "Doubt may even be said to be implied in a Christian's faith." Lectures, p. 104.

‡ Speaking of the appeal to antiquity, Mr. Newman says, "Where men are indisposed to such an appeal, where they are determined to be captious and to take exceptions, and act the disputant and sophist instead of the earnest enquirer, it admits of easy evasion, and may be made to conclude any thing or nothing. The rule of Vincent is not of a mathematical or demonstrative character, but moral, and requires practical judgment and good sense to apply it. For instance, what is meant by being 'taught *always*?' Does it mean in every century, or every year, or every month? Does 'every where' mean in every

ance on the side of revelation ;” “ there are, so to say, three chances for revelation, and only two against it.” The whole ground of faith is swept away, and mere feeling put in its place. “ Why,” asks the author of Tract 85, “ why should not the church be divine ? The burden of proof is surely 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 a 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.” This is the same gentleman who says, “ We believe mainly because the church of the fourth and fifth centuries unanimously believed.” That is, he likes the doctrines of those centuries, and therefore he believes. Here is the whole logic of tradition. This same writer says, our Saviour required the Pharisees to believe “ on weak arguments and fanciful deductions ;” and hence we have no right to complain if we are required to believe on the slight and fanciful evidence which traditionists can produce. He seems to have no conception of the infinite difference between the cases, which is no less than the difference between the authority of God and that of man. The Pharisees were required to believe on the authority of Christ : “ If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not ; but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works ; that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me and I in him.” To call the reasons proposed by such a teacher weak and fanciful, is in the highest degree irreverent. And to represent the Saviour as resting the whole authority of his doctrines on the exposition of certain passages of the Old Testament, is to misstate the fact. Christ showed the Jews that his doctrines were confirmed by their own scriptures ; and his expositions of those scriptures were to be received, not only because they were in accordance with the principles of his opponents, but because of his authority

country, or in every diocese. And does the ‘*consent of fathers*’ require us to produce the direct testimony of every one of them ? How many fathers, how many instances, constitute a fulfilment of the test proposed ? It is, then, from the nature of the case, a condition which never can be satisfied as fully as it might have been ; it admits of various and unequal application in various instances ; and what degree of application is enough must be decided by the same principles which guide us in the conduct of life, which determine us in politics, or trade, or war, which lead us to accept revelation at all, for which we have but probability to show at most, nay, to believe in the existence of an intelligent Creator.” Lectures, p. 69.

as a teacher whose divine mission was fully established. The declaration of Christ is the strongest of all possible reasons as a ground of faith ; and his testimony to the sense of scripture is the strongest of all possible grounds of assurance that such is its true sense. It is not, however, to the irreverence of the language referred to that we would call attention ; it is to the implied admission that tradition can offer us nothing but weak reasons and fanciful deductions as a ground of belief, which the passage quoted contains. The uncertain teaching of tradition is admitted. It may, as Mr. Newman says, be made to conclude any thing or nothing. But then, say the traditionists, we have no better ground of faith in any thing. Our Saviour required his hearers to believe on weak reasons ; we have only a probability to offer even for a divine revelation ; three chances, so to say, for it, while there are two against it. The stream, says Mr. Keble, can never rise higher than the fountain, we have but historical tradition for the scriptures themselves, and of course nothing more for any of the doctrines which they contain ; and we have the same historical tradition for catholic doctrines, i. e. for the oral teaching of the apostles. Every step of this argument is unsound. It is not true that we have nothing but historical tradition for the authority of scripture and of the doctrines they contain. Mr. Goode, in accordance, we had almost said, with all Christians, says, " It will not I hope be denied, that a saving belief in scripture being the work of God, must be the work of the Spirit of God upon the heart ; and that such a faith might be produced under that influence, even though the *external* evidence should be in itself weak and insufficient ; and that such a faith is of the highest and most perfect kind, including all and more than all, which can be produced by a faith wrought by the force of evidence alone ; and that any other faith, as long as it stands alone, is, in fact, useless."* No true Christian's faith rests exclusively or mainly upon historical tradition, but upon the testimony of the Spirit, by and with the truth upon the heart. And in the second place, it is not true that we have the same historical tradition for the oral teaching of the apostles, that we have for the authenticity of the scriptures. The historical tradition in the church of England in favour of the derivation of the Thirty Nine Articles from the Reformers, is

* Vol. i, p. 59.

perfect and conclusive. No man ever has doubted the fact, or ever can doubt it. Though the evidence is of a different kind, no mathematical demonstration is more convincing. But the tradition of that church for any oral teaching of the Reformers, is absolutely null, it is nothing. In like manner the testimony of the church to the authenticity of the New Testament is as strong as historical testimony can be, while its testimony to the oral teaching of the apostles may be made "to conclude any thing or nothing."

