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Scripture and Tradition in the Council of Trent

By RICHARD BAEPLER

THIS study deals with the historical circumstances surrounding the Roman Catholic doctrinal decision at the Council of Trent regarding the authority of Scripture and tradition. By examining this decision in the light of events which led to its formulation as well as in the light of its subsequent fate, we shall be introduced to an issue which has become very much alive in both Roman Catholic and Protestant thought.

In the past, Roman theology has tended to exalt tradition above Scripture; Protestants, in asserting their antithesis, have reversed the relationship. On the side of Roman Catholicism Biblical and patristic studies have prospered to such an extent that the Bible can no longer be relegated to a secondary role. In Protestantism the ecumenical movement has focused on the Bible as a common denominator in Christendom, but this has paradoxically emphasized the multitude of factors which shape the *interpretation* of the Bible. Within confessional Lutheranism the question also takes other forms, the most enduring being that of the relationship of the Lutheran Confessions to the Bible and of the Lutheran Confessions to non-Lutheran confessions.

The relationship of Scripture to tradition is, of course, an aspect of the larger problem of authority in the church. Thus the churchmen at Trent felt they were dealing with a foundational issue when, in the fourth session, they treated this subject explicitly.

I

HOW THE REFORMATION RAISED A QUESTION FOR WHICH THERE WAS NO SINGLE TRADITIONAL ANSWER

That the problem of authority could be raised at all and in the form that it was raised in the 16th century was due to a modification which the understanding of the church had undergone since the beginning of the Middle Ages. Without advancing detailed patristic evidence it is possible to say that in general the patristic period did not feel the necessity for carefully defining and setting off such elements as church, Scripture, tradition, and authority. The common understanding of the church implied that the church, Scripture, and tradition were part of a whole, participating in the common authority of Christ. Theology was essentially exegetical in character, and tradition would ordinarily point to the commonly accepted understanding of the Bible as expressed in creeds, liturgy, and other forms. In this spirit Vincent of Lerins defined the true teaching of the church as that which is taught everywhere, always, and by everyone. Vincent was probably directing this against the theological reforms of St. Augustine, but he expressed the idea of catholicity which the ancient church would probably have accepted as descriptive of the real situation.

By the time of the Middle Ages subtle new forces were at work. Theology was in theory exegetical theology, although for some time before the revival of learning

it had been reduced to patristic quotations. But with the 12th-century renaissance came a renewed interest in the study of the Bible and the fathers. The two were felt to be a whole, sometimes the term *sacra pagina* being extended to cover the fathers as well as the canonical books. Newly discovered linguistic tools stimulated students toward new and fresh exegesis.¹

The same revival produced a new interest in dialectics and consequently in philosophical theology. The study of the Bible was crowded out of the schools and found refuge in the monasteries, which continued to produce a stream of Biblicistic thought.

At the same time the understanding of the church had undergone a subtle but important change. Rudolph Sohm has described this change as the change from an organism to an essentially juridical organization.² Political developments pitted the church against the state over questions involving jurisdiction and authority. From another viewpoint the same question of authority was being raised by reform movements. The church was forced to develop organs for deliberation and for unified action, the Bishop of Rome becoming the chief beneficiary of these developments. In philosophy the power of nominalism would accelerate the breakdown. In theology the Vincentian consensus would be analyzed for its component parts in terms of Scripture, tradition, conciliar decrees, papal decrees, customs new and old.

One towering figure in the 12th century

incarnates the new trends: Peter Abelard, the father of scholasticism. His *Sic et Non* was a collection of mutually contradictory Biblical and patristic passages. He aimed to dispute the acceptance of doctrine on blind faith by introducing *ratio* and critical inquiry. The writings of the fathers are to be read "not with the necessity of believing but with the liberty of judging." He halts only when confronted by the canon. Here no error is possible.³

These developments imposed upon the church's theologians the task of clarifying the relationship between Scripture, tradition, authority, and the church. To the extent that these questions are raised and become issues in theology, to that extent we are witnessing a breakdown of the natural unity between Bible and church that had for long characterized Western church life. Symptomatic of this disintegration is the flurry of spiritualistic, prophetic, and Biblicistic movements, of which the Waldensians are an important example.

The new situation is already evident in the theology of St. Thomas. For St. Thomas the authority of Scripture is axiomatic, is *proprie et ex necessitate* (*Summa*, I, Q.I, Art. VIII). The authority of the fathers is not quite on the same level. It is rather *probabiliter*. No genuine contradiction between the church and the Bible is contemplated by Thomas, for he still presupposes a natural unity. But should there be some differences among theologians in individual Biblical interpretation the matter would, in the last analysis, be settled by papal decision. He uses tradition chiefly as a verb to refer to the transmission of

¹ B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1952), pp. 37-82.

² K. D. Schmidt, *Studien zur Geschichte des Konzils von Trient* (Tübingen, 1925), p. 167, comments on the thought of Sohm with discernment.

³ R. Seeberg, *Text-Book of the History of Doctrines*, translated from the German by C. E. Hay (Grand Rapids, 1952), II, 58.

Scripture. Casually and naturally he draws upon noncanonical apostolic tradition in discussing sacraments and the reverencing of images. His method is exegetical so far as he is concerned.⁴

Alexander of Hales equates theology with Sacred Scriptures, scarcely even mentioning the word *tradition*. When it is used, it refers to the Word of God, which has been handed down in the Bible.⁵

St. Bonaventure, in his commentary on the sentences, does not even treat tradition or the teaching office of the church. Later in the commentary he occasionally refers to apostolic traditions in connection with the reverencing of images of Christ. Yet he is quite clear that *auctoritas principaliter* resides in the Bible. (Brev. V 7)

One of the first theologians to deal with a possible contradiction between Scripture and the church, Henry of Ghent, put the question in a purely hypothetical sense: "Must we believe rather the authorities of doctrine (Bible) than those of the church, or the other way around?" His answer was the classical answer that there is no contradiction between the church and the Bible. Should, however, the visible form of the church contradict the Bible in any way, the Word of Scripture would be the only true authority, for its teaching is immutable, while the teaching of human beings is changeable.⁶

Both St. Thomas and Henry of Ghent are aware of the possible element of error

in the human attempt to interpret the Scriptures. To counter this danger a typical proponent of the papalist position, Guido Terreni, introduces the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit, he argues, is at work in the church, and particularly does He assist the Supreme Pontiff in his decisions, also with respect to the correct interpretation of the Scriptures. For the authority of the canon itself is dependent upon the church, particularly the pope.⁷

Both Henry's and Guido's views are distortions of the patristic and earlier medieval view which considered Scriptures and church to be "mutually inherent" (Tavard). A more subtle but equally revealing expression is that of Nicholas of Lyra: "I protest that I wish to state or determine nothing but what has been plainly determined either by Sacred Scriptures or by the Church's authority." The either-or implies a double authority which would permit emphasizing one at the expense of the other or at least would obscure any unity of authority.⁸

During the 14th century, theologians vigorously discussed the question of authority. Marsilius of Padua declared that Scripture alone (*sola . . . Scripturam*) is true and must be believed for salvation; other writings of men may contain truth, but they are less reliable. Should there be doubt over unclear passages, a general church council would decide.⁹

The term *sola Scriptura* is repeatedly used by William Occam in formulating his position. He denies the church the right to establish doctrines apart from Scripture.

