

SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION AMONG SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY RECUSANTS

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THE DOMESTIC controversies in which English Catholics were involved during the seventeenth century have shadowed over their theology. Divided among themselves in bitterly opposed factions, caught between seculars and regulars engaged in competition, traveling back and forth between England and their Continental shelters in France, the Netherlands, Spain, and Rome, dependent for their survival in England on the current moods of governing circles in both the State and the Established Church, they enjoyed little of the peace and quiet in which theologians like to elaborate impressive syntheses. But this is not to say that they were not theologians. On the contrary, they have left a very remarkable theological heritage, which English-speaking Catholicism and, for that matter, Catholicism as such ought to recover. Perhaps better than on the European Continent, where the successes of the Counter Reformation gave theology a belligerent and triumphant tone, their contribution may show post-Tridentine thought in a subdued mode, when no prospects of spectacular returns urged writers and discussants to massive argumentation destined to "annihilate" the adversary.

The recent histories of the theology of tradition (Yves Congar, *La tradition et les traditions: Essai historique* [Paris, 1960]; Johannes Beumer, *Die mündliche Überlieferung als Glaubensquelle* [Freiburg, 1962]) do not mention this somewhat localized stream of seventeenth-century thought—normal enough, given the dearth of monographs in this field. The collective work *De Scriptura et traditione* (ed. C. Balić; Rome, 1963) also omits our English authors, although it includes several historical studies of Counter Reformation theology. A similar silence prevails in Josef Rupert Geiselmann's survey of the Counter Reformation movements, *Die heilige Schrift und die Tradition* (Freiburg, 1962). And while Günter Biemer's exhaustive study of Newman's doctrine on tradition seeks for antecedents in Anglican writings from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, the possibility of precedents

among English Catholics before Wiseman apparently has escaped this author.¹

The matter of Scripture and tradition was, of course, one of the major pending questions between English Catholics and members of the Established Church. It is therefore not surprising that it should often come back in Recusant writing. What may come as a shock to some is the great freedom that they exhibit in regard to the theological position which our clichés ascribe to the Counter Reformation. Far from being of one mind concerning the existence of tradition as a "source" of faith distinct from Scripture, they often adopt a totally different attitude than that which is commonly called the "two-source theory."² Although my investigation of this period and area is not complete, I would even suspect that the two-source theory was that of only a minority among the Recusants who were involved in the polemics and exchanges of their time. I have already drawn attention to the theology of Christopher Davenport, by far the best known Catholic author in England in the seventeenth century.³ I now wish to draw attention to other Recusant theologians who wrote about this problem.

The most important years for our topic belong to the middle decades of the seventeenth century. Between 1634 and 1662, major contributions to the theology of tradition were made. The question had been raised from the very first years of the Elizabethan era.⁴ The works of

¹ It is interesting to note that Wiseman, the only English Catholic mentioned by Biemer before Newman, supports the concept of Scripture as the ultimate "root" of all doctrines: "The Catholic system does not in the least exclude the Scriptures; . . . it holds that the foundation or root of all doctrines is to be virtually discovered in them" (*Lectures on the Principal Doctrines and Practices of the Catholic Church*, 1836; cf. G. Biemer, *Überlieferung und Offenbarung: Die Lehre von der Tradition nach John Henry Newman* [Freiburg, 1961] p. 32).

² This picture of the Counter Reformation is now changing considerably. For the Counter Reformation in Spain, cf. Cándido Pozo, *La teoría del progreso dogmático en los teólogos de la escuela de Salamanca* (Madrid, 1959); Paul de Vooght, "Remarques sur l'évolution du problème 'Ecriture-tradition' chez les théologiens de Salamanque," *Istina*, 1963, no. 3, pp. 279-304; Joseph Delgado Varela, "Traditio et Scriptura juxta quosdam theologos mercedarios," in *De Scriptura et traditione*, pp. 327-341. For the Counter Reformation in general, cf. many studies by Johannes Beumer, summarized in chap. 5 of his *Die mündliche Überlieferung als Glaubensquelle*; "Tradition in Early Post-Tridentine Theology," *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES* 23 (1962) 377-405.

³ Cf. George H. Tavard, "Christopher Davenport and the Problem of Tradition," *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES* 24 (1963) 278-90.

⁴ Cf. George H. Tavard, *Holy Writ or Holy Church* (New York, 1959) chaps. 13-14.

the Elizabethan Recusants were followed by similar writings under the Stuarts, and the various positions of the former continued to be represented in the recurrent polemics between Anglican and Catholic Englishmen.

JOHN COLVILLE

In the first years of the century, a Scottish convert to the Catholic Church, John Colville (1542?-1605), briefly and colorfully explained the relationship of the Church to Scripture: "Again to discern in questions of religion controverted we can admit no judge but the dumb letter, which is a paradox so absurd and without example preceding as to this hour by antiquity it cannot be verified where the actor and defender pleading at any bar or court have been judged by written laws. . . ."

The analogy of civil courts does not favor taking Scripture alone as the judge of controversy in religious matters. This in itself is not a very strong argument. But a series of comparisons clearly shows the positive aspect of Colville's understanding of Scripture in relation to the Church:

It cannot be denied that the Church is to the Scripture as the pilot to the rudder, the mason to the line, the magistrate to the laws. . . . Even so, the rudder and compass, the line and square of the Holy Scripture and laws contained therein, except they have the Church to be their steerman, mason and judge, they of themselves shall never pacify parties contending in faith and religion, more nor the compass alone can guide the ship, or the line alone build the house.⁵

Colville's point comes out well: Scripture cannot be a judge, because it is only a book. A book needs someone to read it and be aware of its meaning. In the courts this is the task of the judge, who speaks in the name of the laws, at the same time interpreting their use and determining their application. In disputed religious questions the Church is such a judge; the book with the help of which she knows the law is Scripture, but Scripture without the Church as judge could not pronounce sentence and pass judgment: "Even so, albeit by the most equal line and level of the Scripture the Church does judge betwixt

⁵ *The Paroeneze, or Admonition of John Colville (Lately Returned to the Catholic Roman Religion, in Which He Was Baptized and Brought up Till He Had Full 14 Years of Age) unto His Countrymen* (Paris, 1602) pp. 7-8.

orthodox and heretical opinions, yet she, not the Scripture only, are [*sic*] to be esteemed lawful judge."⁵⁶ This is not enough to conclude that, for John Colville, the Church knows nothing apart from the Scriptures. This would seem to lie in the logical direction he has taken. Yet his main interest lies in the Church's function in deciding controversies: whatever the Scriptures may be (rudder, line, square, etc.), the Church is judge. For the Scriptures are too obscure to be open to individual opinions. Colville knows better than those who believe the Scriptures to be understandable even to "children, women and idiots."⁵⁶ He would agree with the Jesuit Richard Walpole (1564-1607) that interpretations of Scripture are "phantastical expositions" and "super-sophistical" if they are not guided by the Church: "As for Catholics, I find such a rule prescribed unto them, as I cannot see how this charge may be laid against them. For that by a General Council they are straitly commanded to expound the Scriptures, not according to their own private phantasy, as you profess to do, *sed secundum unanimum consensum Patrum*, but according to the uniform consent of the Fathers."⁵⁷

MATTHEW KELLISON

The primacy of Scripture is unequivocally stated by another author of the first years of the century, Matthew Kellison (1560?-1642). His *Survey of the New Religion* (2nd ed.; Douai, 1605) identifies the letter of Scripture with the word of God, provided that the letter is known with its true meaning:

If they give us the letter of Scripture with the true meaning, which is the formal cause and life of the word, we will reverence it as the word of God, and prefer it before all writings of Popes and Church. Wherefore, when the letter of Scripture is joined with the right meaning, then do we grant, though men wrote it, that it is the word of God, because it explicates his meaning who spake unto the holy writers in that meaning and directed their ears and hands in the writing of the same.⁵⁸

Kellison's later work, *A Reply to Sutcliffe's Answer to the Survey of the New Religion* (Rheims, 1608), repeats similar propositions, some-

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8. ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁵⁸ W. R., *A Brief and Clear Confutation of a New, Vain and Vaunting Challenge* (1603) fol. 155r.

⁵⁹ Kellison, *Survey of the New Religion*, pp. 21-22.

times quoting his previous volume verbally. Reviewing his first book, Kellison explains its double standpoint: "After a long commendation of Scripture and a great difference which I put betwixt the Pope's decrees and Scripture, I give the precedence and preeminence to Scripture. But yet I prove that the bare letter is no more Scripture than the body is a man without a soul."⁹ This is the question of what he called the "form" of Scripture.

For I affirm there, the word is compounded of the sound or letter, and the sense or meaning; and that is as the matter, this as the form, that as the body, this as the soul; and so the word of God is not the letter only, but the letter with a true sense and meaning; and consequently the word of God cannot have a false meaning; but the same letter, as it may have a true and a false meaning, so with a true meaning it is the word of God, with a false sense it is the word of the devil.¹⁰

The devil can give a false meaning to any writing. Truly, in the exchange between Christ and the devil during the temptation in the desert, Jesus rebuked Satan with scriptural arguments. Yet "Scripture only convinced not the devil, but Scripture sensed by a lawful interpreter, as Christ was."¹¹

Once the sense of Scripture is known, the holy books brook no peer. Kellison does not hesitate to pursue the comparison of Scripture with other writings of the Church; and he determines their difference in authority as arising from the different ways in which God guarantees them: "Wherein a difference is put betwixt Scripture and definitions of the Church, Pope or Councils. Because they are assisted by the Holy Ghost only that they may define the truth, and so the sense of a Council's definition confirmed by the Pope is of the Holy Ghost, but it is not necessary that every word or reason in a Council proceed from the Holy Spirit of God."¹² Kellison in no way disparages papal authority. He is no conciliarist; and a council's definitions for him stand only when they have been confirmed by the pope. Nonetheless, he maintains an essential distinction between the kind of authority wielded by papal or conciliar documents, and that which belongs to Holy Writ:

Wherefore, as I said, let them not charge us with contempt of Scripture, for our opinion and estimation of Scripture is most venerable, if it be indeed Scripture;

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 23. ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹¹ Kellison, *A Reply to Sutcliffe's Answer*, fol. 47r. ¹² *Ibid.*, fol. 49v.

yea, we avouch that in itself it is of far greater authority than is the Church or her definitions, because, though God assists both, yet after a most notable manner he assists holy writers in writing of Scripture, because he assists them infallibly, not only for the sense and verity but also for every word which they write and every reason and whatsoever is in Scripture, whereas he assists the Popes and Councils infallibly only for the sense and verity of that which they intend to define, but neither for every word, nor for every reason, nor for everything which is incidentally spoken.¹³

The verbal inspiration of Scripture extends much further than God's guidance of papal and conciliar definitions: in the latter the truth only, in the former the words also, are guaranteed by God.

