

THE ORTHODOX CONCEPT

***TRADITION
AND
ORTHODOXY***

FR. TADROS Y. MALATY

***ST GEORGE COPTIC CHURCH
SPORTING - ALEXANDRIA***

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*H.H. Pope Shenouda III, 117th Pope of
Alexandria and the See of St. Mark*

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INTRODUCTION

This book, in its origin, was written as a chapter in my book “THE CHURCH, HOUSE OF GOD,” published in 1971 in Los Angeles, for Sunday School students.

In 1975 as it was republished in Alexandria as a separate book, in a new shape.

Now, in this issue I am adding more details as I introduce it to the students of the Theological School of Alexandria.

FR. TADROS Y. MALATY

THE HOLY TRADITION

For a long time some western writers looked to “tradition” as a blind obedience to the past and a mechanical transmission of a passive deposit. In their point of view, tradition is a precise catalogue of a set of ancient doctrines, canons and rites, or it is a museum for antiquity. Therefore, the traditional church, in their view, seems to be a solid obscurant and retrograde one, attached to what is old simply for its antiquity.

In this simple work, I would like to explain our concept to “tradition,” through the holy Bible, the patristic thought and our practical church life.

THE MEANING OF “TRADITION”

The word “**tradition**,” in Greek, as it is mentioned in the New Testament, is “*Paradosis*” which does not mean “imitation.” Its cognate verb is “*paradidomill*” which mean “handing over or delivering a thing by hand.” The closely associated verb is “*paralambano*,” that means “receiving a thing or taking it.”

In Hebrew there are two terms corresponding to these two Greek verbs: “*masar*” (hand on or deliver) and “*qibbel*” (receive)⁽¹⁾.

Thus, the word “**tradition**” does not mean ‘limitation of the past,’ but it means biblically “*delivering a deposit and receiving it.*” A generation delivers the faith and another receives it.

THE SUBJECT OF CHRISTIAN TRADITION

What is the subject of the Christian traditions or what is the deposit that the Church received and preserved through the successive generations?

In fact, Christ did not deliver His disciples and apostles a written document, but rather He prepared them to follow Him and to accept Him dwelling within their hearts. They heard Him teach, followed Him everywhere; they saw Him praying, comforting the people, treating the sinners kindly, healing the sick, giving life to the dead; they saw Him celebrate the Last Supper and granting them peace after His resurrection. At last He sent them His Holy Spirit not only to remind them of His own words and help them to follow His example but rather to attain the unity with Him and to participate His divine life.

This is the essence of our tradition, it is “***the unity with Christ through the Holy Spirit.***” For God the Father delivered His own Son to us, and the Son also gave Himself up for us (Gal. 2:20; Eph. 5:2).

This is the “tradition,” i.e., “***the faith once delivered to the saints***” Jude 3, or the “Gospel” written in our lives and engraved within our hearts. It is a living thing, received by the apostles who delivered it to their disciples by the Holy Spirit, who bears witness to Christ within the life of the Church, and unites her with the Saviour.

In other words, the action of transmission is realized not only by the apostles writings, but rather by the Holy Spirit who guided their feelings, attitudes, worship, behaviour and their preaching. He granted them the new life, that is, “the life in

Christ.” It is the action of the Holy Spirit that the “tradition of Christ” is preserved in the Church life through the successive generation, as He always lives and acts in the Church yesterday, today and tomorrow - inspires her life and makes it a continuity of life, Faith and love, and not a mechanical repetition of the past⁽¹⁾.

Thus, tradition is the living stream of the one life of the Church, which brings up the past with all its aspects as a living present, and extends the present towards the morrow without deformation

This is the essence of the “tradition” on which we have to concentrate on studying the contents of “tradition” which are:

- 1. The message of Faith in the Holy Trinity and God redeeming deeds.**
- 2. The deeds and words of Christ.**
- 3. The books of the Old Testament.**
- 4. The spiritual and ethical scheme in Jesus Christ.**
- 5. The curriculum of worship, its concept and order.**

TRADITION IN THE APOSTOLIC AGE

In the apostolic age, the New Testament books were already in existence, but these were not yet canonized officially. Tradition was the only source of Christian faith, doctrines and worship. Its role in the Church life of that period may be summarized in the following points:

1 - When the Church was born the books of The Old Testament were already extant in use and the early Christians, on the authority of Christ and His apostles received these Scriptures from the Jews and treated them as the inspired and authoritative word of God. The early Church considered herself as the heir of the Jewish Church in this old tradition, i.e., the Scriptures.

It is worthy to note that the early Church was reading the Scriptures with an eye enlightened by specifically Christian revelation. She conceived the prophecies mentioned in these books, and was using a particular method of exegesis(3), which the Jews did not know yet. This type of exegesis was received from the apostles, and there is every reason to suppose that our Lord Himself set the precedent.

2 - Although the books of the New Testament were not canonized until the middle of the second century, but through tradition the Fathers of the Church accepted them as the inspired word of God, and many quotations were used in their writings.

3 - Through tradition the Fathers of the Church conceived the unity of the Holy Scriptures, I mean the unity between the

Old and the New Testaments, as the one and the same word of God, even before the canonization of the New Testament books took place.

4 - The apostles reveal that one of the sources of the authority of their apostleship is that tradition which they had received through their discipleship to Jesus Christ. They preached as eyewitnesses to the events of Christ's life and His saving deeds.

St. John states, "that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life..." John 1:1.

In his gospel he also says, "He who saw it has borne witness - his testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth - that you also may believe" John 19:35.

St. Luke also pointed out that accounts of the events of Christ's life "were delivered to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word" Luke 1:2.

When the eleven apostles wished to fill the place of Judas, they determined to choose only one "of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when He was taken up from us - one of these men must become with us a witness to His resurrection" Acts. 1:21, 22.

This apostolic tradition started by their eye-witness to the Lord's life's events, but the "eyewitness" was not sufficient to set it. The Holy Spirit who guides the life of the Church, reveals

the truth and gives her the unity with God in Jesus Christ founded it. “We are witnesses of these things,” the apostles say, “and so is the Holy Spirit.”

St. Paul the apostle, who was interested in depositing “**the tradition of Christ**” to the Church, was not an eyewitness of these events, but he received a special commission to the apostleship. By the Holy Spirit he received the Church tradition as if it was given to him from God directly. He asserts, “Paul, an apostle - not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father...” Gal. 1:1. He also says, “I received (*Paralarnbano*) from the Lord (*apo tou Kyriou*) what I also delivered (*paradidomi*) to you “I Cor. 11:23. It has been argued that the use of the preposition “apo” in the phrase “from the Lord” indicates transmission of the information through one or more intermediaries, whereas “*para*” with the genitive would have routed out such mediation(4).