⁴ Relevant passages collected by A. Deneffe, *Der Traditionsbegriff* (Münster, 1931), pp. 76 and 77.

⁵ Ibid., p. 75.

⁶ G. Tavard, "Holy Church or Holy Writ: a Dilemma of the Fourteenth Century," *Church History*, XXIII (September 1954), p. 196 ff. This excellent article deserves thoughtful study.

⁷ Ibid., p. 199.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ F. Kropatscheck, *Das Schriftprinzip der lutherischen Kirche* (Leipzig, 1904), pp. 292 ff.

Only the Scriptures are without error; the pope and the councils can err. The only infallible interpreter of Scriptures is the whole church.¹⁰

For John Wycliffe the authority of Scripture derives from Christ. It is His book, and thus, he argues, one is compelled to acknowledge the *sola Scriptura* position. Still sensing a relationship between church and Scripture, he states a preference for the ancient church, which was relatively pure and had no pope. The institution of the papacy should be eliminated because it is not Scriptural.¹¹

Wycliffe's opponent, the learned Thomas Netter, argued chiefly on the basis of Scripture and the early fathers. He pointed to the history of heresies as proof of the need for authoritative interpretation of the Bible while admitting at the same time the supreme authority of Scriptures. The church which had established the canon should be the authoritative interpreter. Netter also spoke of an oral tradition which derived from the apostles, enabling the church to interpret authoritatively.¹²

The 15th-century nominalist Gabriel Biel argued that the Scriptures could not err, whereas the pope can. Still, reform in the church required more than Scripture, which was primarily a book for faith. There were also to be believed truths not found in Scripture. But he denied that the pope or church could create new dogma.¹³

The 15th-century conciliarists shared a common view of the high authority of Scriptures. No dogma, institution, law, or

reason could make a claim for authority in the church unless it was based on Scriptures. The fathers, in some sense inspired, were excellent guides in the interpretation of Scripture. Particularly important is their method of throwing light on dubious passages by comparing them with clear texts. Yet their chief interest was not in the authority of the Bible but in a definition of the decisive organ of the church.¹⁴

It is very difficult to describe the complex 16th-century situation. There was no unified Protestant or Roman position, but both sides had theologians with a wide variety of views. Moving freely on either side were the humanists, many of whom shared with the Protestants an antagonism toward the corruption within the church, an antipathy toward decadent scholasticism, and an urge to return to the sources of the faith.

Luther's own position is not simple, for it developed over a period of years. Primarily concerned for the centrality of the preached Gospel, his views of Scripture and tradition would follow from his evangelical and kerygmatic center. In his *Resolutiones disputationum de indulgentiarum virtute* (1518) he bids the pope speak of Christ as Judge over the indulgence dispute. The pope is to be obeyed when he agrees with canonical law or a council, not when he speaks his own opinions.¹⁵ It was Eck who then formulated the debate in terms of authority, attempting to identify Luther with the conciliarists. Luther does seem to hold substantially to a conciliarist position, though he is forced by Eck to state that both pope and council are human and

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 309 ff.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 326 ff.

¹² Deneffe, p. 78.

¹³ Kropatscheck, pp. 322 ff.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 382 ff.

¹⁵ WA 1, 527, 574, 582.

therefore can err.¹⁶ We are reminded of earlier statements (Thomas and others) which attributed probability to human deductions from Scripture, since only God is infallible and unchangeable.

How, then, did Luther regard the church's tradition? The ancient creeds he accepted and expounded because they summed up Scriptural teaching.¹⁷ Against sectarians he would summon the practice and teaching of the ancient church. On the other hand, the opinion of Paul was superior to the opinion of all the fathers whether they be Athanasius, Ambrose, or Augustine himself.¹⁸ The most thoughtful statement of views appears in 1539 in his treatise *Von Konzilien und Kirchen*. In the same year Melancthon published a similar essay: *De ecclesia et autoritate Verbi Dei*. Both Luther and Melancthon are in substantial agreement that the ancient church is purer than the present Roman Church, but that the fathers must be studied critically, the Word of God always remaining the norm. An interesting divergence is, however, discernible. Luther is always favoring the conciliarist position, sees congregations, schools, and pastors as little councils who are safe guides for people in their study of the Word; Melancthon, partly because he was writing against Servetus, tends to draw upon the historical past of the church to substantiate his argument.¹⁹ In the Augsburg Confes-

sion and Apology the use of patristic evidence in a corroborative fashion is evident. The Augsburg Confession declares its theology to be that of the Roman Church as known by her writings (AC XXI). Melancthon does seem to restrict "traditions" to rites and ceremonies, blasting the position which requires the observance of traditions which contradict the Gospel (AC XXVI). Yet traditions which do not contradict the Gospel are retained (AC XV). Melancthon's pupil Chemnitz, in a more detached way than either Luther or Melancthon, will be able to formulate a Lutheran statement on tradition which gives great weight to patristic evidence. Jan Koopmans sums up the difference between Luther and Melancthon admirably: Luther placed all emphasis on the Word of God, and to understand this Word, he had no need of fathers or councils. What he needed was the brother who would witness to him the forgiveness of sins, under the authority of the Word, and such brothers were the church fathers. Melancthon saw the church in less eschatological terms, was sensitive to Scriptural manipulation, and sought the Augustinian unity of Scriptures and church. But too much a child of his times, he could not create that unity in such a way that church and Bible remained side by side. We should also note the dynamic view of both Scripture and tradition which would seem to be implied in Luther's emphasis on the living, spoken, and preached Word.²⁰

Calvin, too, understood theology to stand in obedience to the Word. His most extensive statement of position on our issue is his *Defensio contra Pigbium*.²¹ He

¹⁶ J. Koopmans, *Das altkirchliche Dogma in der Reformation* (Munich, 1955), pp. 17, 18.

¹⁷ W. Elert, *Morphologie des Luthertums* (Munich, 1931), I, 180 ff.

¹⁸ Koopmans, p. 39. Also see Polman, *L'Élément Historique dans la Controverse Religieuse du XVIème Siècle* (Gembloux, 1932), pp. 27—31.

¹⁹ Koopmans, p. 29.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 31, 32.

²¹ CR VI, pp. 320 ff.

agrees with Pighius that the church cannot err, but only under the condition that she is obedient to the Word. A student of Augustine, Calvin also strives toward unity of Bible and church. He does not reject traditions outright, as many left-wing Reformers did, but critically distinguishes between true and false traditions. He reads the fathers as chiefly supporting the Reformation position, which leads him to conclude that the Reformers and the ancient church stand opposed to the papacy in common service to Christ.²² This position was shared by many Reformers, especially those with humanistic tendencies, and led to a great flourishing of patristic studies, of which the school of Bullinger in Strasbourg is perhaps the most eminent example.²³

There was also a left-wing reformation with radical theological views. Men such as Carlstadt and Bucer had little use for tradition of any sort. They even tended to reject all non-Biblical theological terminology. No doubt their extreme views tended to obscure the conservative standpoint of many of the Reformers, especially during the early years of the Reformation. But the course of debate between Protestant and Roman theologians gradually moved from the argument over Biblical and ecclesiastical authority to controversy over Biblical and patristic issues. This would seem to indicate that the conservative Protestant argument was felt by the Roman theologians to be the most serious position. But left-wing radicals are pointed to as people who are consistent in their *sola Scriptura* views, as the sole logical position of people who disregard ecclesiastical authority.

