

Many people seem to think that the Bible alone is all-sufficient for instruction and that the interpretation of its words can be left, and ought to be left, to each man's private judgment.

But two things concerning the Bible are evident:

(1) That *historically* the Church was in existence and possessed, and propagated very widely the Faith, before there was any book called the "New Testament."

The first of the Books now contained in the New Testament—the Gospel according to St. Matthew—was written not less than fifteen years after Christ's Ascension, while the last, and that one of the most important—St. John's Gospel—was not written till nearly seventy years after that event. For a long time some places had only some books, other places had other books. They were not gathered together till A.D. 170, and the Canon as we now have it was not settled till about the fourth century. Even the Council of Laodicea, in 364, omits the Apocalypse of St. John the Divine.

"Slowly, and with an ever deepening conviction, the Churches received, after trial, and in some cases after doubt and contradiction, the books which we now receive." Dr. Westcott, "Bible in the Church."

(2) That the Scriptures are not, and do not profess to be, a systematic treatise on Christian Doctrine and practice for the teaching of unbelievers or the unlearned.

The Books contained in the New Testament "were written for those who were already members of the Church and had received her primary instruction," and knew about Christian customs. (St. Luke i. 4; 1 Cor. i. 4-7, vi. 2; Heb. v. 12).

Hence—

(1) There are several things, concerning which the Apostles and Evangelists had not occasion to write definitely, that we receive rather from tradition, confirmed, perhaps, by inference of what we find there written, than from any actual command or distinct statement contained in Scripture. *E.g.*,

(a) The observance of Sunday as the Lord's Day;

(b) The baptism of infants.

(c) The admission of women to the full rites of the Church, contrary to Jewish and Eastern custom.

(2) Some doctrines, even of the most fundamental character, have to be gathered from a number of converging statements, and are nowhere enunciated formally as doctrines, *e.g.*, even the doctrine of the "Trinity in Unity."

(3) Scripture itself tells us that there are passages in it which the "unlearned and unstable wrest to their own destruction" (2 Pet. iii. 16).

As a matter of fact, the promulgators of every heresy that has ever arisen in the Church have appealed to passages of Scripture for a confirmation of their own peculiar views. Those who deny the Divinity of our Lord do so as much as others.

Hence it is evident (1) that there was a Teacher before Scripture; and (2) that Scripture even now needs an "Interpreter." The answer of the Ethiopian, when asked by Philip, as he was reading the Scripture, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" "How can I, except some one should guide me?" is applicable to all men at all times. (Acts viii. 30).

And thus we find that Christ gave to the world living teachers. To His Apostles He said, "Teach all nations," and He gave them the promise that the Holy Spirit would lead them into all the truth (St. John xvii. 13), and that He would be with them unto the end of the world (St. Mark xxviii.

20), *i.e.*, not only during their natural lives, but with the body of which they were then the representatives—His Church.

The Faith was "delivered" by Christ and the Holy Spirit, to the "saints," *i.e.*, the Church (Jude 3), and they who were inspired to be the "divinely authorized tongues of the universal body" taught that Faith by word of mouth and by letters written to the churches that they founded.

That Faith was distinct and definite:

(1) It was One. (Eph. iv. 5, 13).

(2) Men were to use the utmost care to continue in it. (1 Cor. vi. 13; 2 Cor. xiii. 5; Col. i. 23, ii. 7).

(3) They were to contend earnestly for it. (Jude 3; Phil. i. 7).

(4) Those who tried to oppose or subvert it were to be expelled from the Church. (Gal. i. 9; 1 Tim. i. 20).

(5) The essential articles of this Faith were already consolidated into some "Form," or creed. (2 Tim. i. 13; Rom. vi. 17).

(6) Those who were commissioned to be teachers (as Timothy and Titus) were to be careful and conform their teaching to these "standards" (Rom. xii. 6). "Proportion of faith," should be "of the faith." (1 Tim. i. 3, vi. 13, 20; 2 Tim. ii. 2, iv. 3; Titus i. 9, iii. 10).

But if there was thus "One Faith" which it was so important to keep "pure and undefiled," it is evident that there must be *One Body* to determine what that Faith is. St. Paul saw danger to "the Faith" in divisions when he said, "Every one of you hath a doctrine, . . . hath a revelation, hath an interpretation" (1 Cor. xiv. 26); and again, "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap up to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and they shall turn away their ears from the truth." (2 Tim. iv. 3).