Since Scripture, fully understood as word of God, is not the letter but the meaning of the holy books, one should know how to ascertain that meaning. In principle, the apostles, who received the letter of Scripture from God, received also its meaning: "I confess also that our faith is principally grounded upon the Prophets' and Apostles' writings, which are God's word, but how shall we know that these writings are God's word, or thus to be understood, unless the Church and her pastors preach it and propose it?"¹⁴ It is, therefore, the kerygma of the living Church which provides the meaning of Scripture: "So Scripture, which is of itself of more authority than the testimony of men, and faith also, which has God's word and authority for her ground, foundation and formal object, in respect of us depends of preachers, revelations not being ordinary, and not only of inward inspiration but also of outward hearing."¹⁵ To imagine that God will reveal the meaning of Scripture to each individual Christian is a delusion, the mother of illuminism and enthusiasm. Such revelations are possible; they are "not ordinary." The ordinary way is to listen to the Church. "Our best will be . . . to listen to the common received, that is, the Roman, Church, who, as she has ever had the custody of the book of Scripture, so it is most like that she best knows the meaning of it, having this book from the Apostles and, with it, the Apostles' and their successors' interpretation."¹⁶

One might expect Kellison at this point to identify tradition with the Church's function of transmitting the sense of Holy Writ, of preaching and teaching it. Certainly, this would correspond to the modern concept

¹³ *Ibid.*, fol. 50v.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, fol. 6r.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, fol. 6v.

¹⁶ Kellison, *Survey*, p. 33.

of tradition: the Church proclaims doctrine through papal and conciliar definitions, which are themselves infallibly protected by God as to their sense and truth, though not in their wording. Yet it would be fallacious to mistake our own problematic for that of the incipient seventeenth century. Kellison proposes, in fact, another description, which would not be adequate in terms of modern theology, but which still corresponds to the medieval equation of *traditio* with *consuetudo*: "Tradition is nothing else but an opinion or custom of the Church, not written in Holy Writ, but yet delivered by the hands of the Church from time to time and from Christians to Christians even into the last age."¹⁷

JOHN PERCY

Kellison's understanding of the primacy of Scripture was not universally shared by his English Catholic contemporaries. The voice of John Percy, S.J. (1569–1641), better known in his lifetime as John Fisher, has a different accent. Percy's *Reply Made unto Mr Anthony Wotton and Mr John White* (1612), published under the initials A. D., constitutes a pioneering document as regards the analysis of the act of faith. Yet the tradition that Percy opposes here to his Anglican opponents echoes the pre-Tridentine emphasis of Albert Pigge and introduces the notion of nonscriptural points of faith into the discussion.

Percy does not wish to undermine Scripture. On the contrary, he extols it in its own order: "True it is, there is the virtue and power of God in the Scripture; there is purity and perfection of matter, majesty of speech, power over the conscience, certainty of the prophecies, etc. . . ." ¹⁸ Were one to insist that Scripture is sufficient, this can even be admitted; but "if it import sufficiency, it is not meant that *alone* sufficiency of which our question is, but at the most sufficiency *in suo genere*, in a certain limited kind, to wit, of written Scripture."¹⁹ This sufficiency must be limited on several counts. The great inner qualities of Scripture which Percy willingly recognizes

do not shine like light to our understanding till it be illuminated with the light of faith . . . nor then neither unless those things be propounded duely, mediate or immediate, by the authority of the Church; upon which, being like a candlestick, the light of the Scripture must be set, or else it will not, according to the ordinary

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 357. ¹⁸ A. D., *Reply*, p. 188. ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

course of God's providence, sufficiently shine and appear unto us in such sort as to give infallible assurance that it is the word of God.²⁰

The necessity of the act of faith makes Scripture insufficient, for it is from God Himself that the act of faith proceeds in us. The task of the Church in proposing the contents of revelation introduces another intrinsic limitation to the sufficiency of Scripture: the Church must intervene by presenting the object of faith.

This function of the Church leads Percy to a more radical limitation of Scripture's authority, in regard to the question of unwritten revelation, concerning which Catholics and Protestants differ deeply:

Now the question is betwixt us and Protestants, whether God did reveal anything to the Prophets and Apostles, manifested by their means to men living in their times, and necessary to be believed of men living in succeeding ages, which was never written or at least which is not now expressed nor so contained in the Scriptures, that by evident and necessary consequence, secluding all Tradition and Church authority, it may be gathered out of some sentence expressly set down in Holy Scriptures.²¹

The problem concerns revelations duly made to the apostles and transmitted, since then, outside of Scripture. What is in Scripture, for Percy, must be explicitly stated in specific verses or may be logically deduced. At the basis of Percy's further explanations of tradition there lies a narrow concept of the "virtually revealed." He must logically conclude that few doctrines are explicitly stated in Scriptures or may be deduced in strict Aristotelian logic; in this case another channel must exist for the doctrines that cannot be related to Scripture in this precise way.

Thus Percy arrives at the notion of extrascriptural traditions: "By this little which I have said, it is apparent enough that the divine Revelation whereupon Christian faith is to be grounded is not contained only in the bare letter of the Scripture, but is also found in the unwritten Traditions of the true Catholic Church."²² Similar statements recur many times, e.g.: ". . . the divine Revelation, made first to the Prophets and the Apostles, partly recorded in Scriptures, partly preserved in unwritten Traditions";²³ "The words of the text [Jn 10:27] are not limited to signify only the written word, but speak in general of the voice of Christ which, as I have shewed, is partly unwritten";²⁴

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 73.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

“the Revelation of those things, contained partly in Scriptures, partly in unwritten Traditions.”²⁵ In a subsequent volume, *A Treatise of Faith* (1614), Percy repeats the same point: “The first conclusion is that Scripture alone, especially as it is by Protestants translated into the English tongue, cannot be this rule of faith which here we seek for.”²⁶ This “partly . . . partly” sums up Percy’s conceptions neatly.

However, Percy is by no means a determined upholder of the two-source theory of revelation. On the one hand, he does not use the expression “sources of faith” in this connection. On the other, the Scriptures and the unwritten traditions do not, for him, give us the contents of revelation without the help of a third element:

This little which I have here said may suffice to show that, besides the divine Revelation made first to the Prophets and Apostles, partly recorded in Scriptures, partly preserved in unwritten Traditions, Church proposition of matters of faith, or the teaching of the present living Pastors of the Church, in such sense as I declared, is necessary; and that there is in it some absolute authority; and that this authority is infallible.²⁷

Percy’s explanation clarifies the difference between the authority of revelation, contained in Scriptures and traditions, and the authority of the Church that protects and proposes them: “For the written and unwritten word, being the divine Revelation itself, concurs to the assent as the formal reason of the object; whereas Church proposition or affirmation is only a condition, by the ordinary law of God, necessarily requisite to our infallible supernatural assent.”²⁸ In other words, the Scriptures and the traditions contain the revelation and are the word of God even for the benefit of the living pastors of the Church. Yet, in the ordinary course of things, it is by the testimony of these living pastors that the faithful know for certain what is and what is not stated in the Scriptures and the traditions. The magisterium is a condition, but not the object, of faith. It is the guide chosen by God to interpret Scripture and tradition:

The same Church, which by the assistance of God’s Spirit, has hitherto preserved and shall be always able to preserve true divine Scriptures and to assure us which they be and to distinguish them from apocryphal books . . . has been and shall always, by the assistance of the promised Spirit, be able to preserve and to assure

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 128. ²⁶ *A Treatise of Faith*, p. 21. ²⁷ *Reply*, p. 92. ²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

us, which be true divine unwritten Traditions, and to distinguish them from all human inventions, though never so colourably pretended to be divine Traditions."⁸⁰

Percy's insistence on this is couched in terms that anticipate the theology of the nineteenth century: "In the Church, besides the divine infallible written Scriptures, there must be admitted some divine infallible unwritten traditions, and some always living Magistrate." Besides the Scriptures, there must be "unwritten traditions, which are the best ordinary interpreters of Scripture, and some living Magistrate, having infallible authority, who may, when controversies arise, infallibly declare which is the right sense and who by that authority may compel men to take them in that sense."⁸⁰ "By doctrine of the Church (I understand) divine doctrine, including therein both the written divine Scriptures and the unwritten divine Traditions, and the true divine interpretation of them both, as by word, writing, sign or otherwise it is or may be propounded and delivered to us by the authority of the Church."⁸¹

The Church is not extraneous to Scripture and tradition. Rather, these together constitute the gospel, which is intimately related to the Church: "I shew to my adversaries . . . that, if they do not admit Tradition and Church-authority, they have no sufficient means to know infallibly that the Gospel itself is Scripture. The force of which argument is grounded in the mutual connexion which is betwixt the Gospel and Church-authority, either of which bears witness of the other, as our Saviour did bear witness of St. John Baptist and St. John Baptist of our Saviour." Percy adds that by divine infused faith one "may be assured both of the authority of Scripture and of the Church, and of the mutual connexion which they have one with the other, and of the reciprocal proof and testimony which they give and receive from the other."⁸²

So far, John Percy's conceptions represent a rather sophisticated approach to the problem of Scripture and tradition as seen within the larger question of the nature of the act of faith. By placing this question in the context of the theology of faith, Percy was opening new ground. By seeking a solution in the inseparable interrelationship of three terms, the Scriptures, the traditions, and the magisterium, he was also

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 74. ⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 184. ⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 203. ⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

anticipating later developments. His division of revealed doctrines into two kinds, written and unwritten, was, in the writings that have been mentioned, unequivocal, and expressed in the expression "partly, partly," which had been discarded at the Council of Trent. In this matter Percy fits the commonplace view of Counter Reformation theology, exalting the magisterium at the expense of the primacy of Scripture and of the originality of tradition.

However, the clarity of this "Counter Reformation" view may be more apparent than real. For an anonymous volume of 1626, which is also ascribed to Percy-Fisher, the epistle dedicatory being signed I. F., adopts a different position. In this, *The Answer unto the Nine Points of Controversy Proposed by Our Late Sovereign unto M. Fisher, and the Rejoinder unto the Reply of D. Francis White, Minister*, the sufficiency of Scripture is unhesitatingly acknowledged: "The Scripture, to them that know Tradition, is abundantly sufficient, but without Tradition not."²² With sufficiency, there goes a primacy of Scripture over the Church, which the author formulates clearly in explaining a sentence of the medieval Schoolman Durand de Saint-Pourçain (*Ecclesia, licet Dei dominationem habeat in terris, illa tamen non excedit limitationem Scripturae*): "His meaning is that the Church, though it have the authority of God upon earth, yet the same power is in some cases restrained and limited by Scripture. In which respect the Church cannot dispense in many things wherein God might dispense."²⁴ The Church is bound by Scripture, which her authority does not give her the power to contradict.

