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Scripture, Tradition and Church: An Historical Survey

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INTRODUCTION

The word 'tradition' is notoriously ambiguous. It often denotes the sum total of the Christian heritage passed down from previous ages. Scripture is just one item of tradition in this all-embracing sense. The act of handing on this heritage is sometimes described as 'active tradition', the stress being on the process rather than the content. A third meaning is identical to the first save that the Scriptures are excluded. As this essay concerns Scripture and tradition the word tradition will normally have this meaning: those non-scriptural writings, liturgical practices, etc. inherited from the Christian past. In this sense tradition can be seen either as a collection of items (writings, practices, *etc.*) or as a body of doctrine (that taught by these items). This is a helpful ambiguity in the use of the term. Manifestly heretical writings and practices are not normally reckoned as part of tradition but it does not follow that the whole of tradition is orthodox, from any point of view. 'Supplementary tradition' will be used to denote that content of tradition which goes beyond Scripture (usually doctrine but sometimes also practices).¹

Scripture and tradition cannot be studied in isolation. They only interact with one another through a third party, the contemporary church. All debates about the relation between Scripture and tradition have to a greater or lesser extent involved the current teaching of the church,² even where this has not been recognised. This point may seem obvious but it is often neglected, especially on the Protestant side, there being studies of Scriptures and tradition which ignore the role of the contemporary church. Such an approach can only lead to a serious distortion of the picture. It is mistaken to treat the teaching of the church as if it were a part of or even identical to tradition as the church is a contemporary body which makes decisions with the aid of Scripture and tradition, both of which come from the past. It is because the contemporary church is of a different order to Scripture and tradition that it is often ignored in discussions of this question. But it cannot be ignored as the conflicts that have taken place in the history of the church have centred on the current dogma of the church rather than on the relation between Scripture and tradition. It is hard to discover any debate on Scripture and tradition where the motivating force has not been a difference concerning the current teaching of the church. For this reason, any historical study of the relation between Scripture and tradition will err and mislead to the extent to which it ignores the teaching role of the church. Those Protestant accounts of the Reformation which treat it just as a rejection of supplementary tradition and not as a rejection of the authority of the leaders of the church seriously distort the picture for just this reason.

¹ Cf. the definitions in 'Scripture, Tradition and Traditions' in *Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order*, Ed. P. C. Rodger and L. Vischer (London, 1964), 50, 52; Y. M. J. Congar, *Tradition and Traditions* (London, 1966), 296-307.

² It is helpful to retain an ambiguity at this point between the teaching authority of the church and the actual content of contemporary ecclesiastical teaching.

The present survey is greatly indebted to an article of Professor H. A. Oberman on tradition from Irenaeus to *Humani Generis*.³ This article fails to give the church its proper place in the discussion of Scripture and tradition and the emerging

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pattern is distorted as a result.⁴ The infusion of this third element has led to a somewhat different picture emerging in the present survey. A similar observation applies to Father G. Tavad's *Holy Writ and Holy Church*.⁵ This essay will trace the development of four different views of the relation between Scripture, tradition and the teaching of the church.⁶

THE EMERGENCE OF SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

In the New Testament a twofold attitude to tradition can be discerned. The tradition of the (Jewish) elders, together with other human tradition, is rejected.⁷ At the same time there is good apostolic tradition which is simply the Christian faith as it was proclaimed and transmitted by the apostles and their associates.⁸ The New Testament writings sprang out of this latter tradition at different stages in its history. There is therefore an important sense in which (apostolic) tradition precedes Scripture, an aspect largely ignored by traditional Protestant theology. But although this has important implications for the origin of the New Testament it does not foreclose the question of the subsequent relation between Scripture and tradition. The New Testament may derive from the original apostolic tradition but once it was produced it became distinct from that tradition and the relation between the two became an open question. It also became a question which could not long be ignored for the original apostolic tradition did not suddenly die when the New Testament was produced but remained as the context in which it was read and interpreted.

The passing of the apostles' generation left an obvious gap in the life of the church. She continued to teach what she had learnt from them but before long the question would arise of the source and authority of her teaching. As yet there was no clear distinction between the apostolic tradition and the writings of the apostles.⁹ To talk of any relation between (New Testament) Scripture and tradition at this stage is anachronistic. Heresy was opposed as

³ 'Quo Vadis? Tradition from Irenaeus to Humani Generis,' *Scottish Journal of Theology* 16, 1963, 225-55 (henceforth referred to as *QV*).

⁴ Up to p. 247 tradition is never explicitly differentiated from the contemporary teaching of the church. This is because the *magisterium* is considered only as a potential source, not as an authority.

⁵ London, 1959. For Tavad the break-up of the classical view comes in the 14th century while for Oberman it comes in the 4th century. This is because Tavad is discussing the relationship between Scripture and church while Oberman is discussing that between Scripture and tradition (note their titles). Also, Tavad, following his sources, uses the word Scripture to cover more than the canonical Bible. Oberman is wrong in asserting that his schema contradicts Tavad's (*QV* 233) as his own exposition of Tavad shows that they are tracing two different relationships. For a critique of Tavad, cf. Y. M. J. Congar, 'Sainte Ecriture et sainte Eglise', *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 44, 1960, 82-8.

⁶ The first two views are basically the same as Oberman's Tradition I & II. The third view is not found in Oberman while the fourth is a variation of his Tradition III.

⁷ Mt. 15:1-9; Mk. 7:1-13; Gal. 1:11-17; Col. 2:8.

⁸ 1 Cor. 11:2,23; 15:3; 2 Thes. 2:15; 3:6; 2 Tim. 2:1f.

⁹ The Apostolic Fathers and the Apologists use the word *παράδοσις* sparingly in a Christian sense and then only of the Christian way of life in its totality—belief and conduct. Cf. E. Flesseman-van Leer, *Tradition and Scripture in the Early Church* (Assen, 1953), 66; G. W. H. Lampe, 'Scripture and Tradition in the Early Church' in *Scripture and Tradition*, Ed. F. W. Dillistone (London, 1955), 38.

contrary to the teaching of the church which had preserved the apostles' teaching. As yet there was no defined corpus of New Testament Scripture. Ignatius appeals mainly to the authority of church and bishops¹⁰ but also to the gospel itself.¹¹ It is the Christian message, taught by the authorized officers of the church (there is no mention of succession) which is authoritative. Polycarp similarly appeals to the basic facts of the Christian message.¹² Clement of Rome has much to say about the succession of the ministry, but in connection with church order rather than doctrine.¹³

The emergence of the New Testament canon is a complex process which need not be described here as it lies strictly speaking outside the present topic.¹⁴ It suffices to note that by the time of Irenaeus the New Testament was seen as a more or less well-defined corpus of Scripture alongside the Old Testament so that Scripture and tradition could be seen as twin touchstones of truth.¹⁵ Two factors helped to create this situation. Marcion produced a truncated corpus of New Testament writings as a basis for his rejection of the Old Testament. Against this the church had to decide which writings were normative. The Montanists claimed that revelation had continued and that the Holy Spirit spoke through (not just to) Montanus, Prisca and Maximilla.¹⁶ This forced the mainstream church to restrict the revelation of the New Covenant to apostolic teaching. Thus, by the

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time of Irenaeus the normative source of ecclesiastical doctrine was seen as the apostolic teaching to be found in the apostolic Scriptures (defined at least in basic outline) and in the apostolic tradition passed down openly in all the apostolic churches.

The distinction between written and oral tradition should be noted. Papias, still within living memory of the apostles, preferred oral tradition: if he met anyone who had known the apostles he enquired what they had taught, 'for I did not imagine that things out of books would help me as much as the utterances of a living and abiding voice.'¹⁷ But it has often been noted that the content of Papias' traditions is a clear indication that by the year AD 150 oral tradition was already bankrupt and consisted as much of legend as of reliable information.¹⁸ Irenaeus

¹⁰ *Eph.* 5; *Magn.* 4; *Trall.* 7; *Philad.* 3,7f.; *Smyr.* 8.

