

# HOLY TRADITION

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# HOLY TRADITION

The Apostolic Doctrines and Holy Traditions of the Timeless  
Church and Their Relevance Today

Moran Mor Athanasius Yohan I Metropolitan

Faith and Tradition Series

## **HOLY TRADITION**

(English)

Faith and Tradition Series

by

Moran Mor Athanasius Yohan I Metropolitan

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## PREFACE

As one who grew up in an environment of Orthodox Christian faith and culture, in the southern part of India, all my life I believed monasteries were 100 percent either Orthodox or Catholic, and not Evangelical. Imagine my shock when, some fifteen years ago, I read an article on monasteries and monasticism in a Protestant Evangelical publication in North America. I was startled when I read that 50 percent of new monasteries in North America were started by Protestant groups.

The article I read aroused my curiosity as to what was happening in the ecclesiastical world. As I read and researched further, I realised that there still is an insatiable hunger in the church at large to return to the deep roots of the Orthodox faith, worship and practice of the timeless church. The late Dr Robert

## Holy Tradition

Webber and a few others became the leading thinkers and theologians who became the voice of the cloud of witnesses of the early church.<sup>1</sup> They told the rootless Christianity that the orthodox faith and practices were not dead, but were alive. Hence, if we are to be part of the Holy Church, we ought to choose to return to the timeless church. This is our only option before Christianity becomes a thing of the past.

True to some of these godly men's prediction, as I write this in 2019, it is a well-known, accepted fact that western countries are now labeled as 'post-Christian'. And the hunger for spiritual reality is more evident now than when I first read about the thousands of Protestant Christians going to monasteries for meditation, silence, the practice of holy traditions of the ancient church, and above all, to seek God there.

As it's often said, the way forward is to sometimes go back. This is why we are now witnessing the resurgence of the Orthodox faith and holy traditions of the ancient church. This booklet is all about the desperate call to the people of God to return to the "ancient path,"<sup>2</sup> the only way to be part of the "one, holy, catholic and apostolic church." My prayer is that since holy traditions are meant for God's people to experience His presence, this booklet will become an



## Preface

added blessing in your journey toward God, to know Him intimately and to truly become part of the living, Holy Church.



## INTRODUCTION

I was once asked a question by a member of the Indian Parliament. He asked, “Metropolitan, you Christians have one God and one Holy Book, but how come there are thousands of different Christian denominations and so many court cases being fought between Christian groups?” The man who asked me this question is an upper-caste Brahmin. Then he continued, “You see, we Hindus have millions of gods and goddesses and so many holy books, but we are all one and tens of thousands of temples are for all Hindus to go and worship.”

I really did not know how to answer his sincere question. One who reads the Bible knows that the heartfelt desire of Jesus was for oneness and unity among all those who loved Him. He was pained to see them divided into so many groups.

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So we come to the cardinal question: why is the church today so divided and why are there more than 45,000 denominations, with each claiming to be the true church?

How can the Christian faith, which is based on one book, the Holy Bible, be so divided? What happened to the church our Lord Jesus started and the apostles established? Historically, there was only one church for over one thousand years after Christ. But what happened after that? What transpired between the church then and now for the Church of Christ to lose its way? Is there any way the great prayer of Jesus can be fulfilled: “Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are.”<sup>1</sup>

Sadly, I believe these divisions can be directly traced back to the attempt by Martin Luther and his followers—the reformers in the sixteenth century—to purify the church. What happened was very much like the idiom: “Burning the house down to smoke the rat out.” The famous phrase *sola scriptura*, meaning “Word alone,” which they promoted, meant that church beliefs and practices must be interpreted by what is found in the Holy Bible or else rejected. It

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has inadvertently opened the way for anyone and everyone to take authority and interpret the Holy Scripture according to their subjective experience and convenience. It was the beginning of what is now widely recognised as the event that eventually led to the breakup of the church into thousands of denominations.

I'm afraid those who believe that sound doctrine alone is sufficient to protect and safeguard the Holy Church are sadly mistaken. What is the proof?