Yet the primacy of Scripture, or the limit that Scripture imposes to the Church's authority, cannot make Scripture sufficient by itself. As Percy adds, "Now what is that to the purpose of proving that men are bound to believe nothing but what is clearly contained in Scripture?"²⁵ The insufficiency of Holy Writ's clear contents is well expressed in Fisher's exposition of the thought of the Tridentine theologian Pedro Soto: Soto "delivers two things: First, that the things concerning matters, not only of faith, but also of good life that are common and must be known of all Christians, are largely delivered in Holy Scripture. Secondly, that *post haec omnia*, after the knowledge of all these

²² *The Answer unto the Nine Points*, p. 141. ²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 137, 138.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

common substantial matters, as for other particular things, they are to be learned by Tradition more than by Scripture." The "other particular things" are "not the main duties of latria and religion, but reverential carriage and ceremonies to be used in the administration of the sacraments."³⁶

LAURENCE ANDERSON

In 1634 there appeared a major work on the theology of tradition. Laurence Anderson, or Anderton (1576–1643), also known as Scroop, was a convert to Catholicism who entered the Society of Jesus in 1604. His most important publication resulted from an attempt to discover a new method of persuading Protestants of the truth of the Catholic faith. This was an anonymous book, printed at St. Omer, *The Triple Cord, or a Treatise Proving the Truth of the Roman Religion by Sacred Scripture Taken in the Litteral Sense, Expounded by the Ancient Fathers, Interpreted by Protestant Writers*. The new method consists in proving Catholicism by the literal sense of the Bible and by the Protestant interpretation of Scripture, or rather by the interpretation of Scripture by selected Protestant authors. Yet Anderson forgets neither the Catholic appeal to tradition nor the Protestant recourse to the Church Fathers, so that patristic interpretation completes the triple cord. This, in the author's opinion, should completely satisfy any reader:

Now if the texts of Sacred Scripture taken in their proper and litteral sense, and the answerable expositions made by the holy Fathers and sundry of the learned Protestant writers, do all of them conspire in making that sense of Scripture, which wholly agrees with the doctrine and practice of the Catholic Roman Church, I do not see what more can be required by any indifferent and understanding man, for the making it appear clear, as the sun at noonday, that the written Word of God is that which teaches us our Catholic faith, and confutes and condemns such errors as arise against it.³⁷

The author's purpose evidently rests on a certain conception of Scripture, whose literal sense is in itself sufficient to establish the truth of the Catholic faith. This conception is explained in the first section of *The Triple Cord*. Before Anderson examines specific Catholic doctrines, he carefully explains on what ground his argument is based. This is done in two sections entitled "The true state of the question concerning the

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 148. ³⁷ *The Triple Cord*, Preface.

verity of the Sacred Scriptures," and "That the Sacred Scriptures are the true Word of God, divine and infallible, the Scriptures themselves do testify." This second section takes a different stand from the position adopted by many Catholics, in whose eyes the validity of Scripture is not established by Scripture itself. There is no doubt, for Anderson, that Scripture testifies to itself.

Scripture, as admitted by all, is "a principal ground of Christian faith and religion, the dignity and infallible truth thereof must necessarily be acknowledged. . . . So that according to Catholics there is not any one sentence or text of Scripture which we are not bound to believe for most true and divine."³⁸ No Catholic has difficulty with the intrinsic dignity of Scripture. None would undermine the binding value of the clear statements of Scripture, for they are for him the word of God. Yet Anderson is concerned lest Protestants continue to think that Catholics despise Scripture. He therefore intends his proofs from Scripture "only in this regard that the world may know that we Catholics do so highly esteem them for divine and infallible, as whatsoever is spoken, taught or to be read therein, we in all disputes and controversies of religion do humbly submit ourselves to the doctrine thereof."³⁹ The problem does not lie in the theoretical strength of the scriptural argument in matters of controversy. This argument is final for Catholics, even in controverted questions. On this basic principle Catholics and Protestants stand together. But a recurring problem concerns the sense of Scripture. It is one thing to believe that Scripture is the word of God, and quite another to know the true sense of Scripture with certainty. Polemics and discussions turn sterile, and arguments fly at cross-purposes, if no agreement has been reached on the sense of the texts. Therefore "that which importeth for the final and infallible deciding of controversies arising from the Scripture is to find out the true sense thereof intended by the Holy Ghost, to which all parties will profess without any tergiversations to yield and subscribe."⁴⁰

That a possible meaning of the text is intended by the Holy Spirit is the important thing. Such a meaning may be "litteral or mystical," for the Spirit may express Himself through the plain meaning or through a more abstruse content of the scriptural texts. Yet mystical senses, since they are harder to determine, seldom provide the true

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2. ³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3. ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

sense of Scripture. "It cannot be denied that a firm argument may be taken from any sense, literal or mystical, so long as it appeareth that sense to be true and intended by the Holy Ghost; but because it is most difficult to know and discern when these mystical and spiritual senses are true and so intended by the Holy Ghost, therefore ordinarily speaking, arguments from this sense are weak, uncertain and not sufficient absolutely to determine a point of faith."⁴¹ Anderson agrees in this with Thomas Aquinas and with all Protestant authors, who, while admitting the possibility of spiritual senses, find that these are seldom trustworthy. Anderson may thus conclude to everybody's satisfaction: "It is our general doctrine that, seeing it is certain, that sense which is immediately gathered from the words to be the sense of the Holy Ghost, that therefore from the literal sense are we to take arguments that will be efficacious."⁴²

Thus is raised "the question in controversy between Catholics and Protestants concerning the judge of controversies in matters of religion":⁴³ How does one interpret Scripture? At this point Anderson quotes the Council of Trent: "No man dare to interpret the Sacred Scripture contrary to that sense, which the holy Mother the Church has and does hold, to whom it belongs to judge of the true sense and interpretation of Holy Scriptures."⁴⁴ The opening words of this sentence shorten the actual text of the Council, although they adequately convey its meaning. The strength of this statement comes from its origin: "the Church of Christ in general Council." Anderson also justifies it in several ways. The Church has "power from Christ to discern the word of God from the words of men"; accordingly, she must also have "the like power of discerning in the words the sense and meaning of God from the sense and understanding of men."⁴⁵ This is required for the preservation and announcement of the gospel. For "the true Gospel of God does not consist in the writing of words but in the sense": if the Church "had only the written word and not the true sense thereof, she had not the true Gospel of God, and so neither faith in Christ, which is had by the true Gospel, faith having relation not to the words but to the sense."⁴⁶ This is a classical argument used time and time again by

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 14. ⁴² *Ibid.* ⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 21; cf. Denzinger-Schönmetzer, n. 1507.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

Anderson's predecessors. Another reason is that "Christ opened [the Apostles'] understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, which certainly he did not for them alone but much more for his Church; and so accordingly the Apostles delivered to the Church the true sense thereof; for if they had delivered the words but not the sense, they had not preached the Gospel."⁴⁷ The sense of Scripture seems, then, to be kept through a sort of parallel transmission somehow duplicating Scripture, the words being preserved in one way and one place, the sense being kept in another way and another place. Yet what is important is not the double knowledge, of words and of meaning, implied here; it is the unity of the two in the concept of "understanding the Scripture": "Seeing the Church is the pillar and ground of truth, and truth properly and truly is in the understanding of the Scriptures, not in the writing or words, but improperly and as in a sign, it evidently follows that she has a certain knowledge of the truths which are contained in the Scriptures."⁴⁸ The words of Scripture are signs of the doctrine which abides in the Church. Therefore, "the true and sincere sense of the Scriptures is to be taken from the interpretation of the Catholic Church."⁴⁹ Knowing that many Protestants profess to find the sense of Scripture in the early Fathers, Anderson objects to their decision to limit this to the first centuries: "Neither may we in reason think that this gift of interpretation of the Sacred Scriptures ceased with the pastors of the primitive Church."⁵⁰

This is the point where the "question between Catholics and Protestants" arises: "whether, besides the Sacred Scriptures, any other infallible authority and judge is to be acknowledged, by which the doctrine of faith and the true sense of the Scriptures may be proposed to the faithful as revealed by God and to be believed."⁵¹ Protestants in general hold that Scripture alone is the sole judge of controversies, although, as Anderson shows, many do appeal to the Fathers of the primitive Church, thus throwing the scriptural principle into jeopardy. Catholics maintain that Scripture cannot be the judge of controversies, because it does not reveal its own sense and cannot apply it to controverted questions. While Scripture is the word written, its meaning, known only through the Church, is the word nonwritten. "Having hitherto proved that neither the Scriptures of themselves nor as con-

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

ferred together nor yet as expounded by the private spirit, can be our sole rule of faith or judge of all controversies, it now next follows that I speak of the Word not written, but delivered from Christ or his Apostles by word of mouth." Anderson adduces the text of the Council of Trent and concludes: "Here the Council receives and reverences with like piety the Word written and not written, to wit, the Traditions."⁵² From this approach it would seem that Anderson does more than identify the Scriptures with the written word, and the traditions with the unwritten word. The understanding of Scripture is only "improperly and as in a sign" in the written word; properly it is only in the understood word.

Thus the traditions are not presented as a second source of doctrine, as a parallel series of documents to which we may have recourse in

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 152-53; cf. Denzinger-Schönmetzer, n. 1501. Anderson's translation of the text of Trent may be quoted. The passage concerning the Scriptures and the traditions is cited twice, in slightly different renderings. On pp. 152-53, Anderson's text runs as follows: The truth of the Gospel, which was first taught by Christ and afterwards by His apostles, "is contained in the written Books and Traditions not written, which, being received by the Apostles from the mouth of Christ or from the Apostles themselves, the Holy Ghost teaching them, as it were, from hand to hand delivered, have come unto us: the Church, I say, following the example of the orthodoxal Fathers, receives and reverences with like affection of piety, all the Books as well of the Old Testament as of the New, seeing one God is the author of both, as also the Traditions belonging to the faith and manners, as taught from the mouth of Christ or from the Holy Ghost, and by continual succession preserved in the Catholic Church." On p. 121, the same text is quoted in this form: The Catholic Church "setting always this before her eyes, that errors being taken away, the very purity of the Gospel may be preserved in the Church, what was promised before by the prophets in the Holy Scriptures, our Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God first published by his own mouth, and afterwards commanded to be preached to every creature by his Apostles, as the fountain of all wholesome truth and of the discipline of manners: and seeing that this truth and discipline is contained in the written Books and in the Traditions not written, etc., following the example of Orthodoxal Fathers, with like affection of piety and reverence, it receives and honours all the books of the Old and New Testament, seeing one God is the author of both . . ."—These two translations emphasize two parts of the Tridentine decree. Let us note the ambiguity of "as it were from hand to hand delivered" (p. 152). The Tridentine text makes this phrase (*aut ab ipsis apostolis Spiritu Sancto dictante quasi per manus traditae*) parallel to another (*ab ipsius Christi ore ab Apostolis acceptae*), both together being subject of "have come down to us." Anderson, however, ties "or from the Apostles themselves" to "being received," with the result that "as it were, from hand to hand delivered" (*quasi per manus acceptae*) qualifies both what has been received "by the Apostles" and what has been received "from" them. In the Latin text, this is grammatically possible but logically unlikely. Nonetheless, it emphasizes Anderson's view that all is tradition, all being delivered as it were from hand to hand.

order to discover true doctrine. The traditions are to the Scriptures what their sense is to the letter. There is an analogy, in this matter, between the Old and the New Testament:

Calvin replies that the doctrine of the Prophets and of the New Testament were not additions to the Law, but explications thereof, as being taught or contained in the Law, though not in particular, yet in general. But I suppose Calvinists will not deny but that they believe more than is written in the Law, and no otherwise does the Law contain them than in general and, as it were, virtually: but so likewise are Traditions contained therein, and so no additions.⁵³

If Calvin may receive the Prophets and the New Testament as implied in and fulfilling the law, one should by the same token receive the traditions as implied in and fulfilling the writings of the New Testament. Tradition is not an addition to Scripture, but the manifestation or unfolding of its meaning; it is not other than Scripture and distinct from it. One cannot have Scripture without a tradition that interprets it, for without tradition Scripture is a closed book, a meaningless written word.