¹¹ *Magn.* 8, 10; *Trall.* 6, 9; *Philad.* 5, 8; *Smyr.* 5.

¹² *Phil.* 7.

¹³ *I Clem.* 42, 44.

¹⁴ Cf. H. von Campenhausen, *The Formation of the Christian Bible* (London, 1972).

¹⁵ A. C. Outler, 'The Sense of Tradition in the Ante-Nicene Church', *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 1, 1964, 466. Cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* III. v. 1 (references to Massuet Migne edition), E. Flesseman-van Leer, *op. cit.*, 139f.

¹⁶ It will be noted that this introduces the Holy Spirit as a fourth element in addition to Scripture, tradition and the church. For most Christian thought the Holy Spirit inspires and guides the processes of Scripture and tradition and aids the church in her decisions. (Cf. D. van den Eynde, *Les Normes de l'Enseignement Chrétien dans la littérature patristique des trois premiers siècles* (Gembloux & Paris, 1933), 100; B. Shelley, *By What Authority?* (Exeter, 1966), 152-8.) Only a few have seen the Spirit as a fourth source of Christian teaching or as a doctrinal authority independent of the other three. After Montanism such views are restricted to certain currents of Catholic theology (to be discussed below) and to the more enthusiastic sects from the time of Joachim of Fiore.

¹⁷ In Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* iii. 39.

¹⁸ Cf. R. P. C. Hanson, *Tradition in the Early Church* (London, 1962), 35-46 for some examples of unreliable traditions. Papias' millenarian tradition, quoted by Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* V. xxxiii. 3f.) is notorious.

informs us that Polycarp had sat at the feet of the apostle John.¹⁹ But by the time when Irenaeus wrote such men were no longer to be found. In their place were found Gnostic teachers who claimed to have a secret oral tradition from the apostles. Such claims were clearly rejected by the Catholic Church.

It is also noteworthy that the first signs of an explicit use of written tradition are found in Irenaeus, who cited earlier writers.²⁰ The first extant explicit appeal to written tradition is found at the beginning of the third century, in the Monarchian controversy at Rome.²¹ The rise of written tradition also marks the end of the appeal to unwritten tradition outside the liturgy. Clement of Alexandria believed in a secret oral tradition which supplemented Scripture. This is an indication of the influence of Gnosticism on his thought and there is no sign that it had any later influence. By the middle of the third century such oral tradition had died out.²² Ceremonial and liturgical tradition of course remained as such tradition is tenaciously conservative (though changes do take place) and also has a much greater survival value.

THE COINCIDENCE VIEW

The first clear attitude to emerge on the relation between Scripture, tradition and the church was the coincidence view: that the teaching of the church, Scripture and tradition coincide.²³ Apostolic tradition is authoritative but does not differ in content from the Scriptures. The teaching of the church is likewise authoritative but is only the proclamation of the apostolic message found in Scripture and tradition. The classical embodiment of the coincidence view is found in the writings of Irenaeus and Tertullian.²⁴

These both reject the Gnostic claims to a secret tradition supplementing Scripture.²⁵ Apostolic tradition does not add to Scripture but is evidence of how it is correctly to be interpreted.²⁶ This tradition is found in those churches which were founded by the apostles, who taught men whose successors teach today.²⁷ These apostolic churches agree as to the content of the Christian message, in marked contrast to the variations among the heretics.²⁸ It is important to note that it is the church which is the custodian of Scripture and tradition and which has the authentic apostolic message. There was no question of appealing to Scripture or tradition

¹⁹ In Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* v. 20.

²⁰ He quotes from Ignatius (as *τις των ημετερων*, *Adv. Haer.* V. xxviii. 4), Hermas (as Scripture, *ibid.* IV. xx. 2) and Justin (*ibid.* IV. vi. 2; cf. V. xxvi. 2). Others are just named (D.T.C. 7. 2416, 2512-6).

²¹ Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* v. 28, cited in G. W. H. Lampe, *art. cit.*, 44 and R. M. Grant, 'The Appeal to the Early Fathers', *Journal of Theological Studies* 11, 1960, 15.

²² R. P. C. Hanson, *op. cit.*, 46-51.

²³ E. Flesseman-van Leer, *op. cit.*, 140-4, 180-5; G. W. H. Lampe, *art. cit.*, 46f.; R. P. C. Hanson, *op. cit.*, 110-7; J. R. Geiselman, *Die Heilige Schrift and die Tradition* (Freiburg *et. al.*, 1962), 222-9; *QV* 227f.; A. C. Outler, *art. cit.*, 483; Y. M. J. Congar, *op. cit.*, 24-38.

²⁴ There are of course important differences of emphasis between Irenaeus and Tertullian but they are agreed in the essential outlines of their position.

²⁵ *Adv. Haer.* III. ii. 1; *Praescr.* 22-6. Cf. *QV* 231f.

²⁶ Cf. n. 23, above.

²⁷ *Adv. Haer.* III. ii. 2; III. iii. 1; III. iv. 1; IV. xxxiii. 8; *Praescr.* 20f., 32, 36. It is noteworthy that Irenaeus was following the Gnostic Ptolemy (*Letter to Flora* 9) who had already claimed to have received apostolic tradition by succession (cf. H. Holstein, *Le tradition dans l'église* (Paris, 1960), 62; H. von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power* (London, 1969), 158f.).

²⁸ *Adv. Haer.* I. x. 2; III. iii. 1-4; III. xxiv. 1; *Praescr.* 20f., 27f., 32.

against the church.²⁹ This is partly because the apostolic tradition was found in the church but not just for this reason: the Holy Spirit preserves the church from error and leads her into the truth.³⁰ The real concern of Irenaeus

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and Tertullian was not with the relation between Scripture and tradition but with the identity of ecclesiastical with apostolic teaching. Any exposition of their teaching on Scripture and tradition which fails to show this is to that extent defective.

The appeal of Irenaeus and Tertullian to apostolic succession and apostolic tradition is primarily (but not solely) historical. Against second-century Gnostics it was a powerful and perfectly reasonable argument to note that those churches which were taught by the apostles and had openly passed on their doctrine from teacher to teacher agreed with one another in their interpretation of the Christian message. The argument does not rely for its force upon the (legendary) succession of monarchical bishops. A succession of teachers suffices and a plurality at any one time in fact strengthens the argument. As a historical argument it does not prove the absolute infallibility of the teaching of the mid-second-century church, let alone that of the later church, but it does guarantee the substantial accuracy of its teaching against Gnosticism.

A further highly influential account of the coincidence view is found in the *Commonitorium* of Vincent of Lérins. The Catholic Church is to hold 'quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est'—the triple test of universality, antiquity and consensus.³¹ Scripture is materially sufficient (it contains all that is necessary) but formally insufficient (it needs an interpreter). Tradition is necessary because heretics from Novatian to Nestorius have misinterpreted Scripture.³² The purpose of tradition is preservation as alteration is perversion.³³ Antiquity can no longer be led astray by some new deception, so whatever all together, with one and the same agreement, openly, often and continually have held written and taught is to be believed without hesitation.³⁴ But while tradition is the test to be applied to novelty which arises in the church and claims to be scriptural it should not be imagined that this test can be used to question the authoritative decisions of the church.³⁵ What was largely (but not exclusively) a historical argument in Irenaeus has here become a theological principle, though this element is already clearly discernible in Tertullian.

THE SUPPLEMENTARY VIEW

²⁹ For tradition, cf. n. 25, above. For Scripture, cf. *Adv. Haer.* I. i. 6; III. iv. If.; III. v. 1; IV. xxvi. 2; *Praescr.* 15, 21, 27f., 36f., 45. But it must be remembered that Tertullian became a Montanist. For another example of how the fathers could sit very loose to tradition when it suited them, cf. the comment of Cyprian that custom without truth is but antiquity of error (*Ep.* ixxiv. 9, cf. J. N. Bakhuizen van den Brink, 'Traditio im theologischen Sinne', *Vigiliae Christianae* 13, 1959, 65-7).

³⁰ *Adv. Haer.* III. xxiv. 1; IV. xxvi. 2; *Praescr.* 27f.