²² Koopmans, p. 41.

²³ Polman, pp. 98, 99.

The initial Roman argument against the Reformers followed the lead set by Eck. There is a general unanimity in the first stage of the polemics, most of the controversialists pounding away at the formal insufficiency of Scripture. They argue that Scripture is obscure, that it is peculiarly subject to extravagant manipulation, that its free interpretation is the source of all heresies. Such insufficiency required the authority of the church. It was the same church which established the canon which guarantees authentic interpretation.

This initial argument was not particularly effective, since many of the Reformers could agree in a formal way with these assertions, provided of course the "church" were understood in the Reformation sense. Indeed, precisely this issue concerning the nature of the church, which had lain dormant since the beginning of the Middle Ages, embarrassed the Roman dogmatists, since it was all too apparent that unanimity was lacking among them. The church was a complex reality. Which were the component parts?

Some, such as John Fisher, attempted to maintain a unified picture of the church in which the church is considered a living whole, consisting of all the faithful among whom the Holy Spirit is active preserving the true doctrine. In this whole Fisher distinguished several elements: fathers, councils, apostolic traditions, customs of the church. On the other hand, the Italian Dominican Prierias opposes to Luther the authority of the pope, the councils, and the church. In Eck's view the pope and councils represent the church.²⁴

Much less agreement is present over the

²⁴ The arguments are well summarized by Polman, pp. 284—293.

issue of who or what is the organ of the church. Bartholomew Latomus speaks of the faith in the hearts of all the people. John Fisher held that the church speaks through the mouth of the fathers. Driedo and Peresius promote the Church of Rome, while Pighius holds to the person of the pope as the proper ecclesiastical organ.²⁵

In what sense do the fathers speak for the church? The distinction is usually made between the fathers as individuals and the fathers as a group. While individually they may err, collectively they have authority. But whence do they receive this authority? Some held that their authority came from the Holy Spirit; others that their authority derived from the approval of the church. In the case of councils similar uncertainty showed itself. Was the council independently infallible or only when approved by the pope?²⁶

There was no unanimity on this issue, and thus the Roman attack on the formal sufficiency of Scripture lost force. This same weakness will show itself in the Council of Trent; it did not achieve a clarification of the nature of the church.

The controversy entered a new stage with the Reformation's critical attack on doctrines not in the Bible and with the Roman assertion of the material insufficiency of the Bible. The concept of tradition was deeply involved, and at this stage it suffers a considerable reduction at the hands of many polemicists, coming to refer to those doctrines not written in Scripture.²⁷ In the patristic and early scholastic period, tradition had included the transmission of the whole apostolic preach-

ing, chiefly in Scriptures. But already in the writings of Bonaventure and St. Thomas the notion of a non-Scriptural source of truth is mentioned in connection with the reverencing of images and sacraments. More evidence of such a source can be found in Occam, it has recently been asserted, and in Thomas Netter the idea is full-blown.²⁸ Again this development witnesses to the breakdown to which we have previously referred. Now, in the 16th century, the pressures of polemic have constricted the idea of tradition to those doctrines outside the Scripture. And yet even here great diversity is to be found. Some Roman theologians emphasize the apostolic character of tradition and give highest authority only to tradition which can be established as apostolic. Other theologians stress ecclesiastical traditions, not distinguishing between apostolic and ecclesiastical, holding that the authority of the church is decisive. We may examine the relevant teaching of some of the leading pre-Tridentine Roman theologians.

We possess a thorough study of the dogmatician Johann Driedo's idea of tradition.²⁹ Christ and the apostles bring the revelation of God. But not everything they revealed was committed to writing. That which was written is the Bible; the rest of

²⁸ The relevant material is collected by J. Beumer, "Das Katholische Schriftprinzip in der theologischen Literatur der Scholastik bis zur Reformation," *Scholastik*, XVI (1941), 24—52. The revised views on Occam are reported by A. van Lecumen, "L'Eglise, règle de foi, dans les écrits de Guillaume d'Occam," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*, XI (Jan—Jun 1934), 249 ff.

²⁹ J. Lodrioor, "La Notion de Tradition dans la Théologie de Jean Driedo de Louvain," *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*, XXVI (Jan—Jun 1950), 37—53.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 294.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 294—303.

²⁷ Deneffe, pp. 127—130

the revelation comes to us through the church. This is the tradition. It is apostolic in that its source is Christ or the apostles. The church may draw out the implications of this tradition, may clarify and develop it, but cannot add to it. Tradition is used by Driedo in a twofold sense: as the original deposit of faith and as the active handing down of the apostolic truth through the physical succession of bishops. The distinction between apostolic tradition and ecclesiastical customs is made also by John Fisher, but although he does not explicitly equate their authority, he uses them for all practical purposes as if they were on the same level.³⁰

We have a full study by George Tavard of the monk Nikolaus Ellenbog on this issue. Ellenbog did not occupy an influential chair at a university but was active in 16th-century polemics. He is valuable in particular because of his extensive correspondence with Romans and Protestants. We have seen previously that the aid of the Holy Spirit has been invoked by thinkers to account for certainty in matters which were not clear in the canon. Ellenbog logically carries this line of thought to the conclusion that if the Spirit once gave revelation to the apostles, and if Christ promised the Spirit to the church, the Spirit continues to reveal through the church. Thus there is revealed the authoritative interpretation of Scripture. This post-canonical inspiration also accounts for later ecclesiastical customs, particularly those which proceed from councils and the pope. Here there is no distinction made between apostolic and post-apostolic inspiration. The church can add new doc-

trines to the original deposit, even some which contradict earlier assertions.³¹

Albertus Pighius in his earlier writings uses the terms apostolic traditions and ecclesiastical traditions in about the same way, later choosing to use the latter designation only, referring to those extracanonical truths with apostolic origins.³²

Peresius Aiala, who participated in the Council of Trent, distinguishes traditions from Christ, traditions from the apostles, and traditions from bishops. The first two uses are the most important for him, so that tradition comes to designate that doctrine which is extracanonical. The authority of Scripture is guaranteed by the authority of the church manifesting itself in tradition. Three criteria for finding that tradition are (1) the belief of the universal church, principally Rome; (2) the general councils; (3) the orthodox fathers.³³

One of the members of the committee which helped produce the fourth session's decree was Alfonso de Castro. In his *Adversus haereses* he asserted that many things taught by Christ were not written down by the apostles but have come down to us by mouth to mouth and heart to heart. He emphasized that behind this tradition is the authority of the church, which is as strong today as when it first established the canon.³⁴

Confronted by a wide variety of theological positions within Christendom, how would the Council respond to the ques-

³¹ Tavard, "A Forgotten Theology of Inspiration: Nikolaus Ellenbog's refutation of 'Scriptura Sola,'" *Franciscan Studies*, XV (June 1955), pp. 106—122.

³² Polman, p. 305.

³³ Deneffe, pp. 84, 85.

³⁴ A. de Castro, *Adversus haereses*, Lib. I Cap. V (Basel, 1534).

³⁰ J. Fisher, *Assertionis Lutheranae Confutatio* (Coloniae, 1553), p. 22.

tion? The fact that the Reformers were not represented, and that the membership was deliberately weighted with prelates rather than with theologians seemed to prejudice the true catholicity of the answer.