5 - The tradition that the apostles received from Christ and was deposited unto the Church was in its essence “the new life in Jesus Christ,” or “the unity with God in Christ by the Holy Spirit.” In other words, the apostolic tradition was not a static deposit, but it bears within itself the continuity of the Pentecost in the Church as a whole and in every living member. Through the apostolic tradition not only does the Christian community - as a whole - practise this new life by the Holy Spirit, but every member of the Church accepts a personal relationship with God in Spirit, without isolation from the catholic Church.

Through this point of view we also look to our tradition - in its essence - as a spiritual gift, not offered from person to another, but having its mutual effect upon the offerer and the

receiver. “For I Long to see you,” wrote St. Paul to the Romans,” that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith, both yours and mine” Rom 1:1 1,12.

In this effect, **St. Augustine** says, “Because for you I am a bishop, with you I am a Christian”(5). He deeply felt that he was appointed by God to deposit his people the Christian tradition, as a bishop, and at the same time he practised this tradition with them as one of them as a Christian.

6. The apostles subjected to some Jewish traditions of worship and rites, which were in harmony with their faith, after christianizing them, the matter which I will discuss in more details, if God permits.

7 - Through tradition the Church made a stress on the loyalty to the episcopate as he regarded the bishop, the successor of the apostle, as the appointed guarantor of purity of doctrine.

In brief, we can say that the Church in the apostolic age accepted the living tradition, by which she received the books of the Old Testament, conceived its prophecies, discovered its types and symbols, acknowledged its unity with the apostolic testimony, received the witnesses of the apostles, declared the authority of their successors in preserving the Christian faith and practised the true worship of God.

THE HOLY TRADITION AND THE GOSPEL

Our faith in the Messiah, the Saviour, that is “the gospel of the Church,” is the core of the holy tradition and its centre. In more than one place, St. Paul the apostle told his people that he had delivered to the tradition of the “gospel of salvation,” the “word of hearing” or the “saving deed of God” which he had received from the Church.

He says, “moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also you have received and wherein you stand... For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again on the third day according to the scriptures” 1 Cor. 15:1.

“When you received the word of God which you heard of us, you received it not as the word of men but as it is in truth, the word of God, Which effectually works also in you that believe” 1 Thess. 2:13.

The apostles received this “Gospel of Christ,” which is “the Gospel of the Church,” not written on paper but received it orally, in order to deliver it unto the Church by the oral tradition as well as by the written one.

In this effect C. Richardson says, “Hence Christian preaching was founded on the Old Testament and on the living tradition of Jesus, passed from mouth to mouth. This feeling for personal

witness was very strong in the Early Church. **Papias**, for instance, records his disdain for books and his preference for the living and abiding voice... (6).

The western scholars began to discover the fact that oral tradition does not stand side by side with the written works, as if they are two things, but as if they are one. What the Book declares, the church had received by oral tradition.

F. Bruce, the professor of Biblical Criticism and Exegesis in the University of Manchester says, “Whereas western Christians tend to set a “scripture” and “tradition” over against each other, as though tradition were oral only and not written, there is no reason why tradition should not take a written form. If it is apostolic tradition, in due course it takes a written form and becomes apostolic scripture. Whether Paul’s teaching was given orally or in writing, it equally carried apostolic authority; hence he can encourage the Thessalonian Christians to “stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter (2 Thess 2:15)(7).”

The New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible says, “The term (tradition), however, came to be used in a good sense of the apostolic teaching handed down in the church either by the oral word or by letter (1 Cor. 11: 23;15:3,2; Thess, 2:15)(8).

J.N.D. Kelly states, “Hence by tradition the Fathers usually mean doctrine which the Lord or His apostles committed to the Church, irrespective of whether it was handed down orally or in documents... The ancient meaning of the term is well illustrated by Athanasius’ reference(9) to the actual original tradition teaching and faith of the catholic Church, which the Lord

bestowed, the apostles proclaimed and the Fathers safeguarded(10).

In fact, the Church received the “word of God” before it was written on paper. She enjoyed the good tidings and understood the deepest meaning of the word of God by the Holy Spirit, through the oral tradition, not only by words but also as a mode of life. She received her life before she had the written New Testament more than twenty years. And when the evangelists and apostles wrote it by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Church accepted it, venerated and understood it as a life she has previously practised.

Thus, the Gospel is not strange from tradition, but the first is a part of the latter. Both declare the “One Truth,” and explain the nature of the Church.

Perhaps one may ask if the oral tradition was cancelled by the appearance of the books of the New Testament. We answer that the apostles themselves, in their letters to the early Christian communities, often remind the believers of the oral tradition, from which they may gain an understanding of the Christian truth.

“Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink, but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full” 2 John 12.

“I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto you. But I trust I shall shortly see you and we shall speak face to face” 3 John 13, 14.

“And the rest (remaining matters) will I set in order when I come” 1 Cor 11:34.

“For this cause I left you in Crete that You should set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain presbyters in every city” Titus 1:5.

In many places the apostle Paul commands his disciples to preserve tradition, deliver it unto others, keep up with the traditions which they were taught either by word of mouth or by letter and to withdraw themselves from every brother walking disorderly and not according to the tradition which he had received from us (2 Thess. 3:6). He also charges us to be aware of every tradition of men against faith, “according to the elements of the world and not according to Christ” Col. 2:8.

Moreover, in the early Church, many nations furnished converts to Christianity, although they had not translations of the Bible as yet in their own languages, and could not therefore learn the truth from it, but from the oral tradition(11).

St. Irenaeus, in the second century, is the first to argue out the matter of tradition. He puts the question - supposing, as might have happened, that we had no Scriptures, to what should we have to make our appeal? “Should we not have to go back to the most ancient Churches, in which the apostles lived, and take from them... what is fixed and ascertained? what else could we do? If the apostles themselves had not left us writings, should we not be obliged to depend on the teaching of the tradition which they bequeathed to those to whose care they left the Churches?(12).”

TRADITION PRESERVES THE BIBLE

The Holy Scriptures is the book of the Church, which we receive through the Church tradition. By tradition the “canon”

of the holy books which affirms their inspired character is established.

+ By tradition, I knew the four gospels, and that they are the true ones.

Origen.

+ Learn also diligently, and from the Church what are the books of the Old Testament, and what are those of the New.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem(13).

+ I would not have believed in the gospel, unless the voice of the Universal Church convinced me.

St. Augustine(14).

If we try to dismiss the unwritten traditions as if they are unworthy, we disregard that thus we disdain the important element of preaching, and make the evangelic preaching merely a name.

St. Basil The Great.

It is worthy to note that Church tradition gives testimony to the holy Scripture, and that the Scripture itself is a part of the Church tradition, but this does not lessen the Scripture's uniqueness. It preserves its own nature as the word of God, the eternal revelation of divinity, addressed not only to this age but also to the ages to come.

Although tradition testifies the holy Scripture, but it is not its criterion. On the contrary, tradition is recognized when founded in disagreement with the Scripture(15).