³¹ *Comm.* ii. 3 ; cf. xxvii. 38. Cf. *QV* 236f.

³² *Comm.* ii. 2; cf. xxv. 35- xxvii. 37; xxix. 41.

³³ *Comm.* iv. 6; viii. 12f.; xx. 25; xxi. 26; xxiv. 34; cf. xxvii. 28-32. The idea that heresy is novelty is also found in *Adv. Haer.* III. iv. 3; *Praescr.* 29-34.

³⁴ *Comm.* iii. 4; cf. xxviii. 39. Cf. xxvii.38 for further tests.

³⁵ *Comm.* xxviii. 39f.

The supplementary view gradually evolved out of the coincidence view. According to this view tradition does not just present the content of Scripture in a different form but also supplements it. Thus Scripture has become materially as well as formally insufficient. That this view arose is clear, how and when it arose is less certain.

The supplementary view is clearly found in Gnosticism and the teaching of Clement of Alexandria but these are not important as the former was clearly rejected by the 'Great Church' and the latter was of no influence in this matter.³⁶ If liturgical and ceremonial tradition be included the supplementary view can be traced to the earliest times. The *Didache* and the *Apostolic Tradition* are both presented as the teaching of the apostles and Tertullian explicitly and at length argues for apostolic ceremonial traditions.³⁷ It has been noted that although the church did not allow heretics to appeal to extra-scriptural teaching there was little distinction between church, Scripture and tradition where matters of ceremony

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and discipline were concerned.³⁸ It is unlikely that at any stage the early church did not believe that there were apostolic ceremonial traditions not to be found in Scripture. It is therefore necessary to distinguish between liturgical customs and doctrinal matters in the rise of the supplementary view. It has been objected to this that the *lex orandi* often becomes the basis for the *lex credendi*.³⁹ This is true and the rise of the supplementary view can be traced to just this point but it is necessary to distinguish between the appeal to apostolic tradition to justify ceremonial practices (as in Tertullian) and the use of such practice as a proof in doctrinal matters. There is also an important difference between the use of liturgical tradition as a secondary proof in a doctrinal debate and its use as the primary proof for a doctrine not found in Scripture. It must also be remembered that liturgical tradition was often an unconscious or unacknowledged influence in doctrinal matters.⁴⁰

The first important example of a doctrinal conclusion based on liturgical tradition is found in Basil the Great's defence of the divinity of the Holy Spirit.⁴¹ He argues at length for the form of the doxology with $\mu\epsilon\tau\alpha\ldots\ \sigma\upsilon\nu$. In doing so Basil asserts that some ($\tau\alpha\ \mu\epsilon\nu$) of the beliefs and practices of the church are found in written teaching, others ($\tau\alpha\ \delta\epsilon$) in a mystery by the

³⁶ R. P. C. Hanson, *op. cit.*, 22-7.

³⁷ *De corona* 3f. Cf. Polycrates of Ephesus on the Paschal controversy in Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* v. 24. For further examples, cf. D. van den Eynde, *op. cit.*, 274-80; G. W. H. Lampe, *art. cit.*, 32-4; J. R. Geiselman, *op. cit.*, 257-9 (for the later history of the appeal to supplementary ceremonial and liturgical tradition, cf. *ibid.*, 259-71); Y. M. J. Congar, *op. cit.*, 50-2.

³⁸ J. N. Bakhuizen van den Brink, 'Traditio in de Reformatie en het Katholicisme in de Zestiende Eeuw', *Mededelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen* 15, 1952, 68f.

³⁹ *QV* 236. Cf. M. Wiles, *The Making of Christian Doctrine* (Cambridge, 1967), 62-93. Wiles explains how the *lex orandi* was a real, albeit unconscious, influence on the *lex credendi*. The present essay examines rather the explicit and acknowledged role given to the *lex orandi*.

⁴⁰ G. W. H. Lampe, *art. cit.*, 34-7.

⁴¹ *De spiritu sancto* xxvii. 66f.; xxix. 71. Cf. G. W. H. Lampe, *art. cit.*, 36; *QV* 233f.; E. Amand de Mendieta, 'The "Unwritten" and "Secret" Apostolic Traditions in the Theological Thought of St. Basil of Caesarea', *Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers* No. 13 (Edinburgh & London, 1965); R. P. C. Hanson, 'Basile et la doctrine de la tradition en relation avec le Saint-Esprit', *Verbum Caro* 22, 1968, 56-71. Basil earlier held the coincidence view (R. P. C. Hanson, *art. cit.*, 58-61). Cf. the different approach of Gregory of Nazianzus to the divinity of the Holy Spirit in *Orationes* xxxi. 26f. where he formulates a crude doctrine of development.

tradition of the apostles.⁴² Both have the *same* force (την αὐτην ἰσχυον). Many examples, mainly ceremonial, are given. A distinction is drawn between δογμα which is observed in silence and κηρυγμα which is proclaimed to all. This is an interesting example of the *disciplina arcani*, later for a while to be used as an argument by Catholic apologists.⁴³ This passage of Basil was often cited by mediaeval canonists, usually via the *Decretum* of Gratian who derived it from Ivo of Chartres.⁴⁴ It should be noted that the argument from the doxology is not Basil's only argument for the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

Augustine also created an important precedent for mediaeval theologians. Against the Manichaeans he argues that he only came to believe the Scriptures on the authority of the church.⁴⁵ It is important to note that this highly controverted passage concerns the relative authority of church and Scripture, not the status of tradition.⁴⁶ Elsewhere Augustine argues that the Roman practice of accepting heretical baptism can be supposed to ('credenda est') have its origin in apostolic tradition although Scripture is silent. For, he continues, many things are observed by the whole church and can fairly be held ('bene creduntur') to have been enjoined by the apostles although not found in their writings.⁴⁷ It can be argued that the status of heretical baptism is a ceremonial or disciplinary rather than doctrinal matter. More important is the manner in which this attitude makes the church a *de facto* source of binding tradition. Augustine doubtless believed that the traditions concerned were of apostolic origin but it can be seen how other traditions came to be seen as apostolic within a few years of their fourth-century origin.⁴⁸

The supplementary view gained ground throughout the middle ages. An increasing number of doctrines were justified by appealing to it and by the late middle ages it was dominant.⁴⁹ It is important to note why the supplementary view arose. It became apparent that not all that the church taught was to be found in Scripture. Scripture thus being insufficient, tradition had to supplement it. The teaching of the church then became equated with that of Scripture supplemented where necessary by tradition. The problem was not just that tradition had grown beyond the teaching of Scripture—this of itself need not have caused problems. It was when the official teaching of the church manifestly contained elements not found

⁴² ἐν μυστηρίῳ is sometimes translated as 'in secret' but the items listed show that this was no secret kept from ordinary Christians.

⁴³ O. Chadwick, *From Bossuet to Newman* (Cambridge, 1957), 68f.; N. Sykes, *Man as Churchman* (Cambridge, 1960), 108-10.

⁴⁴ *QV* 234. Note the comments there on the translation of μεν... τα δε.

⁴⁵ *Contra ep. fund.* v. 6. Cf. *QV* 234f.

⁴⁶ For the controversy, cf. A. D. R. Polman, *The Word of God according to St. Augustine* (London, 1961), 198-208; *QV* 235. Oberman wrongly sees this as an example of Tradition II (supplementary tradition).

⁴⁷ *De bapt.* V. xxiii. 31; cf. 11. vii. 12; IV. vi. 9; IV. xxiv. 32; *Ep.* liv. 1. Cf. G. W. H. Lampe, *art. cit.*, 38; J. N. Bakhuizen van den Brink, 'La tradition dans l'Eglise primitive et au XVIe siècle', *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses* 36, 1956, 274; A. D. R. Polman, *op. cit.*, 72-4; *QV* 236.

⁴⁸ R. P. C. Hanson, *art. cit.*, 57.