This evidently makes tradition the ultimate rule of faith. This was true before the New Testament: "I proved before that in the time of nature and much also in the time of the Law, the faithful were instructed by Tradition not written. . . . So, confessedly, Traditions have been and may be rules of truth."⁵⁴ In the Christian order of things the Church is also the rule: to "the Tradition and Judgement of His Church"⁵⁵ Jesus entrusted the gospel. Only there do we read the senses intended by the Holy Ghost. "The true sense and interpretation of Scriptures and thereby the deciding of all differences in religion, are to be known and taken from the Catholic Church, from General Councils and the unanimous consent of ancient Fathers."⁵⁶ "Not the Scriptures alone, but the Church of Christ expounding the same, is to be acknowledged and received for our guide and judge in matters of faith."⁵⁷ One should therefore be wary, when interpreting the "nonwritten" of an author like Anderson, not to read more recent problems and conceptions into it. Thus, a statement like the following could be misinterpreted: "We understand by the doctrine of the Church such points of faith also as, not being written in the Scriptures, have been delivered by

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 170-71.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

word of mouth, the Holy Ghost inspiring them or Christ being the author of them: and these we believe to have as infallible authority of truth as if they had been written in the Scriptures."⁸⁸ In the light of Anderson's approach, "not written" is not the same as "not implied" in Scripture. It means that besides the immediate connotation of the written word, which the Church knows in her heart, the Church's doctrine also contains points or practices which, without being, strictly speaking, the meaning of a written passage, nevertheless are "no additions," being contained in Scripture "in general and, as it were, virtually." These traditions, although remote from the literal meaning of Scripture, appear, in this perspective, similar to the "mystical and spiritual senses." They are difficult to determine by reading Scripture, yet quite certainly they are the sense of the Holy Spirit as soon as the Church proclaims them.

Undoubtedly, another analogy may also be made: the Church's knowledge of Scripture and of tradition originates in an inspiration by God. This is not far removed from the Calvinist notion of interior testimony. Anderson, however, distinguishes carefully between his appeal to the Church as the depository of the unwritten word, or traditional meaning of the Scriptures, and the Calvinist appeal to the Spirit: "Some object that the Church receives from God inspiring her the right sense of Scripture, and so first decides the controversy in her mind before she can exteriorly decide what is to be believed: therefore the Spirit speaking in her heart is the supreme Judge, even to Catholics." Notably enough, Anderson does not deny this. Yet he does not make the testimony of the Spirit to the heart of Church leaders the rule of faith: there is no rule of faith until their interior conviction of the sense of Scripture has been publicly endorsed by the Church in a judicial sentence: "The motions of the Spirit inspiring the pastors of the Church are unknown to others and to themselves uncertain, until they be outwardly decreed and subscribed by the head and members of the Church, and so are no judicial sentences or final decisions or rules infallible, either to themselves or others."⁸⁹ Undoubtedly, the rule of faith cannot be a subjective persuasion in the hearts of bishops or popes. Only when the Church as a whole has spoken is the meaning of revelation known for certain. Yet this does not destroy the analogy

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 119-20.

between the testimony of the Spirit to the heart of the faithful and His testimony to the heart of the Church. The former is the Calvinist rendering of the Catholic insight which the latter formulation expresses. The real difference lies in ecclesiology: either one identifies the Church with each faithful relationship to God speaking in His word; or, on the contrary, over and above His testimony to the heart of each Christian, the Spirit gives a wider testimony to the heart of all, together mystically present in the supernatural structure of the Body of Christ.

MATTHEW WILSON AND WILLIAM CHILLINGWORTH

In the same year, 1634, Matthew Wilson, S.J. (1582–1656), alias Edward Knott, published a book against Dr. Potter which is remarkable mainly for the fact that it provoked William Chillingworth's long answer *The Religion of Protestants, a Safe Way to Salvation* (1638). In his short essay *Mercy and Truth, or Charity Maintained by Catholics*, Wilson does not treat the question of tradition in itself. Yet he devotes a few pages to the Protestant reading of Scripture. His main point, like that of Anderson, is that Scripture alone cannot be a judge of controversy in matters of religion—a point which he proves on the ground of the nature of a writing (chap. 2, nos. 3–5), the nature of Holy Scripture (nos. 6–14), the nature of biblical translations (nos. 15–16), the difficulty of interpreting the Bible (nos. 17–18), the nature of a judge (nos. 18–25), and finally the admissions of several Protestant authors (nos. 26–27).

The Catholic reverence for Scripture is affirmed from the outset: "No cause imaginable could avert our will from giving the function of supreme and sole judge to Holy Writ, if both the thing were not impossible in itself, and if both reason and experience did not convince our understanding that by this assertion, contentions are increased and not ended."⁶⁰ Scripture is "a most perfect rule, forasmuch as a writing can be a rule"; yet Catholics deny "that it excludes either divine Tradition, though it be unwritten, or an external judge to keep, to propose, to interpret it in a true, orthodox and catholic sense."⁶¹ Since the un-

⁶⁰ Text in Chillingworth, *The Religion of Protestants, a Safe Way to Salvation* (Philadelphia, 1840) p. 87.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

written word preceded the written word in the beginning, it is logical that both should continue now in the Church: "What greater wrong is it for the written word to be compartner with the written, than for the unwritten, which was once alone, to be afterward joined with the written?"⁶² The Church does not only hand us a writing to read; she also preaches and proclaims its meaning in her own Catholic doctrines. Matthew Wilson's position may, then, be summed up in this short statement: "If we receive the knowledge of Christ and Scriptures from the Church, from her also we take His doctrine and the interpretation thereof."⁶³ Whereas Scripture alone is an "inanimate writing," the Church is "a living judge."⁶⁴ Traditions derive from the Church's function, "infallibly to interpret Scriptures already written, or without Scripture, by divine unwritten Traditions and assistance of the Holy Ghost, to determine all controversies."⁶⁵

The irony of the matter lies in Chillingworth's refutation of Wilson: Chillingworth admitted, like Wilson, the infallibility of universal unwritten traditions and saw no contradiction between this principle and the self-sufficiency of Scripture. Yet he complained that Wilson should have proven more: "You were to prove the Church infallible, not in her Traditions (which we willingly grant, if they be as universal as the Tradition of the undoubted books of Scripture is, to be as infallible as the Scripture is: for neither does being written make the Word of God the more infallible, nor being unwritten make it the less infallible); not therefore in her universal Traditions were you to prove the Church infallible, but in all her decrees and definitions of controversies."⁶⁶ Chillingworth believed he knew better than Wilson what was the Roman Catholic conception of "traditive interpretations,"⁶⁷ with the result that Wilson explained one doctrine and Chillingworth refuted another. The point, for Wilson, was that since Scripture cannot speak, it needs a living judge to pronounce sentence out of it, this living judge under the Spirit's guidance drawing on the Church's memory concerning what the apostles said and did. But the correlation of Scripture and Church cannot be limited to judgment of controversies. Before controversies arise, such a correlation already exists. It follows upon the very nature of faith: "Scripture can be clear only to those who are endued with the eye of faith. . . . Faith then must not originally proceed

⁶² *Ibid.* ⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 99. ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 102. ⁶⁵ *Ibid.* ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 217. ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

from Scripture, but it is to be pre-supposed, before we can see the light thereof; and consequently there must be some other means precedent to Scripture, to beget faith, which can be no other than the Church."⁶⁸

This was firmly traditional ground. But Chillingworth refuted something else, namely, the concept of tradition as a separate transmission of given doctrines by other than scriptural conveyance. He wrote, apparently without a smile, that the sense of Wilson's argument "must be this: when only a part of the Scripture was written, then a part of the divine doctrine was unwritten; therefore now, when all the Scripture is written, yet some part of the divine doctrine is yet unwritten."⁶⁹ The discussion went at cross-purposes. Matthew Wilson explained the classical conception of the correlation between Church and Scripture, while Chillingworth refuted a position close to that which was later to be called the two-source theory.

THOMAS WHITE

Thomas White (1593–1673) was one of the most controversial figures among English Catholics of the seventeenth century. He was involved in the unfortunate ecclesiastical polemics of the time, and led what was called, from one of his pen names (Blackloe), the Blackloist party of English Catholics. He was also a prolific writer who published his works under a multitude of pseudonyms. Some of them are theologically important and manifest a mind that is both sharp and traditional. White's philosophical and theological positions, in his major work *Institutionum sacrarum Peripateticis inaedificatarum . . . pars theoretica* (Vol. 1, 1646; Vol. 2, 1652), were considered unusually controversial; and his views on purgatory in *The Middle State of Souls* (Latin ed., 1653; English ed., 1659) drew him into opposition to the Bishop of Chalcedon, Richard Smith (1566–1655), and to the faculty of the English College at Douai. Several of his propositions were censured by the Holy Office in 1655 and 1657; and White successfully cleared himself of the suspicion of skepticism (*Apologia pro doctrina sua adversus calumniatores*, 1661) after the faculty of the English College at Douai had condemned a few more statements of his *Institutionum*.

The works that will retain our attention are the two editions (1640 and 1654) of *The Dialogues of William Richworth* (spelled Rushworth in

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 94. ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 109–10.

the second edition), and *An Apology for Rushworth's Dialogues* (1654). All three were printed in Paris. Only the last carries the name of Thomas White as the author. Yet the Preface to the *Dialogues* is written by White and signed with his initials. The Preface of 1640 attributes the authorship to William Rushworth, alias Charles Rosse, a priest of Douai who had been born in Lancashire and eventually died in England in 1637. The *Apology* admits Thomas White's authorship only for the edition of 1654, "which alone has felt throughout this author's last hand."⁷⁰ However, the differences between the two editions are so minute that Thomas White's authorship may stand for the whole, even if, as it seems likely, the work is originally the outcome of conversations with William Richworth.