II

HOW THE COUNCIL PRODUCED A COMPROMISE FORMULA WHICH SETTLED NOTHING

The debates leading up to the fourth session fall naturally into two parts, the first beginning Feb. 8, 1546, and ending with the first draft of the decree March 22, 1546, the second leading to the adoption of the final text on April 8, 1546.³⁵ The two texts are given at the end of this article, and the debate may be best understood through constant reference to them.

In reviewing the main lines of the debate we may note four salient features. The first is the confusion that reigns concerning the term *tradition*. Shall tradition be designated "apostolic" or "ecclesiastical," or does it make any difference? No final clarity is achieved, although the final decree (which uses neither) in substance means apostolic tradition. But to the very end of the discussion no genuine clarity is achieved.

The second feature we note is the unwillingness of the council to grapple with the definition of authority or of the church. The issue is raised on several occasions, but it is always postponed, never to be undertaken formally in the final promulgation.

³⁵ The sources for the council are collected in *Concilium Tridentinum*, edited by the Societas Goerresiana (Freiburg, 1901). We shall henceforth refer to this simply by a Roman numeral (for the volume) and an Arabic number (for the page).

Thirdly, we should follow the fate of the *partim . . . partim* clause introduced by Cardinal del Monte and included in the first draft of the decree but dropped later. We shall analyze this more closely at the appropriate point.

Fourthly, we should note the excited debate over the phrase *pari pietatis affectu*, first applied to all the canonical books, later extended to include the tradition. This controversy became another form of the argument between apostolic and ecclesiastical partisans.

The letters of the papal legates to Farnese reveal their plan to propose that the council accept Sacred Scriptures as the source of doctrine; to establish that all of Jesus' revelation was not recorded in the Bible but that some was handed down in the tradition; that after the Ascension, the Holy Spirit continues His work of revealing in the church, the results of which are found in the tradition which is defined chiefly by the councils. (X 373)

On Feb. 8 the legates inform the council that they first ought to receive Scriptures as the source of theology (I 28). On Feb. 11 they add that "tradition" ought to be considered also. In the discussion Seripando, general of the Augustinians, and the Bishop of Fano suggested a distinction among Biblical books according to their religious value, but there was no support for this move (V 7 ff.). In their subsequent letter the papal legates indicate satisfaction with the proceedings. In this letter it becomes clear that their intention is to formulate a general statement which will defend the church's practice against Protestant claims that such practice is not in the Bible. (X 378, 386).

After preliminary discussion concerning

the method of receiving the Sacred Scriptures, Cardinal del Monte introduced the question of tradition immediately at the general assembly on Feb. 12. His words are significant:

Noverunt Paternitates Vestrae, qualiter omnis fides nostra de revelatione divina est et hanc nobis traditam ab ecclesia partim ex scripturis, quae sunt in veteri et novo testamento, partim etiam ex simplici traditione per manus.

Therefore, he concluded, we should begin with Scripture and then deal with tradition. (V 7).

It is important to note that the traditions are here described as ecclesiastical traditions and that the *partim . . . partim* phrase would seem to imply a double transmission of revelation. This seems to be the only time in the debate in which "tradition" is used in a comprehensive sense to include both canonical and noncanonical doctrines.

Late at night in the meeting of Feb. 15 the issue of *receptione traditionum apostolicarum* is introduced, but the hour is too late for further consideration.

The next meeting was held on Feb. 18. In connection with the reception of Sacred Scriptures into the decrees, two related articles would need consideration: *de receptione traditionum apostolicarum* and the abuses in connection with the Sacred Scriptures (V 10). First it was necessary to decide in which order these two matters would be considered. The debate reveals the controversial nature of this issue. Some think that the abuses ought to be treated first, others argue for the traditions. Castellimaris would have the Scriptural abuses treated, followed by the traditions and the abuses pertaining to them.

The bishop of Fano argued that when we receive the Scriptures we necessarily receive the traditions, for both are dictated by the same Holy Spirit. (V 10)

Bellicastrensis took a strong position for the *traditiones ecclesiae et eius consuetudines, cum haec omnia principia sint nostrarum conclusionum* (V 10). Asturicensis thought the matter should be delegated and that weightier issues should be undertaken.

But the legate of Cardinal Giennensi, the Spanish theologian Alfonso de Castro, pushed the debate to the issue of authority, declaring that there was no unanimity among the delegates about that vital issue.

The diaries indicate an interesting sidelight, the Bishop of Cavo insisting that he believed the Gospel of John because John said so, not because the church said so. He received the reply that this was heretical. (I 484, 480)

The General of the Servites introduced a consideration of the councils and the papal decretals into the debate, since the heretics rejected their authority.

In summing up, the presiding cardinal, S. Crucis, thought that the majority desired a consideration of the traditions after the Sacred Scriptures, for there is no difference except that one is written and the other not, both having come from the same Holy Spirit. There are three *principia et fundamenta* of our faith: the first is the Sacred Scriptures, written by the Spirit's dictating; the second is the Gospel, which Christ taught orally, part of which some evangelists committed to writing, the rest being transmitted orally; and third is the ongoing revelation of the Holy Spirit in the church, which will continue until the consummation of the age. (V 11)

The meeting of Feb. 23 raised the question as to whether Scripture and tradition should be treated in the same decree or in separate decrees. The procurator of the cardinal of Augsburg suggested that they must distinguish a diversity of authorities and that there was a reception appropriate to each authority. Matters which pertain to faith must be received as the Gospel itself; other matters, such as rules concerning bigamy and the eating of strangled meat, are not so received.

This distinction was well taken, but De Castro, promoting a strong ecclesiastical position, proposed that the following be included in the decree:

Ultra autem sacros libros nonnulla in ecclesia Dei habemus quae scripta non sunt, sed ipsius ecclesiae auctoritate observantur, cui ecclesiae ab apostolis tradita sunt et per manus ad nos usque deveniunt. (V 7)

In summing up this meeting Cardinal S. Crucis accepted the distinction made between traditions which were essential to the faith and those pertaining to ceremonies. He then submitted a long series of Biblical and patristic quotations on the place of tradition in the church.

In reporting to the general assembly of Feb. 26 Cardinal S. Crucis achieved further precision in establishing a valid criterion for apostolic traditions. Remembering the distinction between essential and nonessential apostolic traditions, he designated those as essential *quae ab ecclesia receptae ad nos usque pervenerunt* (V 18). This criterion, therefore, is *continuity*.³⁶

³⁶ E. Ortigues, "Écritures et Traditions Apostoliques au Concile de Trente," *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, XXXVI (Avril, Mai, Juin 1949), p. 277.

This did not satisfy all. Turritano and others expressed the view that all the ecclesiastical traditions themselves should be *generaliter* accepted, that so much mention should not be made of *traditionum apostolicarum* lest the rest of the traditions would seem to be rejected (V 18). At this point Nacchianti, bishop of Chioggia, stood up and declared traditions to be substantially irrelevant because of the soteriological sufficiency of the Bible!

Nemo enim ignorat contineri in sacris libris omnia ea quae ad salutem pertinent.

After the presentation of the first draft on March 22, the council proceeded on March 23 to debate its adequacy. The records indicate that the draft of the decree, though ostensibly worked out by Cervini in committees, was in fact largely suggested by the papal legates already in February.³⁷

Senogalliensis (V 33) thought the description of "tradition" was too general, since it would include traditions which were no longer in use or which had been rejected, e.g., the prohibition against strangled meat.