⁴⁹ J. Beumer, 'Das katholische Schriftprinzip in der theologischen Literatur der Scholastik bis zur Reformation', *Scholastik* 16, 1941, 32-40; P. de Vooght, *Les sources de la doctrine Chretienne* (Bruges, 1954), 13-32, 254-64; G. Tavard, *op. cit.*, 20f.; J. Finkenzeller, *Offenbarung and Theologie nach der Lehre des Johannes Duns Scotus* (Münster, 1961), 60-80; J. R. Geiselman, *op. cit.*, 229-49 (for the coincidence view in the middle ages) and 250-6 (for the supplementary view); *QV* 234-6, 238-40; Y. M. J. Congar, *op. cit.*, 50-6, 111-7; H. A. Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology*² (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1967), 361-412. That the supplementary view did not gain more rapid ground was because 'medieval writers had no difficulty in finding everything in Scripture, since their principles of exegesis provided them with the necessary means' (Y. M. J. Congar, *op. cit.*, 113). Both views are often to be found in the same writer as their statements were often addressed to specific situations and not intended as general principles (cf. *ibid.*, 117).

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in Scripture that tradition had to be brought forward as a supplementary source for that teaching. In most cases the tradition appealed to was ceremonial: the principle that the *lex orandi* is the *lex credendi* was the basis of the supplementary view. As with Augustine, it was assumed that the accepted teaching and practice of the church must go back to the apostles. In practice this attempt to find an apostolic foundation for ecclesiastical teaching was making the church herself, especially her life of worship, a source of doctrine.

The next crisis involved Scripture and the church rather than tradition.⁵⁰ It came gradually to be seen that ecclesiastical teaching did not just go beyond Scripture (necessitating supplementary tradition) but actually contradicted it. Mediaeval heresy was a protest against this. Heresy had been common in the early church but had largely been eradicated in the West by the time of Charlemagne. Its return can initially be traced to alien Manichaean and Gnostic influences and to dissatisfaction with the life of the church. But that heresy which arose from within the church rather than from the importation of alien ideas moved on to the position that the church contradicted Scripture and finally that it was a false church. This process can be seen in the Waldensians, the spiritual Franciscans, Wyclif and the Lollards.

There was also an awareness of this contradiction in the church itself. Henry of Ghent, a secular priest of an independent frame of mind, asked in his *Commentary on the Sentences* (1276-1292) whether Scripture or the church should be believed if they contradict one another. This was as yet a hypothetical question but his approach was a clear indication of things to come, especially as Henry sided with Scripture making a distinction between the church and the community of believers 'which is considered as the church'.⁵¹ This position led to a dichotomy between Scripture and the church.⁵² On the one side theories were developed which subjugated Scripture to the pope and allowed for post-apostolic revelation. On the other side such writers as Marsilius of Padua and William of Ockham distinguished between the authority of the church and that of Scripture, to the detriment of the former.⁵³ The concept of the coincidence of Scripture, tradition and church was in serious decline.

PROTESTANTISM: THE ANCILLARY VIEW

The principle that ecclesiastical teaching actually contradicts Scripture came to its full expression in the Reformation. It has rightly been noted that the Reformation was not primarily a protest against tradition as such.⁵⁴ The revolt was against church teaching rather than against tradition. The Roman church was seen as a heretical body because it had perverted the Scriptures as well as added to them. The root issue was one of ecclesiology: does the church define the gospel or vice-versa?⁵⁵ It is significant that the Reformers

⁵⁰ This is the important jump for Tavad. It also led to a heightening of the supplementary view, showing that Tavad's and Oberman's shifts are not unrelated.

⁵¹ G. Tavad, *op. cit.*, 23-5. Cf. M. Schmaus, 'Die Schrift and die Kirche nach Heinrich von Gent' in *Kirche and Überlieferung*, Ed. J. Betz & H. Fries (Freiburg *et al.*, 1960), 211-7.

⁵² G. Tavad, *op. cit.*, 25-66; Y. M. J. Congar, *op. cit.*, 94-101.

⁵³ G. Tavad, *op. cit.*, 29-31; cf. J. Beumer, *art. cit.*, 44-9.

⁵⁴ QV 226, 241-4.

⁵⁵ Cf. E. Flesseman-van Leer, 'The Controversy about Scripture and Tradition between Thomas More and William Tyndale', *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis* 43, 1959, 143-64 and 'The Controversy about

repeatedly sought to use tradition on their own side. The prime enemy was not tradition, not even supplementary tradition, but the teaching of the contemporary (Roman) church.

Some have argued that the Reformation was basically a return from the supplementary to the coincidence view of tradition.⁵⁶ This is partly true inasmuch as the Reformation was a protest against that teaching of the church which the Reformers saw as based on supplementary tradition.⁵⁷ But this does not go to

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the root of the matter. The Reformers also rejected the Catholic interpretation of Scripture. The essence of the coincidence view is the assumption not just that Scripture and tradition have the same content but also that this content is found in the teaching of the church. The error in attributing the coincidence view to the Reformers lies in the neglect of their ecclesiology.⁵⁸ They did allow for an interpretative tradition not adding to Scripture but did not see either this tradition or ecclesiastical teaching as infallible. It was possible to appeal to Scripture alike from (interpretative) tradition and ecclesiastical teaching. There are two important differences between this view and the classical coincidence view of Irenaeus and Tertullian. These patristic writers were concerned to show the identity of ecclesiastical with apostolic teaching while the Reformers sought to do the opposite. Furthermore they accepted the inherited faith because it was apostolic tradition whereas the Reformers accepted the (traditional) creeds only because they believed them to be scriptural.⁵⁹ This is a significant difference. While the Reformers did not despise tradition they only accepted it if it was scriptural, Scripture remaining the final arbiter. Unlike the coincidence view the *sola scriptura* did not involve the unqualified acceptance of any tradition or of the teaching of any church and Scripture remained, formally as well as materially, the ultimate criterion and norms.⁶⁰

It has been argued that the English, unlike the Continental, Reformers held the coincidence view in so far that they held the first five or six centuries to be normative. 'The Spirit infallibly guided the church for approximately five centuries.'⁶¹ Such a doctrine can be claimed for the 'Anglo-Catholicism' of the Henrician Reformation, but not for any other form of Tudor Protestantism. The error lies in confusing the claim that the primitive centuries supported the Reformation (also to be found in Calvin⁶²), with the granting of a normative

Ecclesiology between Thomas More and William Tyndale', *NAvK* 44, 1960, 65-86. She argues that the basic difference between More and Tyndale lay in their ecclesiologies.

⁵⁶ *QV* 240-4. His quotations show that the reformers accepted tradition as a source parallel to Scripture but not that they treated it as normative.

⁵⁷ Calvin, *Inst.*, IV. viii. 14-6; *Belgic Confession* (1561), art. 7; *39 Articles* (1563), nos. 6, 20; *2nd Helvetic Confession* (1566) ii. 5.

⁵⁸ Cf. *QV* 226 where Oberman refers to the Reformation purely in terms of Scripture and tradition with no mention of the church.

⁵⁹ Calvin, *Inst.*, IV. ix. 8; *39 Articles*, nos. 8, 21; J. M. Headley, *Luther's View of Church History* (New Haven & London, 1963), 86f.

⁶⁰ Calvin, *Inst.*, *Praefatio*; IV. ix; *French Confession of Faith* (1559), art. 5; *1st Scots Confession* (1560), art. 20; *2nd Helvetic Confession* ii. 4; *Formula of Concord* (1584), *Epitome Articulorum*; N. Sykes, *op. cit.*, 73-5; J. M. Headley, *op. cit.*, 163-75.

⁶¹ G. Tavard, *op. cit.*, 238. On pp. 210-43 he argues his case.

