

Tradition as Defined by Wikipedia

- From the Latin *traditionem*, acc. of *traditio* which means "handing over, passing on"
- Beliefs or customs taught by one generation to the next, often orally. For example, we can speak of the tradition of sending birth announcements.
- A set of customs or practices. For example, we can speak of Christmas traditions.

Characteristics of “Tradition”

- Characterized by the *process of reception*- directly from one generation to the next and onwards
- *Understood* from generation to generation without necessarily being clearly recorded in writing
- May be repeated regardless of whether original *intent* is still needed or relevant

Some Examples of Traditions

- Thanksgiving Turkey
- Superstitions/Pre-Game Rituals
- Folk Music & Dance

Christianity is “Traditional”

- In the sense that we have *received* it in a particular context
- Regardless of denomination, each Christian generally does not make Christianity up “from scratch”
- We receive Christianity along with the opinions and interpretations of those who have transmitted it to us- a historical, cultural, and philosophical framework

2 Thessalonians 2:15

13 But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth,

14 to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

15 Therefore, brethren, *stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.*

2 Timothy 1: 13-14

13 Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.

14 That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

Our Dilemma

- If we believe that Christ established the Church and that the Church *as given to the Apostles* possessed at that point the *fullness* of the Faith, then we can judge the merits of our own Christianity with respect to the Church of the New Testament
- As “Orthodox” Christians, we can't seek to be in a Church of our own design, but rather we seek to be in that very same Church of the Apostles

John 16: 12-14

12 “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now.

13 However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you *into all truth*; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

14 He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you.

Matthew 16: 15-19

15 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

16 Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

17 Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

19 And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

I Corinthians 12: 12-14

12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.

13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into[c] one Spirit.

14 For in fact the body is not one member but many.

The Holy Spirit Resides in the Church

- The Holy Spirit is active in the Church- “...Who spoke by the Prophets and the Apostles”
- Regardless of the weakness and sinfulness of the People involved, Theological Truth is not subjective; It is understood within the Church

The “Canon” of Truth

- Canon- Arrow, Trajectory
- The Canon of Truth- the framework established by Christ, anchors the Church in the Truth throughout space and time
- As the Church has existed over time, has it been in *fidelity* with the Canon of Truth, as set forth by Christ?
- To be “Orthodox” in the truest sense of the word, means that it has.

Traditions vs. Holy Tradition

- “Tradition” refers to *all* customs and practices inherited from the past which have shaped and formed us
- “Holy Tradition” (with specific reference to Christianity), refers to customs, beliefs, and practices which are inherited, but also *indispensable*, as they express the organic and continuous experience of the Church established by Christ in the here and now

Apostolicity

- The visible lineage of discipleship and “laying on of hands” from the Apostles to their successors
- Where: Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, Edessa*
 - St. Ignatius, disciple of Sts. Peter and John
 - Seven Epistles attributed to him
 - St. Clement of Rome, disciple of Sts. Peter and Paul
 - Epistle to the Corinthians

Continuity

- The Church is internally consistent both geographically and temporally
- The “democracy of the dead” ..or aristocracy?

Fidelity

- The Church is not only internally consistent, but also fully in agreement with the Canon of Truth
- “for custom without truth is the antiquity of error”- St. Cyprian of Carthage
- What does a Church council do?

The Eucharist- Selected Quotes

St. Paul (A.D. 55)

25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.- I Corinthians 11

St. Ignatius (110 A.D.)

“Take heed, then, to have but one Eucharist. For there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup to [show forth] the unity of His blood; one altar; as there is one bishop, along with the presbytery and deacons, my fellow servants: that so, whatsoever you do, you may do it according to [the will of] God.”

St. Justin Martyr (150 A.D.)

“For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Saviour, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh.”

St. Cyprian (250 A.D.)

“And so, just as we say Our Father, because he is the father of those who understand and believe, so also we call it our bread, because Christ is the bread of us who come into contact with his body...

So when he says that whoever eats of his bread will live for ever; and as it is clear that those are indeed living who partake of his body and, having the right of communion, receive the Eucharist, so, on the other hand, we must fear and pray lest anyone should be kept at a distance from salvation who, being withheld from communion, remains separate from Christ's body.”

St. Cyril of Jerusalem (347 A.D.)

“Consider therefore the Bread and the Wine not as bare elements, for they are according to the Lord's declaration, the Body and Blood of Christ; for even though sense suggests this to you, yet let faith establish you. Judge not the matter from the taste, but from faith be fully assured without misgiving, that the Body and Blood of Christ have been vouchsafed to you”

Take Home Points

- Being “Orthodox” implies that we believe we have a real “connection” with the New Testament Church
- However, without adhering to the Canon of Truth, even Apostolic Churches can deviate
- Our fidelity with Holy Tradition can be expressed/experienced in the writings of the Fathers as well as the Liturgies, the Iconography, the Hymnography, etc. of the Church