Feltrensis replied (V 33) that they followed the 7th council in speaking of traditions in general. As for those traditions no longer in use, the following sentence excludes them: *traditiones quae continua successive usque ad nos pervenerunt*. However, Senogalliensis was not satisfied with this. (I 522)

There was considerable concern over the phrase *pari pietatis affectu*. The bishop of Fano and Bellicastrensis exchanged words on this issue. The bishop of Fano declared (I 523), "Non placet quod dicitur: pari

³⁷ K. D. Schmidt, p. 195.

pietatis affectu recipiendas esse traditiones, quia maiores auctoritates sunt scripturae quam traditiones." Yet lest the adversaries say that in accepting the apostolic traditions we reject the ecclesiastical traditions, it should be made clear that the latter are also given by the Holy Spirit.

Bellicastrensis thought that since the Spirit was the Author of both, and could change the traditions when it pleased Him, there should be no objection to the *pari pietatis affectu*.

A series of questions was then placed before the council. Some are irrelevant to our discussion.

Question 6: Should the traditions be named individually, or shall it be indicated simply that they exist and are received?

Question 7: Can we say of Scripture and traditions *par debetur pietatis affectus*, or shall an expression indicating *debita reverentia* be used?

Question 8: Should *pari pietatis affectu* be retained with a qualification that this pertains to dogmatic, not ceremonial matters?

Question 14: Should ecclesiastical traditions also be dealt with here?

On March 27 the bishop of Fano took up once again the theme that Scripture and tradition should not be received *pari pietatis affectu* because *inter haec maximum discrimen sit*. Scripture is unchangeable, while tradition can be modified by the church. The same Spirit may be behind them, but they are not on the same level. To combat Lutheran arguments, though, it would be enough to insert the following words:

quoniam sancta haec synodus scit, quam plura alia esse in ecclesia a Spiritu Sancto dictata, quae in sacris litteris non sunt

prodita, propterea illa quoque suspicit et veneratur.

Unless this distinction is made, he argued, the opposition would accuse us of receiving traditions against which we are violators. (V 40)

Bituntius (V 40), taking up the argument that the Holy Spirit was Author of both tradition and Scripture, suggested that the Spirit also authored other truths. So it would be insufficient merely to say that some traditions were abolished. Not everything established by the apostles has persisted. But there are some things, namely, those *quae ad fidem pertinent*, which are perpetually valid.

The changes did not satisfy all the men. Bishop Nacchianti of Chioggia raised a storm by declaring the *pari pietatis affectu* to be impious. Since this was taken by some to be personal and out of place, Nacchianti was forced to apologize (V 71). But his statement as such was not called heretical. The opposition to this formula exerted sufficient pressure to cause the committees to substitute *simili* for *pari* on April 6. The next day, by vast majority, this was changed back to *pari*.

On April 1 the fathers voted: 7 voted merely to note the existence of the tradition; 44 wanted to receive them; 33 accepted the *pari pietatis affectu*, while 11 proposed *simili pietatis affectu*; 3 voted *reverentia debeatur*; 3 voted *dubie*, while there were 2 *nihil placet*; several abstained. 13 against 11 (with 28 abstaining) voted for making no distinction among traditions. The council was unanimous in postponing further discussion on ecclesiastical traditions. (V 42—58)

On April 5 the modified form of the decree was again presented. The chief

change was the insertion of *tum ad fidem, tum ad mores pertinentes*, to exclude ceremonial traditions and to establish an internal criterion.

Another significant change in the first draft was the elimination of the *partim . . . partim* formula. Shortly after the draft had been presented, Bonucci, the learned general of the Servites, criticized it by saying: *Iudico omnem veritatem evangelicam scriptam esse, non ergo partim*. Later he again protested against the suggestion that *veritatem evangelicam partim in scriptis, partim in traditionibus contineri*. (V 47)

The supporters of *partim . . . partim* tried to base their contention on John 21:25, which asserts that Jesus did many things which were not recorded. Campeggio refuted this (I, 525) by asserting that the Biblical basis for the council's action was John 16:13: "The Spirit will lead you into all truth."

The combined assault of Nacchianti, Bonucci and others forced the council to substitute . . . *et . . .* for *partim . . . partim*.

Father Geiselmann argues that the combined protest of Nacchianti and Bonucci, who both asserted the sufficiency of Scripture, succeeded in producing a compromise formula. This formula was deliberately left in an indecisive state, surely in part due to the reluctance of the papal legates to force the issue of supreme authority. What was decided was to reject the *partim . . . partim* formula, to lay great stress on the apostolic character of tradition, and to assert, however indistinctly, some basic unity between Scripture and tradition.³⁸

³⁸ "Das Missverständnis über das Verhältnis von Schrift und Tradition und seine Überwindung in der katholischen Theologie," *Schrift und Tradition*, ed. T. Ellwein (Bad Boll, 1956), pp. 8, 9.

Geiselmann argues that the standpoint of Nacchianti and Bonucci, though a minority position at Trent, really has the authentic catholic tradition behind it as classically stated by Vincent of Lerins. Vincent not only stated the famous definition of catholicity in his *Commonitorium* but also asserted the sufficiency of Scripture. This document was rarely studied during the Middle Ages. Geiselmann thinks that an edition published in 1528 inspired these men to hold their position.³⁹ He seems to be supported in his general conclusions by Johann Beumer who has studied the catholic *Schriftprinzip*, particularly in the Middle Ages.⁴⁰ Surely there was much common ground on which the minority party at Trent and the conservative Reformers could stand.

III

HOW THE UNSETTLED QUESTION HAS ONCE AGAIN, AFTER MANY YEARS, REASSERTED ITSELF

The Protestant answer to the Council of Trent varied. The left wing continued to develop radically; its history would tend to support the claim that private interpretation, cut off from a creative relationship to the church's tradition, is self-destructive. The Reformed wing, sometimes tending toward a radical use of the Bible, outdid other branches of Protestantism in patristic studies which aimed to show the agreement of the Reformed position with the ancient church. But the most thorough treatment of the problem of tradition, both on the theoretical level and in actual theological application, came from Martin

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 41, 50.

Chemnitz in his *Examen*.⁴¹ The burden of his argument is that Trent, not the Reformation, has been unfaithful to tradition in its total exposition of doctrine. Chemnitz, the *Martinus secundus* of the Reformation and a major author of the Formula of Concord, clearly distinguished his position from the Biblicistic wing of Protestantism. He rejects Biblical interpretation which depends on one's own wisdom, for Scripture is not of private interpretation. We value highly and reverently use the labors of the fathers. Nor do we approve of someone who invents a sense of Scripture which contradicts all of antiquity.⁴²

Arguing that Trent was exploiting the imprecision so clearly evident in the use of the word "tradition," Chemnitz proceeded to distinguish eight kinds of tradition.⁴³

1. We may designate as tradition that which Christ and the apostles handed down *viva voce*, which the evangelists and apostles subsequently reduced to writing.

2. The faithful and careful transmission of the Sacred Scriptures in a certain connected succession to us is a form of tradition.

3. The rule of faith, a summary of Scriptural truth similar to the Apostles' Creed, such as that handed down by Irenaeus and Tertullian, may be called tradition.