⁶² *Inst.*, *Praefatio*.

status to these centuries.⁶³ The twenty-first Article affirms that general councils can err. Jewel was most outspoken in his appeal to the first six centuries but this was a polemical argument, not an admission that the early church was infallible.⁶⁴ Offers made in debate to subscribe if patristic support for the Roman position be forthcoming should not be taken too literally. Even Richard Hooker with his love of antiquity and hatred of private judgement⁶⁵ praised the early councils as true rather than as *a priori* normative.⁶⁶

The Reformers' attitude to tradition was neither the coincidence nor the supplementary view but the ancillary view. They viewed tradition not as a normative interpretation of Scripture nor as a necessary supplement to it but rather as a tool to be used to help the church to understand it. Tradition had in a sense been desacralized. This meant that the Protestant was theoretically immune to arguments from tradition and at times this immunity needed to be claimed.⁶⁷ But in practice he was very concerned about tradition. His greatest need was to establish his pedigree: had the whole church erred for more than a thousand years?⁶⁸ Although it was theoretically possible with the *sola scriptura* to claim that it had indeed erred from the second century this was not a position that appealed to many, though some did adopt it.⁶⁹ The prime need of the Protestant was to establish a continuity between his teaching and that of the historical church.⁷⁰ It was generally agreed that novelty was automatically error.⁷¹ Calvin could counter the charge of novelty by retorting that his teaching was new only to those for whom Christ and the gospel were new⁷² but in practice he saw the necessity of fighting on

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the field of tradition. His encyclopaedic knowledge of the fathers was carefully directed to two ends. The Catholic Church claimed that its teaching was *semper eadem* and this was an extremely vulnerable position as well as a powerful polemical point. Calvin and his fellow Protestant scholars sought to demonstrate the falsity of the claim. They also sought to show the harmony of their own teaching with that of the early church. Thus, although tradition was not normative, there was constant appeal to the consensus of the early fathers.⁷³

⁶³ Cf. S. L. Greenslade, *The English Reformers and the Fathers of the Church* (Oxford, 1960), 7-9; 'The English Reformers and the Councils of the Church', *Oecumenica* 1957, 99f. and 'The Authority of the Tradition of the Early Church in Early Anglican Thought', *Oecumenica* 1971/2, 16f.

⁶⁴ W. M. Southgate, *John Jewel and the Problem of Doctrinal Authority* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962) follows Tavad's interpretation (pp. 61-90) but this is rejected by J. E. Booty, *John Jewel as Apologist of the Church of England* (London, 1963), 130-49, following S. L. Greenslade, *op. cit.*, 8f.

⁶⁵ *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* V. vii, x.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* I. x. 14; V. liv. 10.

⁶⁷ Calvin, *Inst.* II. iv. 3; III. v. 10; III. xv. 2; IV. xv. 7. But Calvin was very reluctant to admit that he had departed from the consensus of the fathers. Cf. *39 Articles*, no. 19.

⁶⁸ Henry VIII's question, cf. J. N. Bakhuizen van den Brink, *art. cit.* in n. 38, 45f. Some Catholics were prepared to reject the scholastic theology (O. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, 12).

⁶⁹ In 1531 Sebastian Frank described the fathers as those wolves of whom Paul spoke in Acts xx. (S. L. Greenslade, *op. cit.*, 4f.; cf. G. Tavad, *op. cit.*, 216f.).

⁷⁰ This is clearly shown in O. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, 1-20. Cf. J. M. Headley, *op. cit.*, 100-3, where it is argued that Luther differed from other Protestants here.

⁷¹ E.g. Jewel, cited in F. J. Taylor, 'Scripture and Tradition in the Anglican Reformation', in *Scripture and Tradition*, Ed. F. W. Dillistone (London, 1955), 87. Even the revolutionary Anabaptists sought to *return* to Scripture.

⁷² *Inst.*, *Praefatio*.

⁷³ On the use of tradition in the 16th century, cf. P. Polman, *L'élément historique dans la controverse religieuse du XVIe siècle* (Gembloux, 1932).

An example from the Lutheran side shows how positive a Protestant could be in his attitude to tradition. Martin Chemnitz published between 1565 and 1573 a lengthy reply to the Council of Trent in which he rejected the supplementary view as a theological Pandora's box from which any doctrine could be proved. He distinguished eight types of tradition, seven of which he was prepared to accept. The eighth type of tradition, which he rejected, was that concerning faith and morals which could not be proved from Scripture. Of rites it was only required that they be consonant with Scripture and not contrary to Christian liberty.⁷⁴

But in due course the typical Protestant attitude came to be more like that of the famous aphorism of William Chillingworth: 'The Bible, I say, the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants.' The same Chillingworth, it must be remembered, had for a while become a Roman Catholic because he believed that the Roman doctrine was conformable to the fathers while Protestantism was not.⁷⁵ It was the success of Bossuet and those like him which forced seventeenth-century Protestants to loosen their ties with the patristic tradition. By the end of the century this process was largely complete.⁷⁶ It was not until the Tractarians that Western non-Roman Catholic Christians would seek to base their doctrine on the early centuries. With their appeal to the Vincentian canon they genuinely attempted to return to the coincidence view.⁷⁷ The outcome clearly demonstrated that this view was no longer viable.⁷⁸ If this was so for Tractarianism it applied *a fortiori* to traditional Protestantism. A deeper knowledge of the early history of the church had shown that the sweeping claims made by the Reformers for the identity of their teaching with that of the early church were not tenable. But no basic change in theoretical position followed as the Reformers' principle of authority was *logically* compatible with a disowning of the entire theology of the church from the close of the New Testament, though they themselves would have repudiated such an attitude.

The Reformers unequivocally rejected the teaching authority of the Roman Catholic Church. This left open the question of who should interpret Scripture. The Reformation was not a struggle for the right of private judgement. The Reformers feared private judgement almost as much as did the Catholics and were not slow to attack it in its Anabaptist manifestation.⁷⁹ The Reformation principle was not private judgement but the perspicuity of the Scriptures. Scripture was 'sui ipsius interpret' and the simple principle of interpreting individual passages by the whole was to lead to unanimity in understanding.⁸⁰ This came close to creating anew the infallible church. The Roman church was no longer a true church but the synagogue of Satan⁸¹ and the true church (*i.e.* that not under the dominion of the antichristian papacy but controlled by Scripture) ought not to err in any but non-essentials as the Scriptures are plain. Error in the church remained possible but it ought to be resolvable by reference to Scripture.⁸² It was this belief in the clarity of Scripture that made the early disputes between

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⁷⁴ *Examinis Concilii Tridentini opus integrum* cited in N. Sykes, *op. cit.*, 87-95; Y. M. J. Congar, *op. cit.*, 145.

⁷⁵ O. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, 15f.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 74-7.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 87f. It is noteworthy how Vincent was largely ignored in the middle ages, became very popular with the Catholic Reformation, was adopted by the Tractarians and was rejected as inadequate by Newman in his Essay (A. d'Alès, 'La fortune du "Commonitorium"', *Recherches de science religieuse* 26, 1936, 334f.).

⁷⁸ Cf. G. V. Bennett, 'Patristic Tradition in Anglican Thought, 1660-1900', *Oecumenica* 1971/2, 78-85.

⁷⁹ *1st Helvetic Confession* (1536), art. 26; *39 Articles*, nos. 24, 34.

⁸⁰ *1st Helvetic Confession*, art. 2; *2nd Helvetic Confession* ii. 1; cf. *Westminster Confession* (1647) i. 9f.

⁸¹ Calvin, *Inst.* IV. ii; *French Confession of Faith*, art. 28.

⁸² *1st Scots Confession*, Preface.

Protestants so fierce. This theory seemed plausible while the majority of Protestantism held to Lutheran or Calvinist orthodoxy but the seventeenth century saw the beginning of the erosion of these monopolies. But even in 1530 Caspar Schwenckfeld could cynically note that 'the Papists damn the Lutherans; the Lutherans damn the Zwinglians; the Zwinglians damn the Anabaptists and the Anabaptists damn all others.'⁸³ By the end of the seventeenth century many others saw that it was not possible on the basis of Scripture alone to build up a detailed orthodoxy commanding general assent. The Interregnum in England and other experience showed where private judgment could lead. Years of religious controversy and strife led to the Latitudinarian approach which considerably extended the area of non-essentials. This attitude was reinforced by pietism with its reaction against the deadness of orthodoxy. In the next century birth was given to a movement of evangelicalism which was fervently orthodox but which extended the field of non-essentials wider than the Reformers. This tendency has continued to the present day when the various evangelical confessions of faith are all noteworthy for their extreme brevity.⁸⁴ Evangelicalism has retained a belief in the perspicuity of Scripture but confined it to a fairly narrow area of basic doctrine.