Moreover, the Scripture is given to each believer, to judge, in accordance with his personal taste, the value and inspiration of a given work, but no one can by himself decide questions relative to the divine inspiration of the Scriptures and the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Bible. Only the Holy Spirit who lives in the Church gives this. This cannot be a question of personal choice but it depends only on the judgement of the Church(16).

Lastly, this close relation between the Scripture and the Church tradition does not mean extinguishing the personal feeling towards the Scripture. On the contrary, the church tradition asserts our personal attitude towards the Bible, asking us to live in the Bible, but without isolation from the Church.

TRADITION PRESERVES THE DEEDS AND WORDS OF CHRIST

By tradition we receive the holy gospels, which contain the deeds and words of Christ, but not all His deeds and words, as our teacher John concludes his gospel by saying, “And there are also many other things which Jesus did: which if they should be written every one, I think that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written” John 21:25.

The disciples and apostles heard many sayings, preserved them, lived them, but did not record all of them in the gospels. For instance we mention what the apostle Paul says:

“Even so has the Lord ordained that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel” Cor. 9:14.

“And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, let not the wife depart from her husband” 1 Cor. 7:10.

The apostle Paul received these Lord’s commandments and sayings from the disciples and the apostles, who heard the Lord and examined them by Spirit, preserved and delivered them unto others.

Concerning the deeds of Christ, the apostle Paul also says, “For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord (*kyrios*) Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread...” (Cor. 11:23). The apostle did not receive this deed directly from the Lord in the night of His suffering, but as Oscar Culiman says that the word “*Kyrios*” here designates for the Oral Tradition concerning Jesus. The apostle did receive many direct visions and revelation, but the Lord through the Church tradition delivered this deed.

What is wonderful, is that the ancient liturgies, as that of the “Apostolic Tradition” of **St. Hippolytus** quoted the same expression of St Paul in the “Narrative of Institution. It is because the apostolic Tradition reflects a general tradition in the early Church from which St. Paul also quoted and all other apostolic liturgies.

TRADITION ACCORDING TO PAPIAS

After the departure of the apostles and the disciples who were eyewitnesses of the saving events of Christ's life, the Fathers of the Church like Papias, Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria were interested in preserving the oral tradition, or the "tradition of the elders (*Presbyters*)," which they claim to have come down to them from the apostolic times.

We know **Papias**, bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia (around A.D. 130) chiefly through Irenaeus and Eusebius. The evidence of the former is all the more valuable because he belongs to the same circle as Papias, and is only a little later than he in time(18). Irenaeus states that Papias was a hearer of St. John and a companion of St. Polycarp. He compiled five books(19). He praises this work so highly, for he regarded it as putting him in contact with apostolic times(20). This work was still extant in the fourteenth century, if not later, but no copy of it is now known to survive(21).

Eusebius preserved the preface of Papias' work and also its title "*Exposition of the Oracles of the Lord*(22)." In this preface Papias decided, a little before the middle of the second century, to collect the living memories of those who had personally known the apostles, as he says, "I will not hesitate to set down along with my interpretations all the things derived from the elders (presbyters), for I have ever carefully learned them, and carefully recalled them, and am confident of their truth... If anyone who attended the presbyters came, I asked him minutely about their sayings: What did Andrew or Peter say, or what was said by Philip by Thomas, by James, by John,

by Matthew, or by any other of the Lord's disciples...? For I imagined that what was to be got from books was not so profitable to me as what came from the living and abiding voice.”

TRADITION ACCORDING TO ST. IRENAEUS

St. Irenaeus, in the second half of the second century, valued the oral tradition. It is evident from the terms in which he reminds his former acquaintance Florinus of their earlier days with St. Polycarp in Smyrna.(23)

“I remember the events of those days more clearly than those of recent date, for the things that have been learned from childhood grow up with the soul and become one with it. So I can describe even the place where the blessed Polycarp sat and held discourse, how he came in and went out, his manner of life and personal appearance, the discourses which he delivered to the people, and how he reported his communications with John and with the others who had seen the Lord, how he recalled their words, and what he had heard from them about the Lord, His mighty works and His teachings, how he, Polycarp, had received (*Paralambano*) those things from the eyewitnesses of the life of the word and reported them all in conformity with the Scriptures. Even then I listened eagerly to those things by the mercy of God which was bestowed upon me, making notes of them not on papyrus but in my heart; and the grace of God I always ruminates on them truly(24).

TRADITION AND THE INTERPERTATION OF THE SCRIPTURE

In the second century, the Gnostics exploited the holy Scripture to their own ends, by quoting some verses and using it far away from the meanings and concepts of the Scripture as a whole and from the tradition of the Church. Moreover, they

claimed that they had received hidden traditions from the apostles(25) and that they themselves knew better than either bishops or apostles(26).

Many early Fathers of the church faced the Gnostics and argued their opinions.

One of those Fathers is St. Irenaeus, who is called “the father the Ecclesiastical Tradition.” His thought of “tradition” may be summarized in the following points:

1. Tradition which originates from the apostles is guaranteed by the unbroken succession of presbyters in the Church(27).

2. The tradition is preserved in the Church by the Holy Spirit, who renews the Church’s youth(28).

3. The apostolic tradition is not some thing secret but it is within the power of all who wish to accept the truth to know it. It is manifested in every Church throughout the whole world(29).

4. The heretics misinterpreted the Scripture, as they quoted isolated passages and rearranged them to suit their own ideas(30) disregarding the underlying unity of the Scripture. They made use of the texts, but since they do not read them within the Church, they do not read them according to the tradition of the apostles.

The true understanding of the Scripture is only found in the Church, where the holy tradition and the apostolic doctrines are kept. The Church has been planted as a paradise in this world; therefore the Holy Spirit says you may freely eat from every

tree of the garden (Gen 2:16), that is, eat you from every Scripture of the Lord, but you shall not eat with uplifted mind, nor touch any heretical discord. For these men do profess that they have themselves the knowledge of good and evil; and they set their own impious minds above God who made them(31).

HIS SAYINGS IN TRADITION

As I have already observed, the Church, having received this preaching and this faith, although scattered throughout the whole world, yet as if occupying but one house, carefully preserves it.. For although the languages of the world are dissimilar, yet the import of the tradition is one and the same. For Churches which have been planted in Germany do not believe or hand down any thing different, no do those in Spain, nor those in Gaul, nor those in the East, nor those in Egypt, nor those in Lybia, nor those which have been established in the central regions of the world... (32) When we refer them (the heretics) to that tradition which originates from the apostles (and) which is preserved by means of the successions of presbyters in the Churches, they object to tradition, saying that they themselves are wiser not merely than the presbyters, but even than the apostles, because they have discovered the unadulterated truth. For (they maintain) that the apostles intermingled the things of the law with the words of the Saviour... **Thus, these men do not consent neither to Scripture nor to tradition.**

Such are the adversaries with whom we have to deal, my very dear friend, endeavouring like slippery serpents to escape at all points. Wherefore they must be opposed at all points, if

perchance, by cutting off their retreat, we may succeed in turning them back to the truth.

