

the innovations of earlier and later times. We are thus led to rest our faith upon the Word of God, interpreted by the Holy Spirit, as understood by the primitive Christians, and therefore we cannot acknowledge the necessity of an infallible Judge, as we are satisfied that it is a mere expedient for the preservation of external unity at the expense of divine truth.

But there is another argument which has been put forward in proof of the Infallibility of the Church, and that is Tradition, or the historical testimony of the Fathers on this point. It is alleged that the Church herself has always claimed this privilege, that the most eminent writers of the Church in every age bear witness to the fact that such a principle was held in their times, and that this circumstance forms a strong evidence of the truth of the principle. Now we might reply that this is no proof of the divine origin of any doctrine, as our faith is founded on the Word of God, and not on the opinions of the Fathers. But after all that has been written on the subject, there is really little or no evidence to be found in the Works of the Fathers in favor of the Roman dogma of Infallibility. Not one of them expressly asserts such a doctrine, while there are numerous passages in their writings which are absolutely inconsistent with it. They do, indeed, strongly insist on the principle of Church authority, and on the duty of obedience to the Pastors of the Church, in opposition to the innovations of schismatical teachers; but it is a very remarkable circumstance, that, in all their controversies with the heretics of their times, the Fathers never appeal to the decision of any living infallible Judge, much less to the Bishop of Rome, as invested with divine authority to determine all controversies of faith, which is a plain proof that they were totally ignorant of