THE CATHOLIC REFORMATION: THE SUPPLEMENTARY VIEW

The Catholic Church fought to defend its teaching against the reformers. The traditional position, that the teaching of the church is normative, was strongly reiterated. The church naturally denied that its teaching was contradictory to Scripture. That much of it was not to be found in Scripture was harder to deny. The obvious reply to such a charge was an appeal to supplementary tradition. This is precisely what happened and from the end of the sixteenth century to the nineteenth century the supplementary view was unchallenged in the Catholic Church.⁸⁵ This meant that the initial position of the material sufficiency and formal insufficiency of Scripture (the coincidence view) had passed into a dichotomy between a belief in the formal and material sufficiency of Scripture (the ancillary view) and the formal and material insufficiency of Scripture (the supplementary view).

That the supplementary view reigned supreme in Rome from the end of the sixteenth century is agreed by all, but fierce controversy has raged over the teaching of the Council of Trent. That Trent taught the supplementary view was soon generally accepted, with the help of the catechetical work of Peter Canisius, and before long this was Catholic orthodoxy. But in the nineteenth century this interpretation of Trent began to be questioned.⁸⁶ In more recent times Father J. R. Geiselman and many others have vigorously argued that the Tridentine decree is compatible with the coincidence view. The first draft of the decree on Scripture and tradition contained two controversial clauses: that the truth and (moral) discipline of the gospel were contained partly ('partim') in written books and partly ('partim') in unwritten traditions and

⁸³ *QV* 243.

⁸⁴ E.g. the I.V.F. Basis of Faith.

⁸⁵ J. R. Geiselman, 'Das Konzil von Trient über das Verhältnis der Heiligen Schrift und der nicht geschriebenen Traditionen' in *Die mündliche Überlieferung*, Ed. M. Schmaus (Münich, 1957), 168-93; G. Tavard, *op. cit.*, 244L, cf. 'Tradition in Early Post-Tridentine Theology', *Theological Studies* 23, 1962, 377-405 (A qualification of his earlier work and of Geiselman); J. B. Beumer, 'Die Frage nach Schrift und Tradition bei Robert Bellarmin', *Scholastik* 34, 1959, 15-17, 20-2; H. Holstein, *op. cit.*, 103-9; J. R. Geiselman, *op. cit.*, 108-43, 184-221. Earlier in the 16th century there was a wide variety of Catholic opinion (G. Tavard, *op. cit.*, 113-91; N. Sykes, *op. cit.*, 76f.).

⁸⁶ J. R. Geiselman, *art. cit.*, 194-206.

that Scripture and tradition were to be held *pari pietatis affectu*.⁸⁷ There was strong opposition to the latter phrase but a count yielded 33 votes in favour against 19 in support of alternative formulations. Rearguard opposition to the phrase caused some strife but in due course all its opponents submitted and it entered the final decree of the Fourth

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Session on 8 April 1546.⁸⁸ There was no vote on the former phrase as it was only once questioned, by Angelo Bonucci.⁸⁹ But in the final decree the *partim... partim* had been replaced by *et*. It is on the basis of this change that many now maintain that Trent remained neutral as to the material sufficiency of Scripture and that both the coincidence and supplementary views are compatible with the decree.⁹⁰ This interpretation has been vigorously assaulted from both Catholic and Protestant sides. The Catholic offensive was led by Father H. Lennerz who has demonstrated very convincingly that both the council fathers and post-Tridentine theologians held the supplementary view.⁹¹ But this falls short of demonstration that the decree itself teaches the supplementary view. He also argues that traditions which are 'sine scripto' are by definition not in Scripture and therefore supplementary traditions.⁹² But this argument rests entirely upon the assumption that 'tradition' denotes 'item of doctrine' rather than (for want of a better word) 'container or channel of doctrine'. The context clearly excludes this interpretation.⁹³ Later writers have added nothing substantially new to these arguments.⁹⁴ The evidence seems to indicate that while the supplementary view was dominant at the time the final text of the decree remains neutral as to the material (in)sufficiency of Scripture.⁹⁵

⁸⁷ G. Tavard, *op. cit.*, 195-209; N. Sykes, *op. cit.*, 77-87; H. Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent* II (London, 1961), 73-87.

⁸⁸ *Denz.* 783.

⁸⁹ Bonucci was the only one actually to question those words in the draft but Jacob Nacchianti had raised similar objections before the appearance of the draft (J. R. Geiselman, *art. cit.*, 149f.).

⁹⁰ J. R. Geiselman, *art. cit.*, 133-66; P. de Vooght, 'Ecriture et tradition', *Istina* 5, 1958, 183-96; G. Tavard, *op. cit.*, 207-9; H. Holstein, 'La tradition d'après le concile de Trente', *Recherches de science religieuse* 47, 1959, 387-90; P. Lengsfeld, *Überlieferung* (Paderborn, 1960), 118-26; J. R. Geiselman, *op. cit.*, 91-107, 143-65; J. Beumer, 'Die mündliche Überlieferung als Glaubensquelle' in *Handbuch der Dogmengeschichte* 1. 4, Ed. M. Schmaus *et. al.* (Freiburg *et. al.*, 1962), 81-4; Y. M. J. Congar, *op. cit.*, 164-9; K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations* VI (London *et. al.*, 1969), 106f. These by no means all accept Geiselman's position in its totality but they are agreed that Trent does not explicitly teach the material insufficiency of Scripture.

⁹¹ 'Scriptura sola?', *Gregorianum* 40, 1959, 38-53. Note especially the statement of the Catechism of the Council of Trent, *Prooemium* 12: 'Omnis autem doctrinae ratio, quae fidelibus tradenda sit, verbo Dei continetur, quod in Scripturam Traditionesque distributum est' (*art. cit.*, 45, *my italics*). Lennerz argues convincingly that the change was not brought about by opposition to the concept of *partim... partim*. A really convincing explanation of the reason for the change has yet to appear.

⁹² 'Sine scripto traditiones', *Gregorianum* 40, 1959, 624-35. Cf. 'Scriptura et traditio in decreto 4. sessionis Concilii Tridentini', *Gregorianum* 42, 1961, 517-22, which does little more than reiterate the arguments of the first two articles.

⁹³ The decree declares that the truth and discipline of the gospel are contained 'in libris scriptis et sine scripto traditionibus'. This shows that traditions are seen as 'containers' of doctrine, not the doctrine itself. Cf. M. Bevenot, 'Traditiones in the Council of Trent', *Heythrop Journal* 4, 1963, 333-47.

⁹⁴ *QV* 244-7; R. Daunis, *art. cit.*, 139-52; M. W. Anderson, 'Trent and Justification (1546): A Protestant Reflection', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 21, 1968, 385-92. Oberman rejects the suggestion that *partim ... partim* is a Nominalist formula, but this does not materially affect Geiselman's case. Oberman also quotes Jedin as if he supported him (*QV* 245, n. 3) while he only maintains that the majority opinion at Trent was in accord with the supplementary view (*op. cit.*, 75, 92).

⁹⁵ The question has been raised of whether Geiselman is claiming that the council fathers were inspired to say more than they understood. But the issue is not whether the decree can mean more than they meant, which would

There was also debate at Trent about the scope of tradition. It is noteworthy that the council declined to name any specific traditions but confined itself to referring to them in general. The final draft also significantly limits itself to traditions dictated by Christ or the Holy Spirit to the apostles, pertaining to faith and morals and preserved by unbroken succession in the Catholic Church. Some had wanted to include ecclesiastical as well as apostolic traditions and others had wanted to add rites and usages.