Martin Luther and his co-worker Zwingli became bitter enemies due to their disagreement over celebrating the Eucharist. Why?<sup>2</sup> They believed their own interpretation of the Mystical Supper was right. They ignored the unified view and decisions of the church fathers and church councils on this matter of faith and practice. You see, the teaching of sola scriptura<sup>3</sup> did not help unite the church, but instead, created mass confusion in the church.

Sadly, those who followed the reformers' footsteps failed to achieve their narrow-minded views of theological purity and biblical fidelity. Worse still, by having an individual man take the authority to interpret scripture in a very personal, subjective and convenient way every Sunday—completely ignoring

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the hundreds of years of practice of the unified historical church and what the church fathers had to say—the man has become the object and reason for gathering together. God is no longer the audience among much of their church worship. As C.S. Lewis would say, “God is in the dock.” The world and church look and act in the same way. For the true believers in these churches, they keep fighting a losing war against the liberal and lost majority.

Never before in the history of the Holy Church has there been such widespread confusion concerning the faith of the timeless church, the apostolic traditions such as the nature of the church’s faith in the Holy Trinity and the essence of Christian life and worship. Things are getting darker. What is the answer to this confusion, and is there a way out of this maze and fog we are in?

Yes, I believe the prayer of Jesus can be answered. We must return to the apostolic doctrines and the Holy Tradition of the ancient church.

Listen to what St Vincent of Lerins of the fifth century, who had a deep and enduring love for the Holy Scriptures, has to say:

I have often, earnestly approached learned and holy men, who knew Christian doctrine, asking

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how I could distinguish the truth of the Catholic [universal] faith from the falsehood of heresy. In almost every instance, they have said anyone who wants to detect heresy, avoid the traps set by heretics, and to maintain the Trinity faith, one must, with the help of the Lord, reinforce one's own belief in two things: the authority of the Holy Scriptures and the holy traditions of the church.<sup>4</sup>

In this booklet, I will attempt to give you biblical, historical and godly examples of immense importance and show the need for us to understand the meaning of Holy Tradition and also the significance of living a 'sacramental life', participating in the "divine nature" as we obey and humbly follow the footsteps of the apostles and the orthodox fathers of the timeless church. As you keep reading, you will learn how, having been brought up to hate the word tradition, you tend to misunderstand true biblical tradition; what the apostles and early church fathers taught us about the Holy Tradition, how the early church developed its culture and practice, how Holy Tradition helped sustain the faith during testing times in the first four centuries, what really constitutes the Holy Tradition and, most importantly, answers to the questions you might have had in the light of what you've read.





## CHAPTER ONE

# UNDERSTANDING TRADITIONS

**W**e, Indians, touch the feet of our elders (first lesson in manners) to show respect and the elders in turn gently touch the youngsters on their heads in a gesture of blessing. Saying thank you—‘namaste’, with folded hands is an eastern tradition, and shaking hands is a western tradition. These are passed on from generation to generation. If you meet the Santali tribe in North India, they wash our feet as a welcoming gesture. That is their tradition. In the US, celebrating Thanksgiving is a tradition, and so is celebrating St Patrick’s Day by wearing a green-coloured dress. You can have workplace traditions, family traditions, statewide traditions or even national traditions—and they are not usually written down, but generally passed on as customs.

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Once a custom is practised by a large number of people and then handed down to the next generation, it takes the form of a tradition. Traditions, in other words, are customs which are followed by a group of people over a long period of time. From the taste of our food, the clothes we wear, the names we give our children, the body language we project—everything in life is attached to some tradition that may have been thousands of years old and would have travelled through the ages from generation to generation.

The important point to note is this: tradition is transmitted orally—by word of mouth and by practise from person to person—from generation to generation.

### **Biblical Tradition—The Love-Hate Relationship**

While writing this booklet on Holy Tradition and its importance in sustaining the pure faith, I asked a few people what came to their mind when they heard the word ‘tradition’ in the Christian context. The following are some of the answers I got:

Practices we (Christians) follow.

Practical things we do to become spiritual.

Visible acts Christian do—like making the sign

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of the cross, bowing and kneeling as evidence of our faith.

Religious practices of Jews or Muslims that were shaped by culture and family traditions.

Things that unspiritual people like Pharisees do, pretending to be spiritual.