It is within the power of all, therefore, in every Church, who may wish to see the truth, to contemplate clearly the tradition of the apostles manifested throughout the whole world...

For if the apostles had known hidden mysteries, which they were in the habit of importing to “the perfect” apart and privily from the rest, they would have delivered them especially to those to whom they were also committing the Churches themselves. For they were desirous that men should be very perfect and blameless in all things, whom also they were leaving behind as their successors, delivering up their own place of government to these men; which men, if they discharged their functions honestly, would be a great boon (to the Church), but if they fell away, the direst calamity.

In this order, and by this succession (from the apostles), the ecclesiastical tradition from the apostles, and the preaching of the truth, have come down to us, and this is the most abundant proof that these is one and the same vivifying faith, which has been preserved in the Church from the apostles until now, and handed down in truth.

Since therefore we have such proofs, it is not necessary to seek the truth among others while it is easy to obtain from the Church; since the apostles, like a rich man (depositing his money) in bank, lodged in her hands most copiously all thing pertaining to the truth: so that every man whosoever will, can draw from her water of life (Rev. 22:17). For she is the entrance to life; all others are thieves and robbers. On this account are we bound to avoid them, **but make choice of the things**

pertaining the Church with the utmost diligence, and to lay hold of the tradition of truth. For how stands the case? Suppose there arises a dispute relative to some important question among us, should we not have recourse to the most ancient Churches with which the apostles held constant communications, and learn from them what is certain and clear in regard to the present question? For how should it be if the apostles themselves had not left us writings? Would it not be necessary, to follow the course of tradition, which they handed down to those to whom, they did commit the Churches?

To which course many nations of those barbarians who believe in Christ do assent, having salvation written in their hearts by the Spirit, without paper or ink, and carefully preserving the ancient tradition...

Since, therefore, the tradition from the apostles does thus exist in the Church, and is permanent among us, let us revert to the Scriptural proof furnished by those apostles who did also write the Gospel, in which they recorded the doctrine regarding God, pointing out that our Lord Jesus Christ is the truth (John 14:6), and that no lie is in him...

This gift, (the faith in Christ which is received through tradition) of God has been entrusted to the Church, as breath was to the first created man, for this purpose, that all members receiving it may be vivified, and the (means of) communion with Christ has been distributed throughout it, that is, the Holy Spirit, the earnest of incorruption, the means of confirming our faith, and the ladder of ascent to God. "For in the Church," it is said, "God has set apostles, prophets, teachers," (1 Cor. 12:28) and all the other means through which the Spirit works. of

which all those are not partakers who do not join themselves to the Church, but defraud themselves of life through their perverse opinions and infamous behaviour. For where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God. and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church, and every kind of grace.(33)

TRADITION ACCORDING TO TERTULLIAN

Tertullian's attitude does not differ from St. Irenaeus's in any important respect. We may summarize his attitude in the following points:

1. He emphasizes that no secret tradition existed, as he says. "it is incredible that the apostles were either ignorant of the whole scope of the message which they had to declare, or failed to make known to all men the entire rule of faith... (34)

2. Like Irenaeus, Tertullian found the surest test of the authenticity of the doctrine in the fact that the churches had been founded by, and were continuously linked with the apostles(35). For example, he says, "We hold communion with the apostolic churches because our doctrine is in no respect different from theirs. This is our witness of truth(36)."

He also says, "Such are the summary arguments which we use, when we take up arms against heretics for the faith of the gospel, maintaining both that order of periods, which rules that a late date is the mark of forgers, and that authority of churches which lends support to the tradition of the apostles, because truth must needs precede the forgery, and proceeds straight from those by whom it has been handed on(37)."

3. Tertullian states that, the oral tradition or the "Rule of Faith" (*regula fidei*) is the key for the correct exegesis of Scripture. For the heretics were able to make Scripture say what they like, because they disregarded the "Rule of Faith"(38).

4. Tertullian mentions the tradition of practical worship, which became custom in the church for long generations. He says, “if no passage of Scripture has prescribed it (an ancient practice), assuredly custom, which without doubt flowed from tradition, has confirmed it. For how can anything come into use, if it has not first been handed down? Even in pleading tradition, written authority, you say must be demanded. Let us inquire, therefore, whether tradition, unless it be written, should not be admitted? Certainly we shall say that it ought not be admitted, if no cases of other practices which, without any written instrument, we maintain on the ground of tradition alone, and the countenance thereafter of custom, afford us any precedent.

To deal with this matter, briefly, I shall begin with baptism, when we are going to enter the water, but a little before, in the presence of the congregation and under the hand of the president, we solemnly profess that we disown the devil, and his pomp, and his angels. Hereupon we are thrice immersed, making a somewhat ampler pledge than the Lord has appointed in the Gospel. Then when we are taken up (as new-born children), we taste first of all a mixture of milk and honey, and from that day we refrain from the daily bath for a whole week.

In our congregations before daybreak, and from the hand of none but the presidents, we celebrate the sacrament of the Eucharist, which the Lord commanded to be eaten at mealtimes...

As often as the anniversary comes round, we make offerings for the dead as birthday honours.

We count fasting or kneeling in worship on the Lord's day to be unlawful. We rejoice in the same privilege also from Easter to Whitsunday.

We feel pained should any wine or bread... be cast upon the ground.

At every forward step and movement, at every going in and out, when we put on our clothes and shoes, when we bathe, when we sit at table, when we light the lamps, on couch, on seat, in all the ordinary actions of daily life, we trace upon the forehead the sign (of the Cross).

It, for these and other such rules, you insist upon having positive Scripture injunction, you will find none. Tradition will be held forth to you as the originator of them, custom as their strengthener, and faith as their observer. That reason will support tradition, and custom, and Faith, you will either yourself perceive, or learn from someone else...

These instances, therefore, will make it sufficiently plain that you can vindicate the keeping of even unwritten tradition established by custom, the proper witness for tradition when demonstrated by long continued observance(39).

TRADITION ACCORDING TO OTHER FATHERS

ST. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA

Eusebius comments, “in the first of ‘*Stromaties*’ Clement shows us that he himself was very close to the tradition of the apostles... He promises that he would write traditions that he had heard from the presbyters of the olden times(40).”

According to St. Clement “the true Gnostic (his ideal Christian), having grown old in the Scriptures, and maintaining apostolic and ecclesiastical orthodoxy in his doctrines, lives most correctly in accordance with the gospel, and derives from the law and the prophets the proofs for which he has made search...”For the life of the Gnostic, in my view, consists simply in deeds and words which correspond to the tradition of our Lord(41).

He states that he who spurns the Church tradition ceases to be a man of God(42), and that gnosis (Knowledge) came down from the apostles through their successors to a few (of us) being handed on orally (*aypows*)(42).”