The supplementary view provided an answer to the Protestant charge that the church's teaching went beyond Scripture. In practice the Bible faded into the background and did not cause further trouble for Catholic theology until recent times. But much trouble was caused by the relation between tradition and the ecclesiastical teaching as it came to be seen that they contradicted one another. This was especially serious in the light of the belief that the teaching of the church was *semper eadem*.⁹⁶ The Reformers had pointed to many contradictions between Catholic doctrine and that of Augustine and the fathers but the Protestants could easily be written off as heretics. More serious was the Jansenist controversy. Jansenism, like earlier Baianism, was less obviously heretical and seemed to be maintaining the traditional Catholic position. In the seventeenth century many Jansenists felt themselves to be in the invidious position of having to choose between Augustine (the tradition *par excellence*) and the teaching of the Church.⁹⁷ At the same time orthodox Catholics came to see that Augustine was not sound on all points and so began to loosen their commitment to him.⁹⁸ These problems were further exacerbated by the rise of a historical criticism which challenged many traditional arguments. For some time Catholic doctrine had been traced back to the apostles by a series of pseudepigraphs such as the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius and Pseudo-Ignatius. As these were shown to be spurious the line became less clear.⁹⁹ Furthermore, historical study of the doctrine of the Trinity in the ante-Nicene fathers showed that their teaching was not as unequivocally orthodox as had been imagined.¹⁰⁰ It became clear that tradition had changed over the years and it seemed to have been plainly erroneous at times. As the weakness of tradition

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came to be seen there was a growing reliance on naked ecclesiastical teaching. A doctrine of development was evolved to meet the demands of this new situation.¹⁰¹ The alternative, a doctrine of post-apostolic revelation to the *magisterium*, was mooted in some quarters but met

be theological speculation, but the purely historical question of whether or not they ended up by saying less than they could have said, or maybe even wanted to say.

⁹⁶ O. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, 1-20. Cf. the claim of Bossuet that something held by all Christians cannot flow from any other source than the apostles (N. Sykes, *op. cit.*, 107).

⁹⁷ L. Ceysens, 'Le drame de conscience augustinien des premiers jansénistes' in *Augustinus Magister* II (Paris, 1954), 1069-76.

⁹⁸ O. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, 49-73. Cf. especially the story on 53.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 58-60. For the damage done by historical criticism in general, cf. *ibid.*, 58-68; N. Sykes, *op. cit.*, 106-8.

¹⁰¹ It should be noted that the problem did not arise with the mariological definitions of the 19th and 20th centuries (cf. *QV* 253). This motivation (the awareness of the material insufficiency of the early tradition) is explicitly acknowledged by Karl Rahner (*op. cit.*, 105f., 109f.).

its end with the declaration in 1907 of the decree *Lamentabili* that revelation was completed with the apostles.¹⁰²

THE DEVELOPMENT OF DOCTRINE: THE UNFOLDING VIEW

The germs of a doctrine of development can be discerned in the sixteenth century and earlier but it was not until Newman that this concept became prominent. It is important to note why this happened. As an awareness of the insufficiency of Scripture necessitated the supplementary view, so an awareness of the insufficiency of the (early) tradition gave birth to the unfolding view. From the seventeenth century it became apparent that the early tradition was not sufficient to support the contemporary teaching of the church. But although the confident claims of a Bossuet might be muted the old position remained, at least in theory. Mabillon and the Maurists did not yet have a theory of change although in practice they accepted it.¹⁰³ A variety of devices, such as the *disciplina arcani* or the interpolation of ancient writings by heretics, were used to explain the variations in Catholic doctrine.¹⁰⁴ The most notorious was that of Father Hardouin who claimed that apart from the Latin New Testament and six classical writers all that survived from antiquity was a forgery of the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries!¹⁰⁵ Although few followed him, his desperate measures showed the need to explain the evident changes in Catholic doctrine. It was to this need that Newman produced his doctrine of development, the means by which he was able to become a Catholic and retain his historical integrity.

The doctrine of development immensely simplifies the task of the Catholic apologist. A distinction is often made today between implicit and explicit tradition. Theories of development mean that current Catholic dogma need only be shown to be implicit in the earlier tradition. This shifts the emphasis onto the *magisterium* which, always the preserving and interpreting norm, has now more clearly become a *de facto* source.¹⁰⁶ The Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus* appealed for the doctrine of the Assumption to the unique consensus of the church *today*.¹⁰⁷ The doctrine of implicit tradition means that the tradition of the church is to be found at its richest in its most developed form—the present teaching of the church. Pope Pius IX could say that he himself was the tradition.¹⁰⁸ The task of the Catholic theologian is to demonstrate that the teaching of the *magisterium* is the true tradition.¹⁰⁹

Two rival assertions about this new situation need to be evaluated. From the Protestant side it has been claimed that the treatment of the contemporary teaching of the church as a *de facto* source is a dangerous innovation.¹¹⁰ But such a procedure is not altogether new. Augustine clearly enunciated the principle that what is observed by the whole church can fairly be held to have been enjoined by the apostles.¹¹¹ Many others followed him.¹¹² There is nothing new

¹⁰² Denz. 2021. For the history of the idea, cf. O. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, 21-48; G. Tavard, *op. cit.*, 151-71. For a modern Catholic approach to this question, cf. N. Lash, *Change in Focus* (London, 1973), 16.

¹⁰³ O. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, 66.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 67-73.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 40-52.

¹⁰⁶ QV 253f. Cf. Y. M. J. Congar, *op. cit.*, 200-3; N. Lash, *op. cit.*, 126.

¹⁰⁷ N. Sykes, *op. cit.*, 112-5; QV 253.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Y. M. J. Congar, *op. cit.*, 206f.

¹⁰⁹ QV 251, 254; G. Tavard, 'Scripture and Tradition: Sources or Source?', *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 1, 1964, 448.

¹¹⁰ QV 242, 251-4.

¹¹¹ Cf. n. 47, above.

in the *de facto* treatment of the contemporary teaching of the church as a source of doctrine and practice where Scripture and tradition fail. But this does not mean that there is no novelty in the unfolding view. From Augustine to Bossuet it was assumed

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that what the contemporary church held was Catholic because it had always been held by the church. The contemporary teaching of the church was a source because explicit apostolic tradition was to be found there. The modern view is very different. The contemporary teaching of the church is normative even although it is only *implicit* in Scripture and earlier tradition. This must be weighed against modern Catholic claims to have returned to the coincidence view.¹¹³ It is again maintained that Scripture contains the entire Catholic faith but not in the explicit sense of the classical coincidence view. Scripture and tradition can now be said to coincide because both have alike in practice become materially insufficient.¹¹⁴ The alleged material sufficiency of Scripture and tradition is meant only in the sense that the present teaching of the church (*e.g.* the doctrine of the Assumption) is implicit in both. In practice this implies the material insufficiency of Scripture and tradition alike, though this is masked by theories of development.¹¹⁵ A dogma like that of the Assumption condemns Scripture and early tradition to material insufficiency in practice. The unfolding view is not a return from the supplementary to the coincidence view but rather an advance beyond the supplementary view in that tradition has now also been found wanting. It represents not a renewed confidence in Scripture but a loss of confidence in tradition. The requirement that Catholic dogma need only be implicit in Scripture and early tradition¹¹⁶ is both a frank recognition of the ancient *de facto* use of the teaching of the contemporary church as a source and a protection of this use from the ravages of historical criticism, while all the time maintaining the semblance of an apostolic source of Catholic doctrine.

THE PRESENT SITUATION

There have been many drastic changes in Protestantism over the last two hundred years.¹¹⁷ The first and greatest change has come through the rise of the critical historical method and of biblical criticism in particular. While the effects of this have been by no means uniform it would be true to say that even the most conservative of scholarly Protestants have not been unaffected in their approach to the Bible by the methods of historical criticism. Nonetheless

¹¹² Bellarmine, *De verbo Dei* iv. 9, cited in J. N. Bakhuizen van den Brink, *art. cit.* in n. 47, 275; Bossuet as in n. 96, above; Y. M. J. Congar, *op. cit.*, 54, n. 1; 203, n. 3.

¹¹³ For an account of recent Catholic views, cf. J. P. Mackey, *The Modern Theology of Tradition* (London, 1962), 150-69. Some mediaeval theologians held that all was at least implicit in Scripture (J. B. Beumer, *art. cit.*, in n. 49, 35f.) but they did not proceed to apply this distinction also to tradition. They used the distinction to present the supplementary view as the coincidence view while the modern theories use it to present the unfolding view as the coincidence view.