I noticed that people have a love-hate attitude towards Holy Tradition. It seems to me that a lot of practising Christians, especially those from the Protestant persuasion, are almost brainwashed to hate the word tradition. They quote the words Christ used to harshly rebuke the Pharisees who let go or set aside God's commands in order to follow their own set of man-made traditions.

But please think for a moment. If we are to hate, throw away and reject traditions, how then can we respond to the two-thousand-year-old holy traditions of the church? Were the apostles who handed down these traditions, the early Christians who followed those traditions, the church fathers who strived to preserve them, and thousands of faithful believers of the Orthodox faith who saw faith and traditions like two sides of the same coin wrong? Or may be, there is more to it than meets the eye.

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Let me quote a verse which will shed some light of the subject of Holy Tradition.

Here is what St Paul's writing to the Church in Thessalonica, says:

Now we command you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is living in idleness and not in accordance with the tradition that you received from us.<sup>1</sup>

What does St Paul mean by “tradition” in this context? To understand this word tradition, it is important to know the Greek words used in the New Testament for tradition: *paradosis* and *paradomi*. These words have the same meaning as the English word tradition in the dictionary, which is:

The handing down of statements, beliefs, legends, customs, information, etc., from generation to generation, especially by word of mouth or by practice. A long established or inherited way of thinking and acting.<sup>2</sup>

In other words, St Paul is exhorting us to stay away from those who are not living in accordance with “the way we have shown you to live or the practices we have handed down to you.”

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Unfortunately, many versions of the English Bible translate the Greek words ‘paradosis’ and ‘paradomi’ differently and instead use words like: ordinance, teaching, Christian teaching, etc. instead of using the word tradition. I believe this is a deliberate distortion by the western theological mindset which refuses to acknowledge the ancient, timeless belief of: “one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.”

When we talk about Holy Tradition or church traditions, some Protestant and Evangelical groups will protest, and I think they do it without understanding the whole picture. The truth of the matter is, all those who protest against tradition have their own traditions too—they believe and practice thousands of things in their religious and non-religious life. I’ve heard people say that Protestants harbour the tradition of going against tradition!

Yes, it is true that most religions worldwide practise their traditions; And some are even very similar to Christian practices. However, the reason the Holy Church faithfully practices certain traditions and adheres to certain patterns of worship is different. And the difference is crucial. One can bow before Satan—who tempted Christ—and worship him<sup>3</sup> or one can bow down and worship the almighty God.<sup>4</sup>

## **Holy Tradition**

For some, when the word “tradition” is mentioned in the Christian context, they think of external things that people do, such as making the sign of the cross, censing, chanting, bowing, kneeling, responding to prayers and reading the Scripture. But in reality, Holy Tradition is sacred and means a lot more than what we *do* in worship.

The ongoing life of God’s people is called Holy Tradition. In other words, the Holy Tradition is one that has been passed on and given over within the church from the time of Christ’s apostles down to the present day. Although it contains many written documents, Holy Tradition is not limited to what is written; on the contrary, it is the total life and experience of the entire church!

If we compare the Holy Scripture to a train, the Holy Tradition is like the two tracks on which a train runs. It is within the context of Holy Tradition that Scripture comes alive and has been kept alive for thousands of years within the Orthodox faith. Holy Tradition must go hand-in-hand with the Scripture so that the Holy Church will not be tossed to and fro by every wind gust of individual interpretation of doctrine.

Theologian Jaroslav Pelikan, a renowned scholar of Christian history, reminds us that in Christian faith, tradition precedes and succeeds the writing of the Holy Scripture. That is one of the reasons why Believers Eastern Church embraces the Orthodox faith and Holy Tradition as part of its faith and worship.

During the Reformation, Martin Luther, Zwingli and their followers, using the catchword *sola scriptura*, fought against many man-made practices of the Western Roman Church. The western church had embraced these practices after the Great Schism with the eastern church in 1054, and many of these practices went against the Bible and Apostolic Traditions. But while fighting for the faith, the reformers unwittingly rejected much of the Apostolic Tradition of the timeless church; as the sayings go: “they threw the baby out with the bathwater” and “burned the house to frighten the mouse away.” They fought for the separation of Scripture from tradition. As a result, the solid rock of Scripture, now removed from its context of Holy Tradition, was turned into a soft ball of clay, able to be moulded into whatever shape its handlers wished—and this is exactly what happened, causing immense damage to the church.