ORIGEN

According to Origen tradition or “*the Canon of Faith*” is the body of beliefs currently accepted by Christians.

He states that Church tradition is handed down from the Apostles and is preserved in the Church, “the teaching of the Church is preserved unaltered, handed down in unbroken

succession from the apostles and is existing to this day in the churches(44).”

In his exegesis of the Scripture, Origen refers to the tradition and to the writings of the presbyters (the Fathers of the Church). For example, concerning the parable of the good Samaritan he writes, “**One of the Presbyters** (elders) said that the man who was going down to Jericho is Adam, Jerusalem is Paradise, Jericho the world, the thieves, the evil powers, the Samaritan is Christ(45).” J. Daniélou says the same exegesis had already appeared in Irenaeus(46) but since it is hardly likely that Origen would call Irenaeus “*one of the elders*” the common source of both passages must be the tradition in question(47).

Origen believes that the true understanding of the Scripture is only found in the Church. He says, “The true disciple of Jesus is he who enters the house, that is to say, the Church. He enters it by thinking as the Church does, and living as she does; this is how he understands the word. The key of the Scriptures must be received from the tradition of the Church, as from the Lord Himself(48).”

ST. CYPRIAN

St. Cyprian insists that outside the Church there is no salvation, either for the heretics or for schismatics. “For no one can have God his Father who has not the Church for his mother(49).” Therefore the true interpretation of the Scripture and the orthodox doctrines are found only within the true Church. The tradition of the true Church is the safeguard of the Christian faith.”

ST. GREGORY OF NYSSA

In the fourth century there was a growing tendency to appeal to the Orthodox Fathers of the past as custodians and interpreters of the Church traditions.

St. Gregory of Nyssa writes, “it is enough for the proof of our statement, that we have the tradition descending to us from the Fathers, transmitted as an inheritance, by succession, from the apostles through the saints that followed them(50)”

ST. BASIL THE GREAT

1. St. Basil the Great mentions many quotations of the writings of the Fathers as witnesses of the orthodox faith.

2. He speaks of the oral tradition (*agraphos*) as a guide in the true interpretation of the Scripture, which the heretics try to destroy. He says, “The object of attack is faith. The one aim of the whole band of opponents and enemies of ‘sound doctrine’ (1 Tim. 1:10) is to shake down the foundation of the faith of Christ by levelling apostolic tradition with the ground, and utterly destroying it. So like the debtors - of course bona fide (good faith) - they clamour for written proof, and reject as worthless the unwritten tradition of the Fathers(51).”

3. St. Basil refers to the tradition as our guide in sacraments and ceremonies: “Of the doctrines and practices, whether generally accepted or publicly enjoined, which are preserved in the Church, some of which we possess derived from written teaching, others we have received delivered to us in a mystery (1 Cor. 2:7) by the tradition of the apostles, both of which have the same force.

And these no one will gainsay; no one, at all events, who is even moderately versed in the institutions of the Church. For were we to attempt to reject such customs as have no written authority, on the ground that the importance they possess is small, we should unintentionally injure the Gospel in its very vitals; or rather, should make our public definition a mere phrase and nothing more.

For instance, to take the first and most general example, who is there who has taught us in writing to sign the sign of the cross those who have trusted in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ?

What writing has taught us to turn to the East at the prayer?

Which of the saints has left us in writing the words of the invocation at the displaying of the bread of the Eucharist and the cup of blessing? For we are not, as is well known, content with what the apostles or the Gospel has recorded, but both in preface and conclusion we add other words as being of great importance to the validity of the ministry, and these we derive from unwritten teaching.

Moreover, we bless the water of baptism and the oil of the Chrism, and besides this the catechumens who is being baptized. On what written authority do we do this? Is not our authority silent and mystical tradition? Nay, by what written word is the anointing Of oil(52) itself taught? And whence comes the custom of baptizing thrice(53) ? And as to the other customs of baptism from what Scripture do we derive the renunciation of Satan and his angels? Does not this come from that unpublished and secret teaching which our Fathers guarded in silence...? We all look at the East in our prayers, but few of us know that we

are seeking our own old country (Heb. 11:14), Paradise, which God planted in Eden in the East (Gen 2:8).

We pray standing, on the first day of the week, but we do not all know the reason. On the day of the resurrection (in Greek “*standing again*”) we remind ourselves of the grace given to us by standing at prayer, not only because we rose with Christ, and are bound to “seek those things which are above” (Col. 3:1), but because the day seems to us to be in some sense an image of the age which we expect...

Time will fail me if I attempt to recount the unwritten mysteries of the Church(54).”

ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

After saying that the apostles did not hand down all by the epistles but much also without writing, St. Chrysostom adds, “the one and the other are worthy of credit. Therefore let us think that the tradition of the Church is also worthy of credit. It is a tradition ask no more!(55).”

ST. EPIPHANIUS OF SALAMIS

St. Epiphanius mentions that only the Church and not the heretics, has received the tradition, preserves it and hands it down. He also states that “we must use tradition, since all cannot be got from the divine Scripture, wherefore the divine apostles handed down something in writings, others in traditions(56).”

ST. AUGUSTINE

Treating of the dispute about the validity of heretical baptism of the Donatists, St. Augustine writes, “I believe it (that their baptism is valid) comes from tradition of the apostles, like many things which are not found in their letters, nor in earlier councils, and yet, because they have been observed by the whole Church, they are believed to have been handed down and commanded by no others than by them(57).”

CHRISTIAN TRADITION AND JEWISH TRADITION

The early Hebrew tradition arose naturally before there was any written law or history. It was the only source of the Jewish faith. After receiving the written law the tradition interpreted it and was added to it(58). It was a practical commentary on the written law, growing over the centuries as the rules and statues were applied to the changing conditions of life in succeeding generations.

We give here two examples of the relation between the written law and tradition.

1. According to the fourth commandment, “you shall not do any work” on the Sabbath day (Exod. 20:10, Deut. 5:14), what was the precise meaning of “work”? Which activities were counted as work and which were not? In a simple agricultural community the answer was relatively easy “work consisted of those activities which made up the daily routine of labour(59) “It was plain that even in plowing time and harvest they should have rest (Exod. 34:21). But in the time of Nehemiah, the Levites worked on the Sabbath day, for they were standing over the gates as guards (Neh. 13:19f).

2. In Exod. 16:29 we read, “Let no man go out of his place on the seventh day,” a regulation which, if strictly applied, would have prevented any movement outside one’s home on the Sabbath. But “his place” was interpreted to include any point within 2000 cubits’ distance from a man’s home, or from whatever location he might designate in advance as his home for

this purpose - the 2000 cubits being described as “limit of the Sabbath” or Sabbath day’s journey(60).

SCHOOLS OF TRADITION

The Jewish tradition reflects the attitude of many Jewish leaders to preserve the letter of the law, giving little interest to its spirit. In the time of Jesus Christ, there were two schools for oral tradition, one was headed by Rabban Gamaliel, Hilel’s disciple and successor as head of the school which he founded.