4. The true exposition and understanding of Scripture was received by the primitive church from the apostles and handed

down. This, too, we accept as a valid form of tradition.

5. Dogmas not explicitly stated in Scripture but drawn from clear Scripture on the basis of sound reason are traditions. These have been transmitted by the church from the apostles. An example would be infant Baptism.

6. The catholic consensus of the fathers is a form of tradition in which we delight. Thus, as members of the catholic church, after we have set forth Scripture as judge in matters of religion, we immediately join to it the evidence of the catholic consensus.

7. Many ancient rites are designated as apostolic, though it cannot always be established that they derive from the apostles. Nevertheless, in our Christian freedom, we accept them; indeed, we retain and love them, for we distinguish between doctrine and rites. While all doctrines are taught in Scripture, many rites manifestly were not committed to writing, and so we receive them (e.g., renunciation of the devil, abrogation of the Sabbath, other rites in connection with Baptism which have edifying value, etc.).

8. The single sense of tradition to which Chemnitz objects is those matters of faith and morals which derive from post-apostolic times, or which are not written, i.e., without foundation in the canon, which are raised to the same level as the Scriptures.

It must be said, in evaluating Chemnitz's work, that we are confronted by a masterful handling of the problem which certainly tries to maintain a kind of unity between Scripture and tradition reminiscent of the classical position. It is an advance (which was not developed by his successors) that

⁴¹ Martin Chemnitz, *Examen Concilii Tridentini*, ed. Ed. Preuss (Berlin, 1861). Also see J. Pelikan, "Tradition in Confessional Lutheranism," *Lutheran World* III (December 1956), 219 ff.

⁴² *Ibid.*, Part I, sec. 8, p. 66.

⁴³ Chemnitz, pp. 70—99.

Chemnitz recognizes Scripture to be a part of tradition ("tradition" in the senses in which he defined it). There are many passages which seem to be striving for that unity.

Chemnitz is a major author of the Formula of Concord which, though it speaks of the Scriptures as the pure fountain of Israel, qualifies this by adding immediately that the function of Scripture is to judge doctrine. This would suggest that doctrine is an entity in some sense derived from Scripture, yet apart from Scripture, which is brought into some kind of relationship to Scripture without being identified with it. The comparison further suggests that this doctrine, controlled by the norm within tradition, becomes the norm for the living preaching and teaching of the church.

In the 17th century, Protestants, such as Grotius and Calixtus, still attempted to utilize tradition in a constructive and creative way by insisting that tradition in some sense precedes Scripture, but the power of rationalism triumphed in theology, reducing much of Protestant thought to a one-sided emphasis either on the Bible or on individual experience.

On the Roman side the decision of Trent did not prevent theologians from speaking about tradition in the same way as before. Some precision, however, is achieved through the great and decisive work of Melchior Cano.⁴⁴ *De locis theologicis* was published shortly before the council was closed. This work is a basic treatise on theological methodology, was a product of the theological renaissance which was to put Spain in the front ranks of theology

for some time, and became determinative for nearly every dogmatician who followed him, including the great Bellarmine. Without exaggerating we can say that post-Tridentine theology, at least on the question of Scripture and tradition, is based on Cano rather than the council.⁴⁵

In his book he sets forth 10 kinds of theological authority, presumably in their order of importance. First is Sacred Scripture, second are apostolic traditions, third is the catholic church, fourth are the councils, fifth is the Roman Church, etc. Here at last clarity is achieved in clearly distinguishing apostolic authority from ecclesiastical authority and in indicating criteria for establishing that authority. However, the *partim . . . partim* formula is still retained (1. III, c.3), and the analysis of various kinds of authority obscures the question of their unity.

Thus the same rationalism which desiccated Protestantism will now reduce Roman theology in the main to a kind of scholasticism in which authority and certitude become the chief issues, the latter growing in importance for two reasons. Historical criticism called into question certainty which was based on history, since historical analysis could only yield probabilities. In addition, the Thomistic revival reaffirmed that deductions drawn from revelation by reason had only probability, not certainty, for reason was fallible. Thus in July 1601, Father Gaspar Hurtado of the University of Alcalá, defended as a thesis for his doctorate a number of propositions, among them that "it is not *de fide* that

⁴⁴ M. Cano, *De locis theologicis*, in *Melchioris Cani opera* (Petavius, 1734).

⁴⁵ This opinion is supported by A. Michel in *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, ed. E. Amann and others (Paris, 1903), Vol. XV, col. 1322.

a particular person, e.g., Clement VIII, is Pope." The reasoning was that while revelation may declare the successor of Peter to be pope, only historical and rational investigation could affirm that Clement VIII was the successor of St. Peter.⁴⁶

The developing sense of history weakened the classical Roman polemic against the Protestants, formulated by Bossuet, that while Catholicism remained unchanged all through history, heresy represented variation. Prophetic of the decay of this argument is the work of Petavius (d. 1652), who, a patristic scholar and not a schoolman, formulated the theory that Platonism was at the root of all heresy. "In five successive chapters Petau surveyed ante-Nicene Christianity, showed how heresiarchs like Marcion and Tatian depended upon Platonic presuppositions, displayed the cloven hoof peeping out beneath the togas of Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria and Origen."⁴⁷ He was joined by the famous 17th-century French Benedictines, among whom the study of patristics reached new heights. So at the time when Richard Simon, for the Protestants, was startling Biblical scholars with new critical studies, these French historians were beginning to throw doubt on well-intrenched legends in the vulgar Roman tradition.

The man chiefly responsible for giving Rome a new start in theology by which she began to recover from the extreme embarrassments she found herself in, was no less than Gotthold Ephraim Lessing.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ O. Chadwick, *From Bossuet to Newman* (Cambridge, 1957), p. 39.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁴⁸ J. Ranft, *Der Ursprung des katholischen Traditionsprinzips*, (Würzburg, 1931), p. 144.

In his "Necessary answer to a very unnecessary question of Herr Hauptpastor Goeze in Hamburg" Lessing attacked the Lutheranism of his day by striking at its foundation, the Bible. He argued that oral tradition, the *regula fidei*, preceded the Bible, that many Christians had been saved without the Bible, that this early confession is the rock on which the church was built, not the Bible.⁴⁹ The first Protestant who saw in this viewpoint an escape from the devastating results of Biblical criticism was Eichhorn, who began to study the gospels on the presupposition that they are the results of, and are formed by, oral tradition. He thereby became a kind of precursor to form criticism, which modern Roman Biblical scholars have developed with great skill and profit.