Thomas White is conscious of the originality of Rushworth's *Dialogues*: their doctrine, he writes in the epistle dedicatory of the *Apology*, "takes a path not much beaten by our modern controvertists."⁷¹ They use "the antique weapons of Dialogues," which "want neither ornament nor particular efficacy," though White's *Apology* will change this "into the modern mode of direct discourse."⁷² The dialogue takes place between "Uncle" and "Nephew," Uncle answering the puzzled questions of Nephew in regard to controversies of religion. The unbeaten path mentioned by White is that which some of Uncle's answers follow. It will appear from the doctrine of Scripture and tradition contained in these volumes.

The starting point for Rushworth-White's investigation is sharply formulated by Nephew: Why "we Catholics, who bear so great reverence and veneration to the Holy Scripture, receive more of it than others, write infinite volumes of commentaries upon it (as Paul's Churchyard can witness) and are so exact to improve ourselves (I mean our learned men) in the knowledge of it, should, nevertheless, when we come to join in the main point, that is, to the decision of controversies in religion, seem to fly off and recur to other judges, though we acknowledge it to be Christ's word and law?"⁷³ Nephew is understandably puzzled by this apparently double-faced attitude. Uncle acknowledges the problem as it may appear to the observer: "I see by experience that

⁷⁰ Thomas White, *Apology for Rushworth's Dialogues*, Advertisement.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, Epistle dedicatory. ⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁷³ *Rushworth's Dialogues* (1640) pp. 221-22.

the one part seeks by all means to destroy the authority of God's Church, and the other seems to lessen the power of Scripture for the deciding of controversies."⁷⁴ A significant difference is made between the part that "seeks to destroy" and the part that only "seems to lessen." One can already sense what Rushworth's answer will attempt to show: while one part does seek to destroy the authority of the Church, the other's lessening of the authority of Scripture is only a mistaken appearance. One can also sense this in the remote consequences that Rushworth foresees: since "we think by Scripture alone, left without the guard of the Church, nothing or at least not enough for the salvation of mankind can be sufficiently proved," it follows that, in our view, "to stand by Scripture only, as they do," may be "but a plausible way to atheism," so that the ultimate question will be "whether we must rely upon a Church or be atheists." In order to escape this dire consequence, one must show that Scripture does resolve points of controversy. And if this can be made manifest, the Catholic side must give way: "we were worse than beasts if we should refuse to be judged thereby."⁷⁵ Rushworth is prepared to stake all on the outcome of his investigation.

The inquiry begins with Scripture, since Protestants claim to know all the faith with Scripture alone. How does one read Scripture? Rushworth distinguishes two ways, scholarly and plain. But only the plain way is relevant to the question of understanding Scripture. For Scripture is not given to scholars: all the people of God must be able to understand Scripture if Scripture is indeed the conveyer of revelation. The question of the scientific reading of Scripture is, therefore, irrelevant to our problem.

There are two manners of understanding Scripture, the one a kind of large manner, taking it in gross and a great deal together as we take a discourse of play which pleasingly passes away without great demur or particular weighing of every word; the other more curious and exact looking into every little property which may breed diversity. And I suppose you would tell me that this second belongs only to scholars, but that the former guides our life and governs our actions. . . . I must needs confess that what good effect soever is the end for which Scripture was ordained, if it be anything belonging to man's life and conversation, it must be compassed by this gross, common and ordinary course of reading and understanding.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 223. ⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 224. ⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 329-30.

The plain manner of understanding Scripture is described many times in the three volumes of Thomas White. It is for him the only religious way, the only one that matters for the knowledge of Scripture and revelation. It is also, paradoxically enough, the more certain.

This common manner of using Scripture is more secure than the minute and precise balancing of every phrase and syllable. For neither the variety of translations, nor errors of copies, nor difficulties of languages, nor mutability of words, nor multiplicity of the occasions and intentions of the authors, nor the abundance of things written, nor different framings of the books—all which are causes of uncertainty in a rigorous examination—have any such power to break the common and ordinary sense of the writer in general, as we every day find by experience.⁷⁷

Thus White proceeds analogically from our daily experience of reading and writing. The meaning of an author is not ascertained by exact philological inquiry into each of the words he uses, but the sense is grasped by our mind seeing a sentence, a chapter, or a book as a whole. In such a way the Church Fathers read and expounded Scripture, and there is no reason now to depart from their method:

You shall have them cite many places, some proper, some allegorical, some common, all some times avoidable if they be taken separately but the whole discourse more or less forcible according to the natural parts or heavenly light more or less communicated to one than to another, yet still in the proportion of orators who speak to the multitude and not to Socrates or Crysippus.⁷⁸

Given these two possible ways of interpreting Scripture, it is in relation to the second that the controversy between Catholics and Protestants must be resolved, unless we wish to be lost in “a labyrinth of voluntary and unendable disputations.”⁷⁹ Protestants challenge us on the basis of the first way of reading Scripture. They want us to show “every point of our faith in particular” in Holy Writ.⁸⁰ Catholics should eschew this pitfall: “To what end, unless for gallantry and to show wit, should they undertake to prove their tenets by Scripture? For this were to strengthen their opponent in his own ground and principle, that all proof is to be drawn from the Bible.”⁸¹ Yet how far the plain reading of Scripture can take us in the direction of the full Catholic faith remains a legitimate question.

Here lies the originality of the *Dialogues*. Thomas White does not

⁷⁷ *Rushworth's Dialogues* (1654) pp. 126–27.

⁷⁸ *Rushworth's Dialogues* (1640) p. 339.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 354. ⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 332. ⁸¹ *Rushworth's Dialogues* (1654) p. 129.

simply deny or refute the possibility of proving all points of faith from Scripture alone. Once he has distinguished a scientific and an ordinary way of reading Scripture, he maintains that the second supports the Catholic faith. Such is the assertion made in the *Dialogues*: "The other means or way to make one a Catholic"—corresponding to "showing every point of our faith in particular" from Scripture—"is by some common principle; as if by reading of Scripture we find nothing contrary to the Catholic tenet or practise which our adversary calls in question, or also if we find it commended there in general or the authors and observers of it praised. And in this way I doubt not but a sensible and discreet reading of Scripture at large may and will make any true student of it a perfect believing Catholic, so he proceeds with indifference and with a mind rather to know Scripture than to look for this or that point in it."⁸² This passage was reproduced with minor modifications in the edition of 1654. The reading that Rushworth envisions here is indeed that of Scripture alone, without the help of tradition. This is made clear elsewhere: "I think that the Catholic cause may not only be maintained by Scripture, but also that it has the better standing precisely to Scripture alone"⁸³—a statement which was still reinforced in the text of 1654: "For I think Catholic religion may not only be proved by Scripture, but that, standing exactly and precisely to the written Word, Catholicism is far more maintainable than Protestancy." This was followed by a word of caution: "I confess that this kind of disputing is not fit for many auditors, but only persons of moderation and understanding."⁸⁴ Although the second formulation avoids the Protestant expression "Scripture alone," it is actually more forceful: the vague subject "Catholic cause" has become the much more exact "Catholic religion" and "Catholicism."

Thomas White's *Apology for Rushworth's Dialogues* carefully explains these passages, supports them, and professes to give their standing and strength in Catholic opinion. The text is long but deserves to be fully quoted:

Thirdly, we confess the Bible contains all parts of Catholic doctrine, in this sense that all Catholic doctrine may be found there, by places and arguments be deducted thence, nay more; be topically or oratorically proved out of it: so that, if an able preacher be in a pulpit, where he speaks without contradiction, with a

⁸² *Rushworth's Dialogues* (1640) pp. 334–35. ⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 350.

⁸⁴ *Rushworth's Dialogues* (1654) p. 131.

full and free scope, he may, merely discoursing out of Scripture, carry any point of Catholic doctrine before the generality of his auditory, and convince at the present such a part of them as either are but indifferently speculative or have not taken pains in the question.

Fourthly, I affirm that if any point be brought to an eristical decision before judges, where the parties on both sides are obstinately bent to defend their own positions, by all the art they can imagine; so the question be not, which part is true, but only which is more or less conformable to Scripture, the Catholic position may be victoriously evidenced, by arguments purely drawn from thence, compared and valued according to true criticism, without the aid of Fathers, explications or any other extrinsecal helps. Thus far I esteem all good Catholics do *de facto* hold.⁸⁵

In this important page White affirms two distinct points. In the first place, an oratorical use of the Bible in preaching can fully establish the Catholic faith to the satisfaction of the average auditor. Evidently, such a recourse to Scripture does not stand on the literal sense alone. It is, as White says, "topical or oratorical." It corresponds to the essential purpose of Scripture, which is "to inform our lives by an ordinary reading of it, or by preaching, singing, and such like uses."⁸⁶

In the second place, even at the tribunal of the letter alone, with the use of all the tools of criticism, the Catholic faith can be established with sufficient evidence to be accepted by an impartial judge. This is not to say that all judges would accept the evidence. For White rejects the equivalence of his position with another, against which, as he says, he "engages the Catholic negative," namely, that "the Scripture be a sufficient storehouse to furnish either side with texts, unavoidable and convincing beyond any shadow of reply, in the judgement of sworn and expert judges who are well practised what *convincing* signifies, and how much the various acceptions of words and mutability of meanings import in the construction of sentences."⁸⁷ Recourse to Scripture alone in favor of the Catholic faith does not, in White's opinion, make all shadow of reply impossible, for there is always the possibility of quibbling on the meaning of terms. It is, nevertheless, strong enough to counterbalance the Protestant appeal to *Scriptura sola* by making the Catholic interpretation of Scripture reasonably plausible. In other words, it does not fully establish the "truth" of Catholicism; but it supports its "conformity" with Scripture. Should one object that this

⁸⁵ *Apology*, pp. 141-42.

⁸⁶ *Rushworth's Dialogues* (1640) p. 352.

⁸⁷ *Apology*, p. 142.

is not a proper use of Scripture and that to bring the Catholic faith to courts, there to be judged with the help of nothing but the Bible, is tantamount to throwing it into jeopardy, White could colorfully reply, as he does in another context: "Such arguments are the abortive issue of immature brains, not able to distinguish the force of a cannon shot from a fairy's squib or a boy's pot-gun."⁸⁸

Thomas White's conception of the sufficiency of Scripture to explain the Catholic faith is, in his mind, entirely compatible with Catholic doctrine on traditions. His clearest definition of tradition is contained in the *Apology*: "Tradition we call the delivery of Christ's doctrine from hand to hand in that part of the world which, with propriety, is called Christian."⁸⁹ The *Dialogues* define it in similar ways: an opinion which "passes for a thing delivered by hand to hand from Christ."⁹⁰ "A Tradition, or a point of faith delivered by tradition, is a point universally preached and delivered by the Apostles and imprinted in the hearts of the Christian world, and by a universal belief and practise continued unto our days, whereof our warrant is no other than that we find the present Church in quiet possession of it, and whereof no beginning is known."⁹¹ "The Tradition we speak of is the public preaching and teaching and practise exercised in the Church, settled by the Apostles through the world."⁹² Since tradition is this universal transmission of doctrines and practices from the apostles down to us, White distinguishes between written and verbal tradition. Written tradition is the Scripture itself, in which tradition is expressed in a set form of words that can no longer change. Verbal tradition is the transmission of ideas, which may be expressed with different words and terms in diverse countries and circumstances: "The meaning of verbal, here intended, is only as contradistinguished to written Tradition; which, being in set words, whose interpretation is continually subject to dispute, is therefore opposed to oral or mental, where the sense is known, and all the question is about the words and expressions."⁹³ There are thus two forms of tradition: the one is in set, written words, the meaning of which is open to debate; the other is in unquestioned ideas, the expression of which remains open to discussion and can always be

⁸⁸ *Rushworth's Dialogues* (1640) p. 173. ⁹⁰ *Apology*, p. 7.

