

manuscript; others have been scholars who thought they knew enough grammar and meter to correct faulty texts. The results of these conjectural emendations are not always encouraging. R.D. Dawe, looking back over the 70 years of Aeschylean scholarship that preceded his *Repertory of Conjectures*, concluded: "The quality of conjectures is not such as to encourage the thought that of all nature's miracles, man is the finest."

Nonetheless, the true sense of a textual tradition includes the corrections and improvements made by intelligent scribes and modern Greek and Latin scholars from Demetrius Triclinius to Erasmus to Bentley and Porson and A.E. Housman all the way down to Roger Dawe and E. Christian Kopff.

Repudiate tradition, and you will never make sense either of the text or of the poetic rhythm — nor of anything else under the sun. A few scholars or geniuses will be charmingly eccentric, but in the absence of tradition, most people will simply become servile tools of a cultural establishment that will not allow any challenge to its authority. "When I use a word," said Mr. Humpty Dumpty on a famous occasion, "it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less." When you break down all traditional order, you do not produce freedom and diversity; you produce the University of Wisconsin which, if it cannot find sufficient ethnic variety among the Germans, Finns, and Poles of the Dairy State, will simply fake a publicity photograph to prove its *total* commitment to uniform diversity.

Tradition, because it is a rival source of authority, provides ammunition to those who would challenge an entrenched regime. Destroy tradition, as the barbarians finally succeeded in doing in the late 60's, and you have an army of lost souls "half a million strong," all wearing the same clothes, smoking the same dope, reciting the same passages from *Siddhartha*, all trudging the same weary trail "to get back to the Garden." The 60's kids-turned-80's entrepreneurs were not the "me" generation; they were only the "me too" generation.

Now, they are running the country and the world, and whoever was elected in November is one of Them — not lifestyle freaks, but moral and cultural freaks, slaves to an anti-Christian and anti-Western ideology they can never doubt because they cannot read or think or even listen, if some alien from another civilization tries to tell them about the world that once existed long ago but not so far away. They are filled with bright ideas and new paradigms; they use words like "innovation" and "change," "progress" and "liberation," the vocabulary of enslavement that keeps us as stupid and docile as a domesticated animal.

In repudiating tradition, in trying to "be ourselves," we cut ourselves off from the knowledge, so painfully acquired, of the past several thousand years. We do not, of course, make it back to the Garden or even to the Cave. We turn ourselves into one of those people being watched on (or watching) daytime television — the guy having an affair with his wife's brother or the "infantilist" truck driver wearing his Mary Jane outfit. In a hell that is beyond Dante's imagining, a hundred million brain-dead slaves watch each other on television every night and day of the week. That is where Descartes' and Zwingli's cult of the individual has led us — to self-annihilation.

We can be free, but only if we put our wills in service (that is, in subjection) to the traditions that Chesterton called "the democracy of the dead," to the God in knowledge of Whom, as Monsignor Knox was taught to say, "standeth eternal life," and "whose service is perfect freedom."

Soul of the River

by *Brendan Galvin*

Slipping around the bend
of an instant, a shy,
wingéd thing, a spindleshanks
for hanging a body on,
If the soul can be seen

when it takes on the color of river ice
or a wall of reeds, shapes itself
to a cedar, then to a place where bark
sloughed off a gray pine trunk,

and the river's never the same
river twice, but a mirror to the eagle's
passing rumor and the now-and-then
of geese jockeying down the air
to announce opening water,