In this school Saul of Tarsus was educated, and perhaps he would be Gamaliel’s successor if he were not converted to Christianity. The other school was headed by Shammai diverged quite sharply in some points of interpretation and application of the law. Yet, for all their divergence, they shared a large area of common ground; they accepted the principle of tradition as a means of adopting the requirements of the ancient law to changing circumstances, contrary to the Sadducees who insist on the strict letter of the written law(61).

WORKS OF JEWISH TRADITION

Before discussing Jesus point of view of the Jewish tradition I would like to give a brief account of the important works of the Jewish tradition, even those works which were collected or compiled after the time of Christ.

THE TALMUD

The word “Talmud” in Aramaic means “teaching”(62). The name “Talmud” properly belongs to only a part of the collection

(the Gemara) but is popularly used to designate the entire collection.

The Talmud is divided into two parts the Mishnah and the Gemara.

THE MISHNAH

The word “***Mishnah***” means “repetition or second Law.”

The *Mishnah* is a collection of Jewish legal traditions transmitted orally until they were compiled by Rabbi Jadah ha-Nasi (the Prince) in about 200 A.D. It contains the opinions of rabbis or teachers “*Tannaim*” It is divided into six sections or orders (seder):

1. Seeds or “*Zeraim*,” containing eleven tractates, treating mostly agricultural tithes and offerings.
2. Festivals of “*Moed*,” containing twelve tractates on the Sabbath, Passover etc.
3. Women or “*Nashim*,” seven tractates relating marriage laws.
4. Damages or “*Nezikim*,” ten tractates on civil and criminal law.
5. Holy things or “*Kodashim*,” eleven tractates mostly on animal sacrifices.
6. Purifications or “*Tohorath*,” twelve tractates, treating all phases of ritual impurity, how to avoid it and how to overcome it.

THE GEMARA

The word “*Gemara*” means “completion.” It is a commentary on the *Mishnah* which contains the opinions of the interpreters “*Amorian*.”

There are two main forms of *Gemaras* or *Talmuds*: The Jerusalem or Palestinian, which was completed in about the 4th century A.D.; and the Babylonian in the 5th or 6th century. They are similar in method and construction, but they are by no means identical in content(63). The latter is more authoritative in Jewish circles.

THE TOSEFTA

The word “*Tosefta*” means “addition” or “supplement.” It is a collection of opinions of the teachers “*Tannaim*” found outside the *Mishnah*. Its material is called “*Baraita*.”

THE MIDRASH

This name is derived from the Hebrew verb “*darash*” or “*daras*” which means “investigate” or “search out,” i.e. to discover or develop a thought not apparent on the surface.

The word occurs in the Old Testament (2 Chr. 13:22, 24:27) to designate the source used by the Chronicler. The book of, Sirach (51:23) speaks of the “*Bet-Midrash*, the house of Midrash,” “which must designate a school where the sacred text was studied.

In the rabbinical literature, *Midrash* means the study of the sacred text in general, but more particularly a commentary-or an

explanation of a homiletic character. It refers to the way in which exegetical material was attached to the text of Scripture, as opposed to “*Mishnah*,” which refers to the repetition of exegetical material apart from the text of Scripture.

It is worthy to note that the *Midrash* looked for the maximum of edifying lessons, its goal was always the practical application to the present. Two types of *Midrash* are distinguished: the “*halakha*” and “*haggadah*.”

1. ***Halakha*** or ***Halaka***. The Hebrew word means “walking, way, practice, rule or conduct.” It is an explanation of the law deriving principles of conduct. It arose from the pious wish to make the law apply to even the most trivial and unexpected situations in daily life. At first it was handed down orally, then it was collected and written down.

2. ***Haggadah***: The Hebrew word means “narrative.” It is an explanation of the narrative passages of the Pentateuch with an extremely wide scope of edifying lessons. It consists of parables, legends, narrative, folklore and other subjects.

JESUS AND THE JEWISH TRADITION

Jesus Christ who came not to abolish the law and the prophets but to fulfil them (Mat. 5:17) did not repudiate the Jewish tradition. His words, “Why do you transgress commandment of God for the sake of your traditions” (Matt. 15:3, Mark 7:13, Col. 2:8) do not mean his rejection of the tradition itself, but their point of view concerning tradition. He rejected those traditions which were opposing the word of God, and refused the literal attitude in using the law or the tradition. He gave an example of tradition that was opposing the word of God, that is

which enabled a man to avoid the duty of maintaining his parents if he could claim that the money which he might have used for this purpose was already offered to the Temple as a “*qorban*” (offering)(64). Another example, Jesus did not forbid his disciples who were walking extracting the kernels by rubbing the ears between their hands. The Pharisees looked to them as destroying the law, for these deeds (reaping and grinding) were two of thirty-nine categories of work all of which are forbidden on that day, mentioned in the *Mishnah*(65).

THE JEWISH TRADITION AND CHRISTIAN CHURCH

From the Apostolic age, the Christian Church did not neglect the living traditions of the Jews. She refused those traditions which opposed the word of God, and accepted others after christianizing them, to serve the new faith.

We give some examples of the effect of these traditions of the Early Christianity.

1. St. Jude, in his epistle, mentions the dispute between Archangel Michael and the devil over the body of Moses (Jude 9), the story that is quoted from the old tradition.

In the same epistle, he also mentions a prophecy of Enoch (Jude 14, 15), quoting it from the old tradition.

St. Paul, knew the names of “*Jannes and Jambres*” (2 Tim 3:8) who opposed Moses, from the same source.

The Book of Revelation mentions the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of

Israel that they might eat food sacrificed to idols (2:14,15), quoted also from Old Tradition.

2. The early Fathers were affected by the Jewish tradition. St. Justin was in contact with the Jew Trypho, Origen consulted rabbis and borrowed exegeses from them, Syrian literature in particular absorbed Jewish “*Haggada*,” notably in Eusebius of Emesa and St. Ephraem.

3. We borrowed many liturgical texts from the Jewish Tradition, which was in concord with our faith(66).

4. The Didache “The Lord’s instruction to the gentiles through the twelve apostles,” has a Jewish character (the treatise on the two ways).

THE HOLY TRADITION AND CHURCH LIFE

We have said that the church tradition, is the continuous stream of the church life in Jesus Christ, by the work of the Holy Spirit. This life is not limited into our “faith” but also embraces the church spiritual and ethical scheme, beside the church order of worship. Thus the tradition represents the “one” life of the church, which cannot be separated into faith, spiritual teaching and worship.

TRADITION AND ETHICAL TEACHING

St. Paul delivered us the tradition, which contains the spiritual and ethical scheme, as he says:

“As therefore you have received (*paraimbano*) Christ Jesus the Lord, so live in Him, rotted and built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught” Col. 2:6, 7.