⁸⁹ *Rushworth's Dialogues* (1640) p. 481. ⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 554-55.

⁹² *Apology*, p. 126. ⁹³ *Rushworth's Dialogues* (1640) p. 91.

improved upon. Whereas Protestants stick only to the former, Catholics rely on the latter and therefore always know what their faith is: "Those who rely on Scripture are in perpetual quarrels about the sense, whereas to Catholics the sense of their faith is certain, though the words be sometimes in question."⁹⁴

The Catholic reading of Scripture results from the convergence of the known tradition upon the written word, and conversely, the errors of heretics derive from their separation of Scripture from tradition.

Whoever have at any time, under the pretense of reformation, opposed her authority, such have constantly raised up their altar against Tradition upon the dead letter of the Scriptures: which, as the Catholic Church highly reverences, when they are animated by the interpretation of Tradition; so, by too much experience, she knows they become a killing letter, when abused, against the Catholic sense, in the mouths of the devil and his ministers.⁹⁵

In these conditions it becomes important to know where the strength and value of tradition comes from. How does one know that a belief is indeed the tradition handed down by the apostles? The contention of the Reformers, that many traditions of the Catholic Church were in fact traditions of men falsely attributed to the apostles, must be taken seriously if tradition is made, as it now is, the touchstone of the right reading of Scripture.

White's solution falls back upon the traditional notion of the presence of the gospel in the heart of the Church: "You rely upon the testimony of the whole Christian Church, you rely upon the force of nature, borne to continue from father to child, you rely upon the promises of Jesus Christ of continuing his Church unto the end of the world, and upon the efficacy of the Holy Ghost sent to perform it, by whom Christ's law was written in Christians' hearts and so to be continued to the day of doom."⁹⁶ What imports here is the testimony of the present Church in its totality, not that of a few scholars. "For our faith being in some sort naturally grafted in the hearts of Christians, learned men may now and then mistake some points of it, as well as the causes and effects of their own nature itself."⁹⁷ Its strength resides in the unanimity of the interior Christian sense in spite of differences in national cultures, "the root and strength of Tradition being

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 555-56.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 560.

grounded upon this, that such a belief is fixed in peoples' hearts of several nations."⁹⁸ A study of the Fathers reveals "the public doctrine of the ages in which they lived";⁹⁹ this is what gives the Fathers their value. But one could reach the same doctrines and conclusions by simply seeking the public doctrine of the Church today. It is not "because such a number of Doctors held it"¹⁰⁰ that a teaching belongs to the irrefragable tradition of the Catholic Church, but rather because such is the feeling and the sense of the faithful, today as in the past: "It is held as a main distinction betwixt the laws of the Jews and of the Christians, that those of the Jew were to be written in stone and paper, and those of the Christian in the hearts of men by Tradition."¹⁰¹

Tradition being the unanimous testimony of Christian hearts, those who separate Scripture from tradition erect a divisive element into a universal rule of faith, focusing all faith upon the particularity of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures while they have forgone the universality of the Christian witness. Thus Thomas White reaches the following conclusion:

I would entreat you to make a little reflection and compare the knowledge we have by these means, to that which Scripture affords, if handled in a litigious way, as in controversies is necessary; and you shall find Tradition is grounded on that which all men agree in, which is common to all ages, all nations, all conditions; but the knowledge we have by Scripture is grounded on that which is different in every nation. Hence springs another diversity between them; that the one is planted in nature and in what God created in man; the other in what men themselves framed, and that not by design or art but by custom and chance. Out of which again it follows that the one is capable of necessity, as all natural things are, the other not; the one is fixed on universals, the other vagabond in particulars.¹⁰²

In White's mind, this entails no renunciation to what has been called the "scandal of particularity"; nor does it follow that Scripture is less certain than tradition. It implies rather that "if the one were to bring in verdict upon the other, it would be much more forcible and evident to conclude, this book is Scripture, because conformable to the doctrine taught and preached, than that this doctrine is apostolical, because conformable to the Book."¹⁰³ But in the Catholic mind no such verdict is necessary. For all is tradition: "In common, relating generally to

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 573. ⁹⁹ *Rushworth's Dialogues* (1654) p. 72. ¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

¹⁰¹ *Apology*, p. 163. ¹⁰² *Rushworth's Dialogues* (1654) pp. 219-20. ¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

the body and substance of Catholic doctrine, there is no doubt among Catholics but their reliance is upon Tradition, this being the main profession of great and small, learned and unlearned, that Christian Religion is and has been continued in our Church, since the days of Our Saviour, the very same faith the Apostles taught all nations, and upon that score they receive it."¹⁰⁴ White carries this principle to the point of contradicting "our Schoolmen," "very many" of whom "maintain that Tradition is necessary only for some points not clearly expressed in Scripture":¹⁰⁵ this is what they say, but it is not what they do, for "there is a wide distance betwixt these two questions, what a man relies on for his assent or faith, and what he says he thinks he relies on."¹⁰⁶ White refers explicitly to Bellarmine. The Fathers knew better than that, for a Father "being nearer to the Fountain, could less doubt that the stream, of which he saw no other rise, reached home to the Springhead."¹⁰⁷

White's concept of tradition as that which has been with Christians, inscribed in their hearts, from the beginning, in the form of ideas that could be expressed in different sets of words, does not rule out a development of tradition. But the development in question progresses only in extension, as when a formerly local tradition becomes universal. "We acknowledge some points of faith to have come in later than others, and give the cause of it, that the Tradition, whereon such points rely, was, at the beginning, a particular one, but so that at the time when it became universal, it had a testimony even beyond exception, by which it gained such a general acknowledgement."¹⁰⁸ A development in depth, therefore, White would not accept in matters of faith. If such a development seems to have taken place, its scope remains within theological knowledge and does not affect faith itself: "I shall not deny the Church may come to know somewhat which haply before she never reflected on. But then those new truths belong to the science we call theology, not to faith; and even for those, the Church relies on Tradition, as far as they themselves emerge from doctrines delivered by Tradition."¹⁰⁹

The true place of Scripture, according to the theology of Rushworth-White, is therefore in tradition. It is one tradition that has passed

¹⁰⁴ *Apology*, p. 41.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

from particularity to universality. At the beginning a writing was known as apostolical by the local Church to which it was addressed. Only little by little did it reach the entire Church. On the contrary, the doctrine of Christ was delivered to all the apostles equally, and by them to the Churches to which they preached. Scripture remains particular; it is a particular formulation of the universal doctrine. To oppose them would be absurd. And it is equally erroneous to read the particular as if the light of the universal could not shine upon it: "Christ having delivered by the hands of his apostles two things to his Church, his Doctrine, as the necessary and substantial aliment thereof, and his Scriptures, *ad abundantiam*, it was convenient, the strength of Tradition, for one, should far exceed its strength for the other; yet so that even the weaker should not fail to be assured and certain."¹¹⁰

Thomas White's concept of Scripture and tradition is remarkable for several reasons. In the first place, his approach sounds surprisingly modern to us. His problem is exactly the one on which attention has been focused in recent years: Is all revealed doctrine in Scripture? His answer is a definite yes, qualified from the standpoint of how Scripture is read: it must be read in the light of tradition, with the purpose of illustrating the faith rather than finding texts to prove it. Scripture is not a storehouse of texts for arguments; it is written for edification and should be used for that purpose. It acquires value in the light of the Church's doctrine rather than as a result of scientific exegesis.

In the second place, White's conceptions are a perfect example of what is commonly considered to be a pre-Reformation theology. Yet he wrote in the middle of the Counter Reformation and belonged to a section of the Church caught in a polemical situation in which he himself was actively engaged. In other words, White forces us to revise our interpretation of the Counter Reformation. That the Counter Reformation universally taught the doctrine of two partial sources of faith is a myth.

In the third place, one cannot help feeling that White not only anticipated our problems but also already answered them. He does leave us still unsatisfied on the matter of the development of doctrine, to which he does not give the importance which the post-Newman era sees in it. But on the relationships of Scripture and tradition, his

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

position is patently that which Geiselman has described as disappearing after the Council of Trent and reviving in the School of Tübingen: it was very much alive in the second quarter of the seventeenth century. The authors which this article surveys evidence such a survival many years after the Council of Trent. My previous study of Christopher Davenport already permitted the same conclusion to be drawn. From the viewpoint of the history of theology, this is notable enough. But one should also look at the matter from the standpoint of the best way to approach Scripture and tradition. It is now a moot question whether we are not today recovering as something new an old view which we had forgotten: our problems may have been solved already in the seventeenth century. With this possibility in mind, this inquiry acquires a certain piquancy.

In the fourth place, White to some extent anticipated also the problematic of the traditionalist school in the nineteenth century. His comparison of the process of tradition to the communication of knowledge and principles by father to son, his qualification of tradition as a universal element contradistinguished from the particularity of writing, belong to the understanding of tradition as a universal human phenomenon, which the philosophy of the traditionalists will develop two centuries later and which will find its way into theology in the Lammenaisian school of thought, in Lacordaire's Conferences of Notre Dame, and in the writings of Joseph de Maistre. This school has little influence today, partly on account of its exaggerated claims for tradition as a phenomenon of culture, partly because of the condemnation of Lammenais by Pope Gregory XVI in 1832.¹¹¹ But this should not blind us to the fact that more recent Old Testament and New Testament exegesis has found traces in the Bible of such a tradition as was described by these men of the nineteenth century. Thus Thomas White appears, in the seventeenth century, as a genial anticipator of future trends.

JOHN BELSON

The theology of Thomas White, as it refers to tradition, was not, in the English seventeenth century, an aberrant phenomenon. For White

¹¹¹ Encyclicals *Mirari vos* (August 15, 1832) and *Singulari nos* (June 25, 1834); cf. Denzinger-Schönmetzer, nos. 2730-32.

was not isolated from his predecessors, contemporaries, and successors. It is particularly fascinating to see his understanding of the sufficiency of Scripture for salvation defended, against the criticisms of the Anglican Henry Hammond, by John Belson (d. after 1688) in *Tradidi vobis, or The Traditionary Conveyance of Faith Cleared, in the Rational Way, against the Exceptions of a Learned Opponent* (London, 1662). Belson is most clear and vocal in his explanation of what the *Dialogues* mean to say, and he forcefully supports the same positions.