In Roman theology Sailer combined the Lessing insight with Fénelon's concept of living tradition. Thus was begun a direction of thought which flourished in the Tübingen school under the Tübingen greats: Drey, Moehler, Kuhn, Doellinger. Forced into controversy with his Protestant colleague Baur, Drey appropriated Hegelian insights to argue that revelation is dialectically and dynamically developed in the living history and life of the church. The Bible is a part of tradition, but extracanonical sources also contribute to this development. Moehler, under similar influences, advanced the thought of his teacher. In *The Unity of the Church* he argued that tradition is the Gospel of the apostles, that faith is not the servile submission to some authority, but that it imposes itself upon the believer and is self-validating. These ideas combined with

⁴⁹ *Lessing's Theological Writings*, trans. H. Chadwick (Stanford, 1957), pp. 62 ff.

a high and romantic view of the church to enable the Tübingen theologians to accept a great deal of critical history. But still in Moehler, romanticism, argues Father Geiselmann, prevented him from achieving a complete unity of Scripture and tradition, for the church did somehow add something to the Bible, thus not wholly freeing the concept of tradition from an incremental function. It was the greatest of the Tübingen men, Moehler's pupil Johann Kuhn, who finally overcame the *partim . . . partim* idea. Kuhn began his career as an exegete and later became a dogmatician. Since tradition was the living transmission of revelation, borne by the community, the Scriptures were the literary deposit of this. The Scriptures were materially sufficient; all explication of dogma in the church is rooted in them; nothing can develop which does not have its premise or *Anknüpfungspunkt* in the canon. Thus the sufficiency of Scripture is declared in the sense of Vincent of Lerins, and a kind of classical unity is achieved (cf. the exact parallel development in the Lutheran Erlangen School). The tradition lives on and unfolds in the preaching of the church.⁵⁰

But the general retreat of Christianity on all fronts had accelerated the ultramontane tendencies already strongly represented in Trent. The great theological spirit behind the Vaticanum was Franzelin.⁵¹ He pressed for a greater precision in the definition of tradition, distinguishing for the first time explicitly between *traditiones* (tradition in the passive sense) referring to doctrines or truths objectively stated, and *traditio* (in the active sense)

referring to the living and authoritative transmission in the church. This enabled him to emphasize the magisterial function of the church. He denied that the church promulgated new revelations. The Spirit assists the teaching of the church, does not inspire.

This is the main thrust of the Vatican decree also. The *Vaticanum* reaffirmed Trent (*sessio* III, c. 2) and emphasized the magisterial function of the church, particularly that of the Supreme Pontiff when he speaks *ex cathedra* (*sessio* IV, c. 4). But by failing to define *ex cathedra* the *Vaticanum* did not close the door to further discussion of Scripture and tradition. Following the distinction of Franzelin between the active and passive sense, theological debate in Roman circles continues over the relationship between *traditiones* and *traditio*. This is substantially the same debate which we witnessed at Trent between supporters of apostolic tradition and supporters of ecclesiastical tradition. Is the *traditio* controlled by, or does it control, the *traditiones*? Can the *traditio* be corrected by a more accurate and fuller apprehension of the *traditiones*? The antimodernist encyclicals did not really close this debate, for they were chiefly concerned with excesses in the theory of doctrinal development which, in Rome's opinion, gave individual and corporate experience too decisive a role as a source in the development of dogma.

A recent example of the continuation of the Tridentine discussion has appeared in the first issue of the new theological journal from Montreal, *Studia Montis Regii*. Gerard Owens, C.S.S.R., of Assumption University, Windsor, Ontario, undertakes to answer the celebrated French Jesuit

⁵⁰ I depend for my summary upon Geiselmann, pp. 14—21. See n. 38 above.

⁵¹ A. Michel, *Op. cit.*, col. 1336.

Jean Daniélou.⁵² Daniélou is well-known for his published discussions with Oscar Cullman on the subject of Scripture and tradition,⁵³ and he has formulated a position which seems unsatisfactory to his critic Owens.

Daniélou poses the question: "Once we have admitted that Tradition and Scripture are the two sources of Revelation, by which the message of Christ is transmitted to us . . . are these two sources merely two different ways by which a single truth is transmitted to us? Or rather have they a distinct content in such wise that certain truths are transmitted by Scripture but other revealed truths omitted by Scripture are transmitted to us by Tradition alone?"

Daniélou's answer to the second question is negative. Owens responds in his article entitled "Is All Revelation Contained in Sacred Scripture?"

There are three major objections to Daniélou's position, Owens contends. First, the truth of the canonicity and inspiration of Scripture cannot be derived from Scripture itself. A second objection concerns the five sacraments usually rejected by Protestants as non-Scriptural. It would be extremely difficult to establish these from Scripture alone. The third objection includes the dogmas relating to Mariology. Especially the doctrine of Mary's intimate

association with Christ in redemption would be difficult to establish from Scripture alone.

Owens concludes: "The more one thinks of the complete corpus of Catholic doctrine, the more does the restriction of the content of Tradition as a source to co-extension with that of Scripture, appear to be a mirage. . . . It is certainly praiseworthy to remove any unwarranted obstacles to the path of reunion, but it seems questionable, to say the least, whether any approximation to the 'scriptura sola' is a step in the right direction."

This exchange could almost literally have been excerpted from the minutes of the Council of Trent. In view of the narrowing and consequent distortion of authentic Christian tradition, which has constituted the main theological direction of Rome since Trent, it must appear curious to many that such discussion is still alive within the Roman communion.⁵⁴ And yet such controversy is inevitable in view of the significant revival of Biblical and patristic studies within Roman Catholicism.⁵⁵

These developments would be sure grounds for great optimism if one were not saddened by certain dominant trends

⁵² G. Owens, "Is All Revelation Contained in Sacred Scripture?" *Studia Montis Regii*, I (1958), 55—60.

⁵³ This important debate on Scripture and tradition, carried on sympathetically by a Protestant and a Roman Catholic, may be studied in English in O. Cullmann, *The Early Church*, trans. A. J. B. Higgins and S. Godman (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1951), pp. 59 to 99; and in J. Daniélou, *God and the Ways of Knowing*, trans. W. Roberts (New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1957), pp. 174—217.

⁵⁴ The most recent analysis of this problem by a Roman Catholic deals again with the Council of Trent. Conclusions supporting my general interpretation of the council as well as the theological position of Daniélou are presented by H. Holstein, "La Tradition d'après le Concile de Trente," *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, XLVII (Juillet-Septembre 1959), 367 to 390.

⁵⁵ E. B. Koenker, "The New Role of the Scriptures in Roman Catholicism," *The Lutheran Quarterly*, X (August 1958), 248—254, shows that in addition to the great renewal of Bible studies on a scholarly level there is also an important movement encouraging Bible study on the level of the parishes.

in Mariology as exemplified by the recent Dogma of the Assumption. There seems to be a certain irreversibility in Roman Catholicism which constitutes a grave problem for all who view evangelical developments within this communion with sympathy.

At the same time we must be grateful for, and attentive to, the lifeblood of the Gospel that still flows within sclerotic Roman veins.⁵⁶ We must never underestimate the renewing power of the Word of God, no matter what the circumstances of history.

* * *

This study has principally dealt with the Council of Trent and has neglected parallel Protestant developments. These may be described at another time. We may now attempt some concluding observations which will try to place our results into the context of the current theological situation.

The problem of Scripture and tradition is part of a whole complex of questions, such as the nature of the church and the nature of authority within the church. In the past the question of the relationship between Scripture and tradition has been formulated on the presupposition that these were two competing and mutually exclusive realities. The new formulation of the question which is developing both within Roman Catholicism and Protestantism tends to link Scripture and tradition *hermeneutically*. The basic question seems to be: What is involved in bridging the gap between the *then* of revelation and the *now* of the life of the church? The Bible is not a dead book, but continues to live in

the act of reading, contemplation, proclamation, interpretation. This is accomplished in the living context of the church, which under the guidance of the Spirit is shaped by the message of the Bible and, in turn, supports it and shapes its proclamation.

