

have even made a charge against her that she will never be converted because she *cannot* change. The doctrines of the Church are secured by promised assistance of Christ: "I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Matt 28:20; and also by the promised assistance of the Holy Spirit: "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (Jn 14:26).

Hence, when difficulties or disputes about doctrine arise, which call for the decision of the Church, she assembles her Bishops in Council, has recourse to revelation both written and unwritten; and having carefully and diligently examined, she then decides by virtue of her divinely authorized commission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28:19). "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of the Lord" (Acts 20:28). Now in this decision, by virtue of the express promises of Christ, the Church is divinely assisted. Thus, in the first Council, held in Jerusalem, the Apostles began their decision in these words: "For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us..." (Acts 15:28). Hence, how perfectly secure are Catholics in relying on the authoritative teaching of the Church! Nothing can be more secure; for God has given His word for it. And though "heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (Mk 13:31). God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should repent. Has he said, and will he not

do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it? (Num 23:19).

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Pamphlet 541

Sacred Tradition in Holy Scripture

The Word of God consists of *all those truths which he has revealed to mankind*, whether written in Scripture or not. What the Apostles taught by writing, is *Sacred Scripture*; what they taught without writing is called *Sacred Tradition*. What then is Tradition?

Tradition is the *handing down of revealed truths not contained or not clearly contained in Scripture*. The Sacred Scriptures do not contain all that Christ taught. After the Last Supper, Christ said: "I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you." (John 16:12-15). Here we see that many things were to be taught by the Holy Spirit, after His coming on the day of Pentecost. The Scripture also tells us that Jesus, after His resurrection, taught many things concerning the Kingdom of God, i.e., the Kingdom of His Church: "To them he presented himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:2). Now, where is all this written? Saint John concludes his Gospel saying: "But there are also many other things which

Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written” (21:25). Therefore all is not written in Scripture. Indeed, Protestants themselves believe many traditional doctrines; for example, the lawfulness of keeping Sunday as a holy day, instead of Saturday, infant baptism, the inspiration of Scripture, etc.

What is the principle of Tradition?

The principle of Tradition is the invariable rule that every generation adheres firmly to the doctrines received from the preceding generation and carefully commits *the very same doctrines* to the succeeding generation. The Apostles established this principle; and the efficacious means to preserve it. Thus they commanded the *Pastors* whom they ordained and the faithful at large to preserve and hand down the doctrines committed to them: “O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. Avoid the godless chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge, for by professing it some have missed the mark as regards the faith” (1 Tim 6:20). “Follow the pattern of the sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus; guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us” (2 Tim 1:13-14)...” But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it” (2 Tim 3:14).

He also commands *that the doctrines be handed down*: and that *means be taken* for their being still further handed down to succeeding generations. “What you have

heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim 2:2).

So far the Apostles instructions lay an obligation upon Pastors of adhering to and of handing down the doctrines committed to them; but the same obligation of adhering to the doctrines delivered, he also lays upon the faithful at large: “So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter’ (2 Thess 2:15). Saint Jude tells us he wrote his Epistle purposely to enforce this duty on the faithful: “Beloved, being very eager to write to you of our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (3).

Not content with these strict and positive commands, the Apostles were very earnest, moreover, in warning the faithful against all new doctrines and the teachers of them: “Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings; for it is well that the heart be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited their adherents” (Heb 13:9) “I appeal to you, brethren, to take note of those who create dissensions and difficulties, in opposition to the doctrine which you have been taught; avoid them” (Rom 16:17). “As for a man who is factious, after admonishing him once or twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is perverted and sinful; he is self-condemned” (Tit 3:10-11). Saint Paul goes so far as to pronounce an anathema against anyone who shall teach anything other than what has been handed down: “

But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, If any one is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed” (Gal 1:8-9). The principle of Tradition could not be taught *more clearly or more strongly*, than in these texts.

It is evident from these texts that the rule of Tradition was established by the Apostles as a means of preserving and handing down the deposit of faith.

The Catholic Church has always followed this rule to the letter. Proof is found in the writings of the Church Fathers and in the Acts and Professions of Church Councils recorded down through the ages. The Church continues this rule in the present age. No trace has ever been found of there ever having been any changes on this point; indeed, it is by this rule, the Apostolic principle that the Church has always condemned new doctrines.

The Church has never changes or corrupted the Apostolic Traditions. The writings of the Church Fathers show that the Church *has always been the same*. The principle of the Church has always been, as it is now, never to alter, add to, or take from, the body of doctrines received from Jesus and His Apostles; but always “to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). It is the universal character of the Catholic Church that she has always been utterly averse to novelties; always solicitous in detecting, and firm in condemning all new doctrines. Her enemies