According to the *Dialogues* there is a sense, acceptable to Catholics, in which all revealed truth is in Scripture. "You know the *Dialogues* hold Catholicism may be victoriously evidenced to be more conformable to Scripture than Protestantism by argument purely drawn from the text, without extrinsical helps."¹¹³ They maintain "that a discreet and diligent perusal of Scripture will make a man a perfect Catholic, but not with that steady firmness as to be able to evince his religion before a critical judge, against a wrangling and crafty adversary."¹¹³ This is also John Belson's doctrine, which he expresses in several ways. "That Scripture has couched in it most, if not all, truths essential to Christianity in diverse expressions, I conceive to be true."¹¹⁴ If the question concerns the possibility of salvation by individual readers of Scripture, Belson sees no need to start a quarrel: "This paragraph conjectures a man may be saved by Scripture alone, and since it does no more, I might, if I would, make a drawn match of it, by opposing my 'No' to your 'I.' But sincerity and diligence being virtues which God may much favor, and since a weak vessel will bring a man to his haven, who sails in a perpetual calm, I cannot see what it prejudices me to admit what you say to be true."¹¹⁵ Belson does not present this as simply Thomas White's or his own theology, but as the doctrine of the Catholic Church: "We deny not but all may be contained in Scripture some way or other, particularly or under general heads."¹¹⁶

The moot question between Catholics and Protestants does not, therefore, refer to the contents of the Scriptures; for Catholics also, Scripture contains all revelation. It asks rather in what way revelation is contained in the Bible. Thus the last-quoted passage continues: (We

¹¹³ *Tradidi vobis*, p. 75.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 47; cf. also p. 34.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

deny) "that all is so contained as is necessary for the salvation of mankind; to which effect we conceive certainty and to that evidence requisite, neither of which are within the compass of naked words left without any guard to the violent and contrary storms of criticism."¹¹⁷ Belson formulates exactly the pending question several times. "'Tis true also that the reader, duly qualified, may by due reading Scripture come to truth; but that this truth will be enough to serve all the exigencies of all mankind in all circumstances, or that what satisfied his sincerity and diligence will be able to satisfy all manner of peevishness and obstinacy, are two positions which I see you have not, and think you cannot prove."¹¹⁸ That one man or even many men can be saved through Scripture alone "is nothing to our question, whether it be sufficient for the conduct of all dispositions found in mankind, through all circumstances the Church will be in from the Resurrection to the day of Judgement."¹¹⁹ The problem, then, is not whether Scripture contains revelation, but whether it is the ultimate means of salvation for all mankind. While Protestants teach the latter, Catholics only admit the former. Thus Belson replies to Hammond: "Your conclusion . . . does not in any way prejudice the tenet I am maintaining; to contain sufficient truths and to be a sufficient means to salvation (which may possibly be true on respect of some persons and circumstances) being quite another thing than to decide all quarrels carried on by factiously litigious persons, and this in all times and cases."¹²⁰ The salvation of mankind, not the writing down of revelation, is in question: "That faith has been so transmitted by Tradition that it has not been written, is not Mr. White's tenet, but that that writing, at least the writings we have, is not able so to transmit it as is necessary for the salvation of mankind, without Tradition."¹²¹ As Belson is thus suggesting, Catholics and Protestants have been arguing at cross-purposes. Both of them teach that all revelation is contained in some way in Scripture. But, for Protestants, this gives mankind a sufficient knowledge of revelation, whereas for Catholics reading Scripture alone, without tradition, provides no sufficient knowledge of revelation for mankind in general, whatever particular exceptions may be admitted in rare circumstances. Belson would agree with the formulation of the

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 154-55.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 297.

same idea by Thomas Vane (d. after 1652): "Thus indeed, the Scriptures may be granted sufficient, joined with Tradition, but not alone. And whereas there are some places of the Fathers alledged by Protestants to prove the Scriptures to be clear in all substantial points, they are to be understood, as the Apostle's words (2 Tim., 3:14) are, with reference to such men who have been before instructed by Tradition."¹²²

Scripture is "a determinate number of words,"¹²³ and tradition "a determinate sense,"¹²⁴ which may be expressed in fewer or in more numerous words according to the needs of the audience. Therefore, Scripture will be "the very same" as tradition, once the truths it contains "are indisputably acknowledged and practised both with constancy and high esteem by a multitude."¹²⁵ But Scripture, being written once for all, does not explain itself, while tradition, being constantly spoken and preached, comments on itself at whatever length is necessary. Admittedly, Scripture must have been fully adequate to its readers' needs when it was written; but this no longer obtains for its readers today. "'Tis true that Scripture was intended to be intelligible to those to whom it was written, but not to after ages without other means."¹²⁶ Today the only way to be certain of the meaning is to stand in the line of tradition. Belson sums up his argument in a passage that deserves full quoting on account of its clarity and forcefulness:

You assert: We deny *Scripture* to be the *rule* of *faith*; every of which words deserves its particular reflexion. For first, by *Scripture* is meant either words or sense; that is, the words containing a sense, so as that another may be found in the same words; or else a sense expressed accidentally by such words and which might have been expressed by others. By a *rule*, since 'tis our belief must be regulated, and our belief is of things, not sounds, is understood either a determinate sense or a certain means to arrive at it. We say then that *Scripture*, taken the first way, cannot be a rule, nothing being more evident than that words, merely as such, are neither sense nor means to arrive at a determinate one, since the same words may comprehend many senses. Take *Scripture* the second way, and the question is quite changed; none denies the sense of it to be the word of God by which all our belief and actions are to be regulated; our dispute then in that case is not whether it be a rule, but how 'tis known: whether by the bare words in which 'tis couched (which

¹²² Thomas Vane, *A Lost Sheep Returned Home* (Paris, 1645) pp. 52-53.

¹²³ Belson, *Tradidi vobis*, p. 25. ¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 27. ¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

we deny, because other senses are couched in the very same words) or by the Church's authority of interpreting it by Tradition, which you conceive unnecessary. To Scripture interpreted by Tradition, or the sense of Scripture acknowledged by Tradition, we submit all our thoughts and actions, but deny the title of a rule can belong to Scripture taken for mere words, unsensed, that is, characters; and conceive the sense of Scripture cannot be sufficiently discovered by the bare scanning of the words, which after all, being capable of many senses, leave it undetermined which is the true one.¹²⁷

Scripture, therefore, in the eyes of Catholics, is inseparable from tradition, which conveys its sense. In a way, as explained by Belson after White, Scripture occupies a dominant place within tradition. For the expressions of faith "should be uniform" and "the best way in order to it is to make use, as much as may be, of those which the Holy Ghost in Scripture has before made use of."^{127a} Similarly, in his anonymous book *Protestancy without Principles* (Antwerp, 1668), Edward Worsley (1605–76) makes Scripture, provided it is read with the faith of tradition, the standard of Christian doctrine: "All know that the objective verities writ in Holy Scripture, and the belief in those verities in a Christian heart, are to be distinguished. By the first, God speaks to us. By the second, we yield belief to his Word. All know likewise that if my belief be true faith, it may say exactly and express that *in mente* which God speaks in Scripture, neither more nor less."¹²⁸ Of course, this does not isolate Scripture and make it sole rule: faith is founded on Scripture "explicated by that never erring oracle of truth, the Catholic Church, or on the Word of God not written, which we call Tradition."¹²⁹ Worsley thus shows that the expression "unwritten Word" does not always imply the two-source theory of tradition. The tradition which is indispensable and in which Scripture finds its meaning can be described as the unwritten and the written word standing together in an inseparable relationship.

This does not make Scripture sufficient, for the expressions used in Scripture presuppose, among those who read them, a faith which rests upon tradition. "The positions then are both true, that the Scripture is the best rule to govern our expressions by, and yet not sufficient to regulate our belief."¹³⁰ Catholic doctrine is that "Tradition is the best interpreter of Scripture."¹³¹ It is "the security of whatever

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 115–17.

¹²⁸ *Protestancy without Principles*, p. 154.

¹²⁹ *Tradidi vobis*, p. 137.

^{127a} *Ibid.*, p. 137.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

writing faith is contained in: if it be Scripture, we know the sense by Tradition; if a Father, he is of authority in as much as what he writes is consonant to Tradition, if anything be found to disagree, this not having any weight."¹⁸²

The word "tradition" is not, however, free of all ambiguity. The sort of tradition that Belson understands to be Christian must be carefully distinguished from another, which he associates with Jews. In so doing, Belson eliminates esoteric concepts of tradition, as an oral transmission taking place in secret, known only to a few: "Tradition with us signifies a public delivery to a multitude, so as what was so delivered was settled in their understanding and rooted in their hearts by a constant visible practice. Their [the Jews'] Tradition was a close underhand conveyance from a few to a few, neither so many nor so honest as to be secure from mistakes, both accidental and wilful, and yet the cheat, if any happened, remaining by the secrecy undiscovered, so that nothing more apt to make void the Law of God than such a Tradition as this."¹⁸³ Because it is thus open and public, tradition always involves the whole Church. It cannot be the tradition of a few men mistakenly taken as universally binding. It cannot be imposed by a minority on a majority, for it is always universal. It dwells in the hearts of all believers. Notably enough, Belson finds a close parallel between the written decrees of councils and the written Scripture: both are set in so many words, and both need interpretation. Yet there is a major difference: Scripture does not provide its own interpretation, whereas bishops in a council have time to explain the meaning of the words they have used. Thus Belson answers his adversary:

The parity you next urge between Scripture and Councils I should think of great force, if there were nothing but the bare letter in both. But in the former the word is the only interpreter of the sense; in the latter the word is interpreted by the sense: in the first, the sense is to be accommodated to the word, in the second, the word to the sense. . . . When the words are agreed on, they [the bishops] perfectly know what they mean by them. . . . This they certify by their practise when they are out of Council, and so leave to their posterity not only a rule but a method to preserve it from being wrested by the craft and the perverseness of their adversaries. Now in Scripture the case is quite different: there are none to tell you the sense of the word in question, neither can the word help you, for 'tis of it you doubt. . . . The printed determinations therefore of Councils barely are not our

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 297.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

Rule, but the printed determinations understood and practised; and were Scripture so qualified, I know not what conditions it would want necessary to a Rule.¹²⁴

It logically follows—and this is the position of John Belson—that Scripture is such a rule, if the total life and faith of the Church are taken to be the practice by which the written word is understood. Scripture is then interpreted by tradition; it is not a bare letter, but a letter with its meaning.