“As you have received (*paralambano*) from us how you ought to live and please God” 1 Thess. 4:1.

“Keep away from any brother who is living in idleness and not in accord with the tradition which you received (*paralambano*) from us” 2 Thess 3:6.

“What you have learned and received (*paralambano*) and heard and seen in me, do” Phil. 4:9.

In the Christian tradition, faith is correlated with the spiritual and ethical life. St. Mary as an archetype of the Church, “Kept the word of God in her heart, not as a passive memory, but as the living word of God acts within her life.

When the pagan Autolyclus asked **Theophilus of Antioch**, in the second century, “show me your God,” Theophilus wisely replied, “show me your man and I will show you my God,” show me your soundness of the inner man of your heart then you will be able to see God and I will show Him to you. Thus faith is correlated with our life.

TRADITION AND CHURCH WORSHIP

What we say concerning the ethical scheme, we repeat concerning the Church Order of Worship. Through tradition we accepted our “Church life in Jesus Christ,” not only through the Christian beliefs, doctrines, Holy Scriptures and ethical scheme, but also through the Church liturgies, rites, canons and all that belongs to our worship. We received a true life of worship in an apostolic and patristic spirit, which strengthens our true faith.

TRADITION AND LITURGY

Tradition is the source of our Church liturgies of Baptism, Eucharist, Marriage etc... and at the same time these liturgies are tradition itself at its highest degree of power and solemnity(67). For the liturgies in their wholeness - are the celebration of the whole Christian mystery. They not only teach us but bring us into the real communication with the Christian Mystery.

TRADITION AND RITE

Rite is an essential element of the liturgical, family and personal worship, for it meant the participation of the body and spirit in worshipping God.

The rites we received by Tradition are not accidental in the life of the Church. In their symbolic meaning they are more than an expression that brings the senses and mind to the realities of faith... They are real entrances to the mystery of worship, and a declaration of the living Truth, which abides in the Church.

For instance, by the church hymns, we practise the new heavenly song in Jesus Christ... By these hymns, we not only taste a musical art we also practise the heavenly life.

Through the Church Building and all its contents, we do not acknowledge merely an art of architecture or precious antiquity. but we receive living traditions. The building is a living icon of the heavenly Church, which expresses accurately the Church Faith.

Thus, in every kind of the Christian art, we meet with the spirit of Tradition. For instance, the iconology offers us the life of the Church through the Holy Spirit, and explains the life of faith in the Orthodox teaching. For we neither see icons as visible things that help us in worship nor religious decorations for the temple, but we taste in them our living faith in heavenly things and our love and unity with saints in Jesus Christ.

CHURCH TRADITION BETWEEN CLERGYMEN AND LAYMEN

We have seen that the Church tradition is the life of the whole members of the Church of Christ - clergymen and laymen- by the power of the Holy Spirit. Now, we ask about the responsibility of clergymen and laymen in preserving the holy tradition and in its continuity.

TRADITION AND COUNCILS

In the first century, the apostles assembled together in Jerusalem (Acts. 15) to study the problem of accepting the Gentiles in the new faith, and to give a church decision which fits Christ's mind. It is the responsibility of the church Fathers to assemble in local or ecumenical councils to study the needs of the present church and to preserve its traditional life through the new circumstances. They do not give individual but common opinions. They assemble under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in one mind to satisfy their people's needs. For example, they must study how to explain the church doctrines and dogmas to the modern man and how to strengthen their people against every heresy or materialistic philosophy. They also discuss the pastoral and preaching needs and the church ecumenical role etc...

In other words, it is the Fathers responsibility to preserve the Church traditional life as an active life, having Its spiritual effects, locally and ecumenically.

TRADITION AND THE WRITINGS OF THE FATHERS

Besides the Church councils, the writings of the Church Fathers are one of the essential sources that preserve the Church tradition.

J. Kelly(68) gives many examples of “the appeal to the Fathers” in the early Church to affirm the traditional beliefs and doctrines

1. Writing to the Egyptian monks in defense of the blessed Virgin’s claim to be called “Mother of God,” **St. Cyril of Alexandria** counselled(69) them to follow in the steps of the holy fathers, since it was they who had preserved the faith handed down from the apostles and taught Christians to believe aright.

Again, he was prepared to affirm(70) that the correct doctrine of the holy Trinity had been expounded by “The wisdom of the holy Fathers”

As against Nestorius, he appealed(71) to “the holy worldwide Church and the venerable Fathers themselves,” claiming that the Holy Spirit spoke in them.

For the more formal justification of his Christological position, he prepared elaborate dossiers of patristic quotations, inserting them in his controversial writing(72) and producing them at the council of Ephesus(73).

St. Cyril states, “I am a lover of sound doctrines, treading in the religious footsteps of the Fathers”(74)

2. **Theodoret**, the Antiochene Father, speaks(75) of the orthodox faith as having been transmitted to us, not only by the apostles and prophets, but also by those who interpreted their - Ignatius, Eustathius, Athanasius, Basil, Gregory, John and other luminaries of the world - and also by the holy Fathers who, before them, assembled at Nicea. And added that any one who deviated from their teaching must be labelled enemy of the truth, and elsewhere(76) explained that the Holy Spirit inspired the Fathers to elucidate the darker passages of Scriptures.

Here I mention some quotations of the Father's sayings concerning the relation between the Church tradition and the Fathers.

As the teaching of the church , transmitted in orderly succession from the apostles and remaining in the churches to the present day, is still preserved, that alone is to be accepted as truth which differs in no respect from ecclesiastical and apostolic tradition.

Origen

If our reasoning be found unequal to the problem, we must keep for ever firm and unmoved the tradition which we received by succession from the Fathers.

St. Gregory of Nyssa(77)

I mention also the commandment of **St. Athanasius**(78) to substantiate "The actual original tradition, teaching and faith of the Universal Church, which the Lord bestowed, the apostles proclaimed and the Fathers safeguarded."

It is worthy to note that according to our Orthodox Church not any one of the Fathers alone can comprehend the Truth in

its fullness as the whole Church does. Some of them had at times fallen into error and at times contradicted one another. For this reason our Church has never canonized patristic theology in its every word and has not even established a compulsory list of the Fathers and their writings(79).

To acknowledge the true Church tradition we must not simply know and quote the Fathers. but we must penetrate their spirit and attain “the patristic mind”

TRADITION AND LAYMEN

What about the role which the laymen must play in preserving the traditional Church life?

The decisions of the Church councils and the writings of the Church Fathers are insufficient in preserving the Church tradition.

The Laymen have an essential role in preserving tradition alive, by practising it in their daily life and their worship.

For traditional Church life cannot be transmitted by canons or through books but through practice and life.

Every true believer represents a living stone of the spiritual temple of God.

He is laid on other previous living stones, i.e., he ‘receives the traditional life Church from the past generations, and at the same time he bears other living stones, i.e., he deposits this life into the life of the future generations. Thus, he becomes a living ‘member of the Church of Christ, who transmits its traditional life by practising it daily.