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Ponder through the following for a moment. When one argues in favour of sola scriptura, the contention that only the written Word of God is the basis for faith and practice, they may be doing so without fully grasping the reality and implication of what they are claiming. The fact is, it was only in AD 397 that the 27 books of the New Testament were canonised and acknowledged by the church as God's inspired word. This means that for almost four hundred years, believers did not have the New Testament like we have today.<sup>5</sup> In fact, as you will see in detail later, the first portion of the New Testament was written around AD 50 and the final portion around AD 90. Yes, they had portions of written documents in circulation; however, they were not combined together like we have them now. So, the obvious question is this: how did the early church survive for nearly four hundred years without the written New Testament of the Holy Bible? The answer is simple if we are ready to see it—by Apostolic Tradition!

The early church survived, grew and thrived because it had many oral “teachings” of the apostles, which not only told them what Jesus had taught (faith), but also showed them how to live in faith that they had been taught (traditions).



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This is what St Paul alludes to in 1 Corinthians Chapter 11:2, where he tells the Corinthian church of his appreciation for their willingness to follow the “traditions” he handed over to them.

I praise you ... for holding to the teachings  
(Greek word), just as I passed them on to you.

And this is what St Paul refers to when he writes in 2 Thessalonians 3:6 about living in accordance with the tradition he and the apostles passed on.

It is important to realise that the first written document of the New Testament came nearly 40 years after Christ’s death and resurrection. Scholars say the Gospel of St Mark was the first narrative of the life of Christ, and it was written between AD 50 and AD 60.<sup>6</sup>

And when St Paul and St John wrote letters to Christians, it was between AD 90 and AD 96. They wrote from Christ’s teachings and through the special revelation God gave them. It is hard to imagine that St Paul’s letter to Philemon about the runaway slave, Onesimus, would become part of the inspired, infallible Word of God! But God knew and guided his hands and heart to pen those words. It is similar to the fact that the prophets of the Old Testament, who spoke of the future, had only a little understanding

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of the events to come. But they were guided by the unseen hand of God. And remember, what they (the Old Testament prophets) said was not written down for thousands of years, but was rather passed through oral traditions.

For the early church, the understanding of Jesus Christ was passed down and learned through oral communication. This tells us that the establishment of apostolic doctrines had their roots in the beliefs and practices of the early Christians. As one can see, both the Holy Scripture and the apostolic traditions go hand-in-hand: on one side, the apostles taught the faith based on the Old Testament and its fulfillment in Jesus Christ, and on the other, they also passed on the traditions which showed them how they must live or worship with this new faith.

The classic example is the Divine Liturgy created by St James, the first bishop of the church in Jerusalem, which was handed down to the church. That liturgy, which we even follow today, showed the early believers how a worship service ought to be conducted and prayers said. In fact, St Basil, in the fourth century, used this liturgy as the authentic source to defend the faith against heresy. This means, what the early Christians believed was found not in books or

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theological treatises, but rather in the liturgy! And for nearly four hundred years, the sacramental life of the church transformed lives and became the way of life. As a result, when the time came, they had no trouble deciding the books of the New Testament.

This is my contention: as much as we believe that the Holy Scripture is the infallible, inspired and unadulterated word of God and is absolute for our salvation, so also must we not deny the Holy Apostolic Tradition that has been passed on and handed down to the Holy Church from the time of the apostles to the present day. This tradition never contradicts the written Word of God, but rather, serves to strengthen and support the church to enter into the sacramental life and “become partakers of His divine nature.”<sup>7</sup>



## CHAPTER TWO

# CULTURE, TRADITIONS AND FAITH

I was recently talking to a septuagenarian, who was born and raised in Germany and later moved to North America in his forties. Thirty years of his life in America made him feel that the place was truly his home, as he was totally at peace with the culture, weather and food of the new land. At times, his family brought him nostalgic items, especially items of food imported from his homeland. When he ate them, he said he was reminded of the flavour and taste of the food his mother cooked when he was five years old.