ROGER ANDERTON AND THOMAS BAILEY

It needs no saying that White's understanding of Scripture was not the only one among English Catholics of his time. We already know that Christopher Davenport, who reports this position faithfully in his *Systema fidei* (1648), expresses some reservations about it, although he does not challenge its claim to be a Catholic position. The doctrines of the sixteenth-century Recusants were themselves varied, and while the theology of Harding survived in the Rushworth-White-Belson line, that of Thomas Stapleton also influenced some of the later Recusants.¹²⁵

The *Miscellania, or a Treatise Containing 200 Controversial Animadversions* (1640), of Roger Anderton, who wrote under the initials N.N.P., do not suggest any specific doctrine concerning Holy Scripture. Animadversion 168, however, states that "the Catholic Church delivers certain rules for the more perfect knowledge of true tradition." The first rule is: "When the Universal Church doth imbrace any doctrine as a point of faith, the which is not found in the Holy Scriptures, it is necessary to say that the said point proceeds from the Tradition of the Apostles." The second rule is: "When the Universal Church does observe any thing which not any but only God had power to institute, and yet which is not found written in the Scripture, the same we are to presume to be delivered from Christ and his Apostles."¹²⁶ This takes for granted that some points of faith cannot be found in Scripture but have derived from the apostles by other channels.

With Thomas Bailey (d. 1657), a convert to Catholicism, who could not remain in the Church of England after he felt it had been aban-

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

¹²⁵ Cf. *Holy Writ or Holy Church*, chaps. 13-14.

¹²⁶ N. N. P., *Miscellania*, p. 290.

doned of God during the Commonwealth,¹³⁷ the stress is placed on the word of God, for all doctrine is contained in and taught by the word. Indeed, since Scripture is the word of God, Catholics believe "the canon of Holy Scripture to be perfect, a perfect light to our feet, a lantern to our paths, a perfect rule of faith, provided . . . that the line of prophetic and apostolical interpretation be levelled according to the square of ecclesiastical and Catholic sense."¹³⁸ But whatever our respect and love for Scripture, "a large field, full sown with the precious wheat of the Gospel,"¹³⁹ we must never sever Scripture from the Church:

For though the Scripture be the Word of God, yet the Church is the Spouse of Christ; though the Scripture is the Spouse's deed of jointure, yet the Church is the Spouse herself; though the Scripture is the truth herself, yet the Church is the ground of truth. Though the Scripture be the Law, yet the Church is the Kingdom of Christ; this Kingdom must be governed by that Law, but that Law must be interpreted by the representatives of that Kingdom. Christ is the door, the Scripture is the lock, the Church is the key of Paradise.¹⁴⁰

These are beautiful expressions of the essential coinherence of Scripture and the Church. But Bailey's concept of the word does not rest there. For he explains also that "the Word of God is partly written and partly unwritten; whereof the one part is called Holy Scripture, sacred writings, commonly the Old or New Testaments or the Bible; the other is called apostolical or Church Tradition, which from hand to hand has continued in the Church, the pillar and ground of truth, preserved in her bosom and delivered by her mouth, as occasion should require to all posterity."¹⁴¹ Bailey proves this from Scripture, from the Fathers, and from the analogy of the common law of England, which is partly written and partly unwritten. Among the doctrines that Bailey does not find in Scripture, he lists the baptism of infants, the procession of the Spirit from the Son (*filioque*), the perpetual virginity of Mary, the begetting of the Son by the Father, the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, the change of the Sabbath to the Lord's day, the belief that Scripture is the word of God.¹⁴²

¹³⁷ "When my Church was down, I viewed the foundation, and found the foundation of my Church to be laid in fallibility" (*An End to Controversy between the Roman Catholic and the Protestant Religions Justified* [Douai, 1654] p. 40).

¹³⁸ *An End to Controversy*, p. 101.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 351; cf. also p. 83.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

The repository of these unwritten beliefs is the Church, that is, the heart of the faithful. "I know you cannot believe that God's Word, folded up in characters or letters, figured with ink, painted or impressed on paper, should add such awe and reverence over the unwritten verities of God, which are ingrafted and preserved in conservatives that are more noble, viz. the heart of man, the mouth of the Church, the lips of her priests, the fiery tongues of the Apostles, that you should utterly abolish them."¹⁴³ Thus inscribed in living hearts, the word can be expressed as befits all circumstances, adapted to all the controversies and hesitations of each day. "Shall the infinite knowledge of the Holy Ghost, which shall increase in us more and more the later days, daily teaching and instructing the Church, be restrained and limited to volumes written so long ago?"¹⁴⁴ Thus Bailey briefly outlines a theology of development: the Holy Ghost continually teaches the Church, making the word relevant to all historical happenings and increasing our knowledge of the truth. All this perfectly fits the emphasis on the word that we have already found among the other English authors we have surveyed. The only difference lies in the concept of a limited Scripture, beyond which the word overflows into a number of unwritten verities preserved in the hearts of the faithful and formulated from time to time by the Church.

Bailey coins eloquent expressions to describe Scripture and to extol tradition. The latter is "the principal means that was to be used for a right understanding of the divine verity, as the common road unto the Catholic Church and the high way to heaven, the footsteps of the flock of Christ, the tents that were pitched by his own shepherds, the direct, beaten and unerring path of Esaias, the touchstone of truth, the pilot's staff, the broad seal of the Kingdom of Christ, which, once broken, anything is religion and everything is lawful."¹⁴⁵ The Scriptures, in turn, are "the fountains of life, the manna from heaven, the sea of wisdom, the armory of the Holy Ghost, the promptuary of God . . . the will and testament of Jesus Christ . . . the light of the world . . . the *suprema lex*."¹⁴⁶ As such, they are radically related to the tradition which keeps them, explains them, completes them. This is where Bailey's theology on the relationship of Scripture and Church parts from that of other Recusants: tradition completes Scripture, not only

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 92.¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 86.¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 83.¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

insofar as it is necessary to interpret the word, but also inasmuch as it contains truths that are absent from the Bible. The theology of "partly . . . partly" has been grafted into a very dynamic theology of the word. We are reminded in this of St. Francis of Sales.¹⁴⁷

Bailey's concept of unwritten verities does express one trend of post-Reformation thought which coexisted with other tendencies, and especially with the sequels, very much alive indeed in some theologians, of the pre-Reformation conception of Scripture as the full word of God inseparably linked to the Church that reads it. To the Protestant *Scriptura sola*, the Catholics, after the hesitations of the Reformation period and the dilemma Holy Writ *or* Holy Church, now oppose, not only Holy Writ *and* Holy Church, but, more adequately, Holy Writ *in* Holy Church. Holy Writ *and* Holy Church may stand for Thomas Bailey's position; Holy Writ *in* Holy Church stands for the theology of Rushworth, White, and Belson.

JOHN GOTHER

The hopes of the English Catholic minority to see better days in their country soared high under the last Stuarts, Charles II and especially James II, the first Catholic King of England since Queen Mary. The Revolution of 1689, which ejected James to bring the Protestant William and Mary from Hanover, dashed these hopes. There were Jacobite plots afterwards. But the Catholic community in England or the English Catholic exiles did little more than vegetate from the end of the seventeenth to the beginning of the nineteenth century. If the fall of the Stuarts was related to the Catholicism of James II, as it undoubtedly was, this may be due in part to the lack of moderation of the King in his dealings with the Church of England and to the political weakness of English Catholics. But it cannot be traced back to a theological decadence. Under the Stuarts and during the interregnum, Catholic theology was, at least as regards a major question, at a peak. The achievements of Rushworth, White, and Belson, were not, as we have seen, isolated. Their line of thought was echoed among other authors and given a fair share of space in the preoccupation of Christopher Davenport.

At the end of the Stuart period, John Gother (d. 1704), writing under

¹⁴⁷ Cf. St. Francis of Sales, *Les controverses*, Part 2, chap. 2.

the initials J. L., published a short volume entitled *A Papist Misrepresented and Represented* (1685). Once again the classical theology of Scripture and tradition was outlined, in excellent formulas, as the doctrine of the Catholic Church. Scripture is "the dew of heaven, oracles of God, fountain of eternal life."¹⁴⁸ If Catholics are "taught to believe that the Scripture alone can be no rule of faith to any private or particular person," this is "not that there is anything wanting on the Scripture-side; but because no private person can be certain, whether amongst all the several meanings every text is obnoxious to, that which he understands it in, is the right or no."¹⁴⁹ On the side of Scripture *everything is perfect; it is on the side of human inadequacy that the Church is needed. The Catholic "believes that the Church is not above the Scripture; but only allows that order between them as is between the Judge and the Law."*¹⁵⁰ "He believes the Scripture not to be imperfect, nor to want human ordination or traditions of men for the supplying any defects in it: neither does he allow the same authority to these as to the Word of God; or give them equal credit. . . ."¹⁵¹ What matters is to follow and receive the word of God; but "whether that which has been so delivered down to him as the doctrine of Christ and his apostles has been the word of mouth or writing, is altogether indifferent to him."¹⁵²

This is not to say that tradition and Scripture are distinct and contain different doctrines. On the one hand, all doctrines are "standing upon the same foundation of the Church's Tradition, which, if it fall in *sue*, leaves no security in any."¹⁵³ The Catholic "undoubtedly holds the Scripture to be the Word of God, penned by prophets and apostles, and inspired by the Holy Ghost, because in all ages from Moses to Christ and from Christ to his time, it has been so taught, preached, believed and delivered successively by the faithful. . . ."¹⁵⁴ In this way Scripture rests on tradition. On the other hand, tradition is the continuation of God's speaking to His people as He spoke through the Scriptures. It never stands apart from Scripture as something other than God's word: *it is God's word unwritten, the faithful correlative of God's word written.* "In like manner, he [the Catholic] is ready to receive and believe all that this same Congregation has, together with the Bible, in

¹⁴⁸ J. L., *A Papist Misrepresented and Represented*, p. 12. ¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 18. ¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 19. ¹⁵² *Ibid.* ¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 20. ¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

all ages, successively, without interruption, taught, preached, believed and delivered as the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles and assent to it with divine faith, just as he does to the Bible."¹⁵⁵

In another essay, John Gother lists the various ways in which the Church teaches her doctrine: "The Church proposes unto us matters of faith, first and chiefly, by the Holy Scriptures, in points plain and intelligible in it. Secondly, by definitions of General Councils, in points not sufficiently explained in Scripture. Thirdly, by apostolical Traditions derived from Christ and his Apostles to all succeeding ages. Fourthly, by her practice, worship and ceremonies confirming her doctrine."¹⁵⁶ The relationship of the first item, Scripture, to the other three, is that which Gother has described as uniting "the Judge and the Law." Scripture is the law; and the Church, manifesting her mind in councils, in the successive apostolic tradition, in worship, provides the interpretation which conveys the sense of the law.

This inquiry may be brought to an end here. We have reached the last decades of the seventeenth century. We are in the great age of the Counter Reformation, in a group of authors belonging to the oppressed Catholic minority of a Protestant country. Yet a dominant—perhaps the dominant—understanding of Scripture and tradition follows the classical pattern set by the Fathers and preserved by the Schoolmen, rather than the categories which our textbooks attribute to the post-Tridentine era. It is in the context of the classical pattern of thought that the Council of Trent is understood.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹⁵⁶ J. L., *Roman Catholic Principles, in Reference to God and King*, p. 2.