¹¹⁴ *QV* 252f, K. Rahner, *op. cit.*, 105f., 109f.

¹¹⁵ It is noteworthy that the belief in the material sufficiency of Scripture and the corresponding interpretation of Trent appeared in the Catholic Church at the same time as the doctrine of development.

¹¹⁶ Cf. E. Dhanis, 'Revelation explicite et implicite', *Gregorianum* 34, 1953, 236f.

¹¹⁷ For reasons of space, this essay has not considered the Orthodox attitude. Cf. C. Konstantinidis, 'The Significance of the Eastern and Western Traditions within Christendom', *Ecumenical Review* 12, 1960, 192-8; T. Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (Harmondsworth, 1963), 203-15; Y. M. J. Congar, *op. cit.*, 101-7; H. Cunliffe-Jones, 'Scripture and Tradition in Orthodox Theology' in *Holy Book and Holy Tradition*, Ed. F. F. Bruce & E. G. Rupp (Manchester, 1968), 186-209.

the most fundamental divisions within Protestantism are those arising from the issue of the authority of Scripture. But for our present purpose it is important to note that the decline in the authority of the Bible in many quarters has come from a turning from authority and revelation in general rather than from a downgrading of Scripture *vis-à-vis* church or tradition.

Secondly, historical studies have clearly shown the existence; desirability and even necessity of development in Christian doctrine.¹¹⁸ Our teaching today is not, and cannot be, a simple summary of Scripture. Twentieth-century theology, even when most firmly based on Scripture, is clearly the outcome of nineteen centuries of Christian thought. But this awareness does not mean that Protestants have to abandon the *sola scriptura* in the sense that Scripture is the sole norm, the *norma normans non normata*. Development there may be, but this development is neither normative nor irreformable.

Thirdly, a more positive attitude to the concept of tradition has arisen in many Protestant circles.¹¹⁹ The Reformers used the word 'tradition(s)' in a predominant-

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ly negative fashion. They were human additions to the divine message of Scripture which were at best *adiaphora*, at worst anti-Christian. In other words, 'tradition' meant supplementary tradition. The Fourth World Conference on Faith and Order of the W.C.C. at Montreal in 1963 produced a report, *Scripture, Tradition and Traditions*, which sets forth a more positive concept of tradition.¹²⁰ It defines 'Tradition' as 'the Gospel itself, transmitted from generation to generation in and by the Church, Christ Himself present in the life of the Church'.¹²¹ It also states 'Thus we can say that we exist as Christians by the Tradition of the Gospel... testified in Scripture, transmitted in and by the Church through the power of the Holy Spirit. Tradition taken in this sense is actualized in the preaching of the Word, in the administration of the sacraments and worship, in Christian teaching and theology, and in mission and witness to Christ by the lives of the members of the Church. What is transmitted in the process of tradition is the Christian faith, not only as a sum of tenets, but as a living reality transmitted through the operation of the Holy Spirit. We can speak of the Christian Tradition (with a capital T), whose content is God's revelation and self-giving in Christ, present in the life of the Church'.¹²²

The stress here is on tradition as an all-embracing concept rather than something opposed to Scripture. In this sense Tradition both precedes Scripture and includes it.¹²³ This new approach would not command the assent of all Protestants and there would be considerable differences in how it is to be understood. But it is important to note that it need not involve a contradiction of the older position. The positive approach avoids an unnecessary antithesis between Scripture and tradition and rejects a narrow biblicism which sees no role for tradition. While the Montreal statement can be accused of obscuring the unique and normative

¹¹⁸ G. A. Lindbeck, 'The Problem of Doctrinal Development and Contemporary Protestant Theology', *Concilium* 1, 1967, 64-72.

¹¹⁹ O. Cullmann, *The Early Church* (London, 1956); K. E. Skydsgaard, 'Scripture and Tradition', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 9, 1956, 337-58; J. P. Mackey, *op. cit.*, 170-92; Y. M. J. Congar, *op. cit.*, 459-93.

¹²⁰ Ed. P. C. Rodger & L. Vischer, *op. cit.*, 50-61.

¹²¹ Para 39.

¹²² Paras 45f.

¹²³ Paras 42, 45, 50.

nature of Scripture it does not mean that Protestants as a whole are willing to accord a normative status either to extra-biblical tradition or to the pronouncements of the Church. To recognise tradition as an important channel of doctrine is not the same as a return to the coincidence view.¹²⁴

Finally, the problem of the plurality of 'traditions'¹²⁵ has combined with modern biblical studies to focus attention especially on the question of hermeneutics. There is a dominant concern today with the problems of the interpretation of Scripture in terms of contemporary language and culture. But while this question has to some extent upstaged that of Scripture and tradition it has not fundamentally changed the situation. Despite all the changes, advances and regressions in Protestant theology, despite the many changes in emphasis and nuance, it still falls basically within the bounds of the ancillary view. Scripture is still the norm to which appeal can be made against any decisions of church or tradition. This remains true even in many circles where the authority of Scripture has largely waned. It is the authority of revelation in general that has suffered and the relative positions of Scripture, tradition and church are little affected.

Recent Catholic thought on this question has drawn much closer to Protestantism. The First Vatican Council (1870) confined itself to reiterating the decisions of Trent.¹²⁶ The Second Vatican Council presents a very different picture. The dogmatic constitution *De divina revelatione* (18 November 1965) shows abundant marks of *aggiornamento*. Two points in particular can be noted.¹²⁷ First, revelation and tradition are defined in dynamic and personal terms, as in the Montreal report. The propositional side of revelation is neither denied nor

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ignored, but it is seen to be inadequate on its own. An all-embracing concept of tradition similar to that of Montreal, is taught by the constitution. Secondly, the council was careful to avoid a definite position on the material (in)sufficiency of Scripture, in the light of contemporary disagreement within the Catholic Church. Since the council there has been further development in Catholic thought. Some contemporary Catholic theologians are turning from the idea of development. There is a tendency to stress rather the change in ecclesiastical doctrine from one cultural situation to another.¹²⁸ This brings modern Catholic thought into close contact with Protestant thinking on the question of hermeneutics. But it leaves unaltered the basic point of controversy. The normative status of ecclesiastical dogmas and decisions is still a point of dispute between Catholics and Protestants. Again, Catholic thought may be moving away from the model of development, but a doctrine like the Assumption still condemns Catholic theology to the *de facto* material insufficiency of both Scripture and tradition. This can only be met by some sort of unfolding view in which the church makes explicit what is implicit in Scripture (and tradition).

¹²⁴ *QV*; J. F. Peter, 'The Place of Tradition in Reformed Theology', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 18, 1965, 303-7.

¹²⁵ *Scripture, Tradition and Traditions*, Paras 50-5.

¹²⁶ *Denz.* 1787f. For a difference in nuance between Trent and Vatican 1, cf. G. Tavard, *art. cit.*, 445-59.

¹²⁷ E. Flesseman-van Leer, 'Present-day Frontiers in the Discussion about Tradition' in Ed. F. F. Bruce & E. G. Rupp, *op. cit.*, 154-70.

¹²⁸ N. Lash, *op. cit.*, 128-82.

It is true that Protestants are also forced to concede the existence of development, but there is a basic difference in that they are not committed in advance to any particular developments and Scripture remains the sole norm by which to test developments.¹²⁹ It is true that Protestants recognise the role that the church necessarily and properly plays in the development and testing of doctrine, but nonetheless they do not accord the church a normative or infallible' role. Thus, when all is said and done, the issues between Catholic and Protestant today, as at the Reformation, are the authority of the church and the normative role of Scripture.¹³⁰ Historical studies have forced both sides to accept the existence of development (or some similar concept) and to modify their views of Scripture and of tradition, but the basic point of controversy remains the same.

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¹²⁹ G. A. Lindbeck, *art. cit.*

¹³⁰ E. Flesseman-van Leer, *art. cit.*, 160f., 167.