And so he affirms that—

"THE CHURCH" is "THE PILLAR AND GROUND (OR BASIS) OF THE TRUTH." (1 Tim. iii. 15.)

It is so in declaring, maintaining, guarding, and promulgating the "faith once delivered to the saints"—and the *True Canon* and *True Exposition* of Holy Scripture, as the record in which that Faith was in all its fulness and sufficiency enshrined by inspired men. (See Bishop Wordsworth's Com. on 1 Tim. iii. 15.)

The Church has always believed that "the Faith" was in all its fulness "delivered" to the Apostles, and they were inspired to commit to writing a sufficient record of all that they were commissioned to teach, so that as our Article (vi.) says, "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation."

Thus, as it has been often said,

THE CHURCH TEACHES; SCRIPTURE PROVES.

And what the Church teaches as Articles of the Faith requisite to salvation is embodied in

THE CREEDS,

which "may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture." In other points of doctrine the humble and teachable Christian will gladly be guided by what that branch of the Church to which he belongs teaches through her formularies and by her chief theologians, esteeming it most reasonable to yield "the individual judgment to

that of the whole body, and to those who, inside the Church, are her authorised teachers."

We need not dwell at any length on the other aspects of the Church to which we have alluded above, it will be sufficient if we refer to a few passages of Scripture.

4. The Church is "the Dispenser of the Means of Grace." (2 Cor. v. 19. The ministry of reconciliation comprises—

(1) The Preaching of the Word, which requires duly commissioned teachers. (Rom. x. 15.)

(2) The Administration of the Sacraments. Saint Paul claims that the Ministers of Christ are also "Stewards of the mysteries of God." (1 Cor. iv. 1.)

(4) The Absolution of penitent sinners. (St. John xx. 23, cf. St. Matt. xviii. 17, 18.)

5. "The Educator of elect souls for the Beatific Vision of God in heaven." (Ephesians ii. 19-22, iii. 10-19, iv. 1-13; Col. i. 27; Rom. viii. 23-30.) (The "called" are those who are admitted into Christ's kingdom. (2 Thess. ii. 12; Rom. ix. 24.) So the Catechism teaches all baptized children to say of God the Holy Ghost, "Who sanctifieth me and all the elect people of God."

The Church is a school for instruction in righteousness, as well as in doctrine. "The only great school of virtue existing." The very purpose of the Church is to make men perfect.

6. The Church is to be hereafter Christ's all-glorious Bride. (Rev. xix. 7-9, xxi. 2, 9, cf. Eph. v. 23-32, and Heb. xii. 22.)

And in this "great mystery" we return once more to the first thought of the *perfect unity*, or, rather, oneness betwixt Christ and His Church, and of the necessity of there being but *One Body*, for it is only because according to God's law and the mystery of our being, a man and woman when joined together in the holy estate of matrimony were no more two but "one flesh," that this union is a type of the mystical union between Christ and His Church. "The Church is in Christ, as Eve was in Adam." And her children "are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." (Eph. v. 30.)

REVIEWS.

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND: ITS CONTINUOUS ORGANIC LIFE, AND ITS CATHOLIC RESTORATION. A Lecture by the Rev. Isaac Brock, D.D., Rector of Horton and Canon of St. Luke's Cathedral, Halifax; to which is appended a Sermon, by the same author, on the Three-fold Apostolic Ministry of the Holy Catholic Church. Pp. 38. Price 12c. Halifax: Morton & Co.

Both these statements are sound and well put before the public. In the first it is clearly shown, historically, that the Church of England is, from the outset till now, the same one Church, though she was sullied for a time by Roman influence and attempted usurpation. The second treats the question of Orders, also historically, by seven steps or periods, down to A.D. 110. If we may notice one flaw it is in the sermon (p. 36). John Knox was dead before Presbyterianism was broached in Scotland: its real father there was Andrew Melville, and he imported it from Geneva.

DECLARATION ON THE TRUTH OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

1. It must be evident to thoughtful persons that there are now current certain impressions that Holy Scripture has been discovered not to be worthy of unquestioning belief; and the faith of many Christian people is thereby unsettled.

2. These impressions are manifestly a dishonour to God, as discrediting His faithfulness and truth; and are full of peril to the eternal life of those affected by them, seeing that they undermine all faith in the mystery of Christ, and, indeed, in the supernatural itself.