

Christian dispensation. Nor again, shall I dwell on that great tradition, which is the corner stone of Protestantism, the denial of all tradition—the doctrine that the Bible is the sole rule of religious belief and practice, and that everything bearing on Christian faith and worship which is not to be found within its four corners, is to be regarded as the doctrine and commandment of men. My concern is rather with certain historical traditions, which are tenaciously held by those who reject the claims of the Catholic Church, and which form with many persons a principal reason for such rejection.

There are, as I have said, many traditions. There are true traditions, and there are false traditions; and they are true or false, according to the truth or falseness of their origin. As no stream can rise higher than its source, and as the strength of a chain cannot exceed that of its first link: so the authenticity of any tradition must depend upon its first beginnings.

Now there are certain popular traditions held in our midst to day, which, in the cause of truth, I would fain see shattered. They are wide spread. They have been implicitly believed for generations. They are received as absolute truth by thousands; and they form, among English speaking people at any rate, an immense obstacle to the Catholic religion. So long as they are accepted as facts, it is almost useless to look for the extensive spread of Catholicism amongst us. It is, therefore, all important, in the cause of truth, that they be shown to be unfounded. Let us then make some enquiry concerning them.

The first tradition that I am going to examine, is the belief, widely held among those who reject the claims of the Catholic Church, that, previous to the time of Martin Luther, the Bible was practically an unknown book, and would have continued to be so, had it not been providentially discovered by Luther in the town of Erfurt, in Germany, about the year 1507. The circumstances of this discovery are set out in great detail in what I may call the authorized version of this tradition. A picture not