Now, we can define the “traditional believers” not as those who study accurately the Church canons and acknowledge the details of the rites or recite the church hymns etc... but rather who discover their unity with God in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit through preserving and practising the Church canons, rites, hymns etc...

CHURCH TRADITION TODAY

TRADITION AND THE PRESENT CHURCH

Someone assume that “Tradition” means “conservation” and “Solidification” as if it prevents every development in the life of the Church.

In our Orthodox point of view tradition is the life of the Church throughout the history, which is guided and renewed by the Holy Spirit. The Church will never be satisfied until the perfection of the whole mankind.

Bulgakov says, “Tradition is not a book which records a certain moment in the development of the Church and stops itself, but a book always being written by the Church’s life. Tradition continues always and now not less than formerly, we live in tradition and create it. And nevertheless the sacred tradition of the past exists for us as present; it lives in our own life and consciousness...”

Ecclesiastical tradition does not put the voice of the past in the place of the voice of the present; in it the past does not kill the present but gives it full force... (80). Tradition must be creative and at the same time conservative. There is no contradiction between these two elements but they are essential and are indispensable to each other. Tradition cannot be conserved unless be continually developed. And it cannot be developed unless it takes place on the shoulder of the past(81).

“Conservatism” and “Development” are two facets of the same process, which we call holy tradition.

It is worthy to note that this development of the life of the Church is realized not by the act of individuals but the act of the Church, as a witness of the Holy Spirit who lives in the Church, and without declination from her apostolic and patristic mind.

TRADITION AND CHURCH ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

The theologians, through their studies of the ecumenical movement aiming to attain the unity of the church in the whole world, face this question: What is the true Tradition which the church had received to live its rules in the whole world?

If we return to the apostolic age we find “many local church traditions” that afford varieties of culture. But all these traditions have one mind, that is the mind of Christ; one spirit, i.e., the Spirit of the Lord, and one aim, i.e., our salvation. For this reason Alexandrian bishops did not hesitate in participating with Rome’s, Antioch’s and Jerusalem’s Bishops, in one service, and on one altar, even if there were some differences in the details of the rites or traditions. For all of them received but one shape for the worship with one spirit, i.e. One Tradition.

All the apostles lived with one opened spirit of preaching. (For, whereas I was free as to all, I made myself the servant of all, that I might gain the more) 1 Cor. 9:19.

When St Mark preached in Egypt, he spoke about the one Christ; and the Egyptians worshipped through their culture but in true apostolic spirit, and with the same shape of worship of other bishoprics.

For instance, the Coptic hymns were different from the Syrian and Latin ones... but all had the (quiet and modest spirit), the spirit of the heavenly new hymn, containing the deepest true dogmatic and spiritual concepts and teachings.

The (Lights) of the House of God, are another example. All the apostolic churches in the world use lights during worship by day and by night, especially during reading the Gospel... This is the spirit of Tradition, which declares that Christ is the Light of the world. The Egyptian art was evident in making the candles of the Coptic Church, while Syrian, Latin, Greek etc. arts were clearly shown in making theirs.

Thus, although the Orthodox Christians in the whole world have unity of faith and preserve tradition as a living truth, but every local church expresses this one faith by her own language, her liturgical rites, hymns, sacred vestments etc... without dismissing the unity of faith. The church locality has not hidden the universal heavenly character of the Church.

In other words, the differences of traditions, in details and not in essence do not stop the realization of the unity of the Universal Church, as long as it has been established on the basic unity of faith and life.

We conclude this book with the following notes:

1 - The Orthodox Church, especially the Church of Alexandria, preserved -more than others- the holy Tradition in its details as in its spirit. It is because our church did not interfere in politics, and had not any worldly authority. She lived in her spirituality far from the spirit of the world . The

appearance of the monastic movement has kept the tradition of the church in a humble, evangelic and ascetic spirit.

2 - The unity between the Non-Chalcedonian Orthodox Churches in this generation, gives a practical and accurate lesson concerning the concept of Unity, to the theologians who are interested in the Ecumenical Movement.

These churches have differences in some details of tradition, but have one Faith and one Tradition. In the last years the whole world had seen more than one time, the participation of the Patriarchs, Bishops, Presbyters, Deacons and Laymen from these churches in one service, giving one offer for all.

These churches must play an active role with their sisters, the Chalcedonian Orthodox churches, to put one expression for the one faith concerning the nature of Christ. Their views -in their essence- have come nearer. Having done this, the Orthodox Church should devote all her power for preaching to the whole world.

3 - We, as an Orthodox Church -ought to think seriously of what we should offer to the world in our preaching, when a French man, for instance, accepts the Orthodox faith. It is our duty to offer him how to worship in an orthodox, apostolic and patristic mind with one spirit, but in a culture that fits him.

H.G. Gregorius, the metropolite of Newdelhi, India, in his speech to the Orthodox Church leaders in Melbourne, said that we have to sow Orthodox seeds in the Australian soil, so that tree will be Orthodox Australian one(83).

4 - As the Church of Alexandria has been opened to the outside world and thousands immigrated, the Church Mother

must study her message. She must guide and help them to preach the Orthodox thought and life to others without any evading from the spirit of Tradition or Rite.

She must not close herself to a local community or language but must bear an ecumenical responsibility.

Truly, it is too accurate a mission to offer the living Tradition to the universe with an opened heart and without any evading or disregard. It is the urgent work of the orthodox theologians nowadays.

EPILOGUE

The church and Tradition are but two aspects for the life of Faith. They are inseparable; we can't know one of them without the other.

By Tradition the church has her existence, acknowledges her Bridegroom, practises His saving deed and accepts His divine mysteries...

By Tradition we discover the church gospel, accept it, preserve it, live its rules and preach it...

By Tradition we recognize the sacramental and ecclesiastical life, the church liturgies, hymns, rites etc...

By Tradition we meet with the Church Saints and Fathers, discover their lives in Jesus Christ, their writings, take the blessings of their prayers and enjoy our fellowship with them in Jesus Christ...

By Tradition we understand the Church canons, come in touch with its holy councils and their works etc...

In brief, we say that Tradition is the core of the church, and without Tradition, the church can't exist, can't practise her apostolic life, her continual renewal, her unity, nor live with her genuine characteristics...

NOTES

1. F. F. Bruce: Tradition: Old and New, Michigan 1972, p 20, 21.
2. O'Brein: The Convergence of Tradition, p 22.
3. J. Kelly: History of the Early Christian Doctrines, N.Y 1960, p 32.
4. F. F. Bruce, p 33.
5. J. P. Mackey: Tradition and Change in the Church, Iriand 1968, p. 20.
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81. cf J.P.Mackey: Tradition and Change in the Church, p 24.
82. Meyendorff: Orthodoxy and Catholicity.
83. He visited Melbourne on 1977