It is very clear that the men who remove our faith from the sure and stable foundation, and place it on one which is false and feeble, are in fact taking the best course to destroy faith altogether. The testimony of the scripture is true and trustworthy; the testimony of tradition, taken as a whole, is in the highest degree uncertain, unsatisfactory and erroneous. This is so, and men cannot but find it out, and when required to believe on grounds which they see to be so unstable, they will either not believe at all, or they will commit themselves blindfold to the guidance of their priests. Infidelity, therefore, or blind, superstitious faith, is invariably attendant on tradition. Speaking in general terms, such is and ever has been its effects in the Romish church. Those who think are infidels; those who do not, are blind and superstitious.

As it is the tendency and actual working of tradition to supersede the word of God, and to destroy the very foundation of faith, so it has never failed to introduce a system of false doctrines and of priestly tyranny. If you take men from the infallible teaching of God, and make them depend on the foolish teaching of men, the result cannot fail to be the adoption of error and heresy. This is a conclusion which all experience verifies. And as to ghostly domination, the result is no less natural and certain. The inalienable and inestimable right of private judgment, which is nothing else than the right to listen to the voice of God speaking in his word, is denied to us. We are told that we must not trust that voice; it is too indistinct; it says too little; and is too liable to lead us into error. We must hearken to tradition. When we ask, where is this tradition? we are told in the church. When we ask further, which church? we are told the Catholic church. When we ask which church is Catholic? we are told, that one whose teachings and institutions can stand the test of antiquity, universality and catholicity. When we say that this is a

test exceedingly difficult to apply, requiring immense labour and research, and that it is exceedingly precarious, concluding "any thing or nothing;" we receive two answers, one on rare occasions, which is absurdly inconsistent with the whole theory, and that is, that we must judge for ourselves; we must use our "common sense," and act as we do in "trade, politics or war;" take that for the true church, and that for the teaching of tradition, which we on the whole think most likely to be so. That is, although we are forbid to judge for ourselves what our blessed Lord means, when he says, Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out; yet we are told to judge for ourselves, what all the Greek and Latin fathers mean; in what points they all agree; which of the conflicting councils were truly general, whether that in which three hundred bishops decided right, or that in which six hundred decided wrong. When we have done all this, then we may judge for ourselves, which is that true Catholic church which is authorized to tell us what those things mean which are revealed even unto babes. As this is such a many-sided absurdity, we rarely hear this answer given. It is only when an unwonted sprightliness or levity leads the traditionist, as in the case of Mr. Newman, to strip the mask from the whole system of fraud and imposture.


It is so manifest an impossibility for the mass of ordinary Christians to apply the test of antiquity, universality and catholicity, in order to decide which is the true church, and what tradition really teaches, that the enquirer is commonly simply told to "hear the church;" and as he cannot tell which church he ought to hear, he must hear the one that speaks to him, be it the Romish, the Greek, or the English. If the church within whose pale he happens to live, teaches him error, even fundamental error, he has no relief. He must submit his soul to his church; he must subject his heart, his conscience, and his life, to her guidance, and wait until he enters eternity to find out whither she has led him. Still further, as every church speaks to its members, mainly through the parish priest; as he is her organ of communication, the parish priest is to the great majority of Christians the ultimate arbiter of life and death. They must take his word for what is the true church, and for what that church teaches. Thus what in sounding phrase is called the

church catholic and apostolic, turns out in practice to be one poor priest. The Bible, Christ and God are all put aside to make the soul depend on the fidelity and competency of one sinful, feeble man. Where tradition has its perfect work, there, in point of fact, the souls of the people are in the power of the priest, their faith and practice are subject to his control.

This same result is reached in another way. We have seen that it is virtually admitted by traditionists that their system cannot be found in the scripture, nor in the first three centuries. We believe, say they, what the fifth century believed and because the church of that age believed. The reason of this obvious. Priestly power was not fully established before the fifth century. To find a system suited to their taste, they must come away from the Bible and from the early church, and turn to an age in which salvation was doled out for pence; when priestly excommunication was a sentence of death; when pardon, grace, and eternal life were granted or withheld at the option of the clergy; when the doctrines of episcopal grace, and sacramental religion, had subjected all classes of men and all departments of life to ghostly domination. We do not say that the modern traditionists love this system, merely or mainly because of the power it gives the clergy, but we say that the system which they love, has ever had, and from its nature must have the effect of exalting the priesthood and of degrading the people.

Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty. The men who read the Bible and hear there the voice of God, cannot but be free. It commands their assent and secures their homage. They cannot be subject to men in things whereof God has spoken. All the traditionists in the world cannot persuade them that the Bible is not the intelligible voice of God, or that there is either duty or safety in closing their ears to that voice, in order to listen to the mutterings of tradition. Our blessedness is to be free from men, that we may be subject to God; and we cannot be thus subject, without being thus free.

We have reason then still to assert and defend the position that the Bible, the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants; we want no other and we want no more. It is the rule of our faith. It is infallible, perspicuous, complete and accessible. It is able to make us wise unto salvation; being inspired of God, it is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for



correction, for instruction in righteousness ; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work. A better, surer rule than inspired scripture we cannot have ; and it must stand alone, or fall. If men bring their torches around the pillar of fire, the sacred light goes out, and they are left to their own guidance ; and then the blind lead the blind.