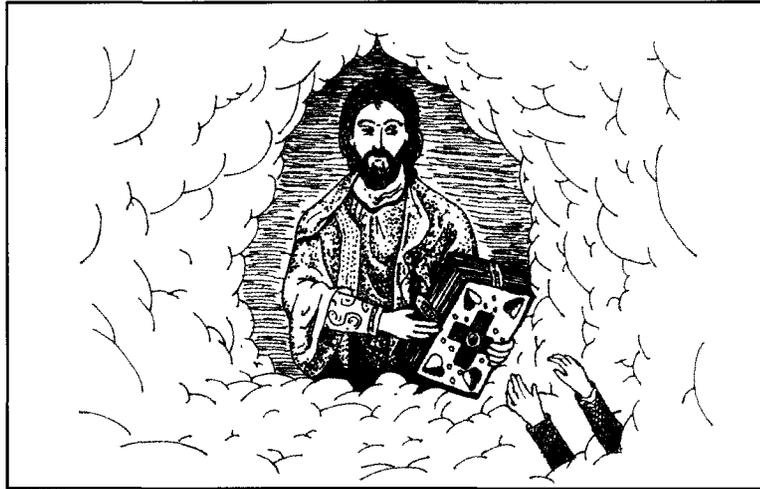
then the soul is the river's constancy,
and you are the soul of the river,
great blue, always near,
even on this winter morning — a lobe
of southern air pushing in until it's April
or October for a few hours again —

ice on the river going, the last
snow under roadside
bittersweet and chokecherry
like edges of seafoam,
the marsh hawk up and hunting,

heron, and you've been hunting, too,
your wet footprints crossing the road,
three toes and a spur, like a line
of tree runes on the asphalt, until that wind
chopping up the bay arrives to erase them.

Tradition, Old and New

by Harold O.J. Brown



H. Ward Sterrett

“Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?” (Matthew 15:3). Jesus had many negative things to say about the dangers of placing excessive emphasis on tradition; in the passage quoted above, he goes on to cite the prophet Isaiah, “In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Isaiah 29:13). Who said anything positive about tradition? The prophet Jeremiah, for one: “Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls” (Jeremiah 6:16). How do we reconcile the warning of Isaiah with the exhortation of Jeremiah?

As a starting point, we must distinguish between tradition as container and tradition as content. This is a difference between the positions of the two great confessional bodies which appear equally devoted to preserving their traditions. Generally speaking, the Eastern Orthodox think of tradition — *paradosis* — literally, the handing down or handing over, as the container that carries the Scripture as its central content. Roman Catholics — and this was the Protestants’ *casus belli* — asserted (or seemed to assert) that tradition stands beside Scripture, presenting a content that supplements Scripture and is equally authoritative. For those who had discovered (or recovered) the principles of *sola scriptura*, a natural reaction was to reject the concept of tradition altogether, without reflecting sufficiently on the fact that they themselves retained old traditions to varying degrees and soon developed new ones for their progeny.

If we simply take the word “tradition” without further qualifi-

cation, Jesus would seem to be saying that all tradition involves transgression. And this, indeed, has been the interpretation of many Protestants, with battle lines drawn up between the camp of those who they think slavishly and uncritically follow whatever has been “*traditum*” (handed down), and who therefore involve themselves in a maze of complex observances, and their own camp, where worship and life are clean and sparse, built only on the Word of God in Scripture. This second camp really does not exist, however, for almost no one attempts to limit teaching and worship to strings of Scripture verses. If we attend a Lutheran or Episcopal service, we see much that reminds us of the Catholic Mass. While repudiating the traditional form of the Mass, even the more austere Reformed and Baptists have their extrabiblical traditions, often taken with extreme seriousness, such as the Sunday evening service and adult Sunday school. No less eminent a Reformer than John Calvin recognized the limits of *sola scriptura* when he warned against limiting theology to collections of Scripture verses strung together.

What then is the Protestant objection to “tradition”? How are we to interpret Jesus’ warning? The problem with the traditionalists is not that Scripture is disregarded, but that it is supplemented. It is not merely that something is added on, but that the additions are deemed necessary for salvation. This was the Protestant charge. Nevertheless, the Protestant Reformers, even the stern John Calvin, preserved much more of the Catholic intellectual tradition than many ostensibly Catholic thinkers do today. They preserved it, but, they would argue, as container, not as content.

When the Protestant Reformation — led by Luther, followed by Calvin and the other Reformers — proclaimed the principle of *sola scriptura*, rejecting tradition as a source of revealed truth,

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