The question of tradition, then, as it is being raised in modern theology, deals with the presuppositions and influential factors at work as a reader weighs, elaborates, and connects the various data of Biblical revelation. In short, we are dealing with the very heart of theology, the exposition of the Scripture.

To illuminate this question rather than to provide answers, we may call attention to merely two of these influential factors which make their presence felt in the interpretation of the Bible. The historic doctrinal decisions, embodied in the creeds and confessions, are always at work supplying the presuppositions and doctrinal framework for interpreters who accept these decisions as dogmatically binding. Another instance would be the influence of the great doctors of the church. For example, can we really understand the exegesis current in the Missouri Synod apart from the specific heritage of Luther, Gerhard, Walther, Pieper, and Stoeckhardt, to mention only a few? The expositor is always in some sense indebted to the great teachers who preceded him.

A question which may be raised in this connection is the traditional assertion of the principle that the Scripture interprets itself. Of course, this principle sets certain conditions which the interpreter must obey, but within those conditions the process of apprehension and interpretation continues.

My observations on the new form of the

⁵⁶ The problematics of Protestant-Roman Catholic dialogues are discussed by J. Pelikan, *The Riddle of Roman Catholicism* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1959).

old problem of Scripture and tradition are partly in anticipation of what we think will happen and partly a recognition of a trend already evident. If this becomes a major trend and development, we may hope that interconfessional dialog will turn more and more to matters of Biblical exposition. One can observe this new situation already in various theological disci-

plines. For example, the church fathers are now being studied not so much as metaphysical theologians but principally as Biblical expositors. Thus the study of patristic exegesis is one concrete field in which Protestant and Roman Catholic studies are converging with mutual benefit and illumination.

Valparaiso, Ind.

ADDENDUM

The text of 22 March is the initial draft; the text of 8 April is the final decree. Words omitted or added in the course of the debate are in italics. An English translation is appended.

Text Presented on 22 March

Sacrosancta oecumenica et generalis Tridentina synodus in Spiritu sancto legitime congregata praesidentibus in ea eisdem tribus Apostolicae sedis legatis, hoc sibi perpetuo ante oculos proponens ut sublatis erroribus puritas ipsa Evangelii *Dei* conservetur, quod promissum ante per prophetas ejus in Scripturis sanctis Dominus noster J. C. *ejus filius* proprio ore primum promulgavit, deinde per suos apostolos tanquam *regulam* omnis et salutaris veritatis et morum disciplinae omni creaturae praedicari iussit, perspiciscensque hanc veritatem *partim* contineri in libris scriptis *partim* sine scripto traditionibus, quae *vel* ipsius Christi ore ab apostolis acceptae *vel* 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, necnon traditiones ipsas tanquam vel oretenus a Christo vel a Spiritu sancto dictatas et continua successione in Ecclesia catholica conservatas, *quibus* pietatis *debetur* affectus, summa cum reverentia *pro sacris et canonicis* suscepit et veneratur, *suscipi et ab omnibus Christi fidelibus statuit et decernit*. Omnes itaque intelligant quo ordine et via ipsa synodus post iactum

fidei confessionis fundamentum sit progressura et quibus potissimum testimoniis ac praesidiis in *constituendis* dogmatibus et instaurandis in Ecclesia moribus sit usura. (The list of canonical books follows.)

Final Text of 8 April

Sacrosancta oecumenica et generalis Tridentina synodus in Spiritu sancto legitime congregata praesidentibus in ea eisdem tribus Apostolicae sedis legatis, hoc sibi perpetuo ante oculos proponens ut sublatis erroribus puritas ipsa Evangelii *in Ecclesia* conservetur, quod promissum ante per prophetas in Scripturis sanctis Dominus noster J. C. *Dei Filius*, proprio ore primum promulgavit, deinde per suos apostolos tanquam *fontem* omnis et salutaris veritatis et morum disciplinae, omni creaturae praedicari iussit: perspiciscensque, hanc veritatem *et disciplinam* contineri in libris scriptis *et* sine scripto traditionibus, quae ipsius Christi ore ab apostolis acceptae, *aut* 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, necnon traditiones ipsas, *tum ad fidem, tum ad mores pertinentes*, tanquam vel oretenus a Christo vel a Spiritu sancto

dictatas, et continua successione in Ecclesia catholica conservatas, pari pietatis affectu ac reverentia suscipit et veneratur [the list of canonical books follows]. . . . Omnes itaque intelligant quo ordine et via ipsa synodus post iactum fidei confessionis fundamentum, sit progressura et quibus potissimum testimoniis ac praesidiis in *confirmandis* dogmatibus et instaurandis in Ecclesia moribus sit usura.

The Text of 22 March

The holy, ecumenical and general council of Trent, lawfully assembled in the Holy Ghost, the same three legates of the Apostolic See presiding, keeps this constantly in view, namely, that the purity of the Gospel of God may be preserved after the errors have been removed. This [Gospel], of old proclaimed through the Prophets in the Holy Scriptures, our Lord Jesus Christ, *His Son*, promulgated first with His own mouth, and then commanded it to be preached by His Apostles to every creature as the *rule* at once of all saving truth and norms of conduct. It also clearly perceives that this truth is contained *partly* in the written books and *partly* in the unwritten traditions, which, received *either* by the Apostles from the mouth of Christ Himself, or from the Apostles themselves, the Holy Ghost dictating, have come down to us, transmitted as it were from hand to hand. Following, then, the examples of the orthodox fathers, it receives and venerates with the highest reverence *as sacred and canonical* all the books both of the Old and New Testaments, since one God is the Author of both; also the traditions, *to which is due* an equal feeling of piety as having been dictated either orally by Christ or by the Holy Ghost and preserved in the Catholic Church in unbroken succession; *and orders and decrees that these*

be received by all the faithful of Christ. Let all understand, therefore, in what order and manner the council, after having laid the foundation of the confession of faith, will proceed, and who are the chief witnesses and supports to whom it will appeal in *establishing* dogmas and in restoring morals in the church. (The list of canonical books follows.)

The Final Text, Approved 8 April

(This translation is essentially the Schroeder translation provided with his edition of the text. I have made some modifications.)

The holy, ecumenical and general council of Trent, lawfully assembled in the Holy Ghost, the same three legates of the Apostolic See presiding, keeps this constantly in view, namely, that the purity of the Gospel may be preserved *in the Church* after the errors have been removed. This [Gospel], of old promised through the Prophets in the Holy Scriptures, our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Son of God*, promulgated first with His own mouth, and then commanded it to be preached by His Apostles to every creature as the *source* at once of all saving truth and norms of conduct. It also clearly perceives that this truth and *rule* are contained in the written books *and* in the unwritten traditions, which, received by the Apostles from the mouth of Christ Himself, *or* from the Apostles themselves, the Holy Ghost dictating, have come down to us, transmitted as it were from hand to hand. Following, then, the examples of the orthodox Fathers, it receives and venerates with a feeling of equal piety and reverence all the books both of the Old and New Testaments, since one God is the author of both; also the traditions, *whether they relate to faith or morals*, as having been dictated either orally by Christ or by

the Holy Ghost, and preserved in the Catholic Church in unbroken succession. (There follows a list of the sacred books.) . . . Let all understand, therefore, in what order and manner the council, after having

laid the foundation of the confession of faith, will proceed, and who are the chief witnesses and supports to whom it will appeal in *confirming* dogmas and in restoring morals in the Church.

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