That brought back a flood of memories. Although I've travelled extensively throughout India and the world and eaten many different kinds of food, I still feel the special taste of my mother's dishes whenever I come across food that is cooked similarly. In my mind, I

then travel back to my childhood, my home, my village and my life in a Syrian Christian family.

Taste, like language and hundreds of customs and behaviour—both visible and invisible—is part of culture and custom. Culture and tradition are inseparable. This is true of our faith too. The culture we are born into affects our entire life—including the way we think, act and respond to everything around us. Our beliefs, behaviour and responses are conditioned by our upbringing and culture. However, if we adapt to a new culture and become part of it, the new culture can quickly become the dominating principle which drives our behaviour in day-to-day life.

### **Formation of Early Church Culture and What We Can Learn From It**

Let us look at how the culture of the early church developed. The Holy Church started with a large number of Jewish families around AD 30 as recorded in Chapter 2 in the book of Acts. They made the first Christian church. By carefully reading the New Testament, we can see the complex problems the first-generation Christians faced. They had to create a new culture and become part of it, and slowly let the new culture permeate into them and impact their lives and

behaviour.

The first-generation Christians, who were brought up in the strong, binding Jewish culture, had to live in a way that reflected their new-found faith in Christ. They not only had to be faithful, which was invisible, but also had to translate that faith into their visible speech, actions and convictions. And this new faith or belief system—or culture—was to take root and cause the inside out transformation of both their lives and the community that was being formed. How did they do this effectively? They did it by forming Christian traditions.

Although it would take a few years for their generation to internalise the faith, the “traditions of their faith” would then be handed down to the next generation—not primarily in written form, but in the behaviour and actions they saw being lived out in their families. Then, the children would also be born into the culture of their Christian church. Later some of these traditions were written down (what we now know as the Holy Scripture), but the unwritten faith and practices which were passed on were not less important to the community. The part of the faith that was passed on orally is what we refer to as “tradition.”

It is no wonder that on several occasions, St Paul told

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the churches the importance of living by the traditions (both oral and written) he handed to them.

The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.<sup>2</sup>

But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.<sup>3</sup>

And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.<sup>4</sup>

There's a lot for us to learn from the Jews who became Christians and developed a new culture for the church.

Quite often, when people from other backgrounds first come into our world of Orthodox faith and traditions, they are not used to our worship and their subconscious will drive them back to their comfort zone and value system—to the culture they have been born into and raised in. Their first thought is: “What do I benefit from it or is this going to make my life



better?” People are usually concerned about their present life—their joys, happiness, love and acceptance and attention they get from others.

Those who are mature in faith and loyal to the church must reach out to these newcomers and befriend and encourage them, becoming their mentors, instructing and helping them learn the deeper, spiritual meanings of our faith and worship. They should be invited to participate in Bible study and fellowship groups where they get to know our faith through relationships.

When the newcomers progress in their response, their active presence should be valued by assigning them roles to be part of the church life in whatever ways they can. This way, they will feel they are trusted and, thus, they will want to learn more about our church life. And they will no longer think of what they can get by joining our church—instead, they will start caring for others in their prayers and activities. They will quickly become a core member of the parish. They will begin to say words like “my church,” “our church,” etc. The next stage is when they realise the change is an inside-out transformation which is a spiritual work of God, and they are truly part of the Holy Church which is directly linked with God and eternity.

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In almost the same way, you can see this progressive change in the lives of people we read of in the New Testament. When the Gentiles (non-Jews) started to join the local churches, which, until then were composed solely of Jewish converts, being from different religious and social backgrounds, they struggled to adapt and become part of the new culture and tradition. This is why St Paul had to write the letter of First Corinthians to the Church in Corinth, where some people had struggled to become part of a new culture: “Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you.”<sup>5</sup>

The church’s faith, continuity, stability and permanence are preserved and kept by the Holy Tradition. We have seen how Christian culture and tradition developed in the early church. The two-thousand-year-old Holy Church survived because of the apostles’ doctrines and traditions that the church followed closely. As we will see in the chapters ahead, in the midst of hundreds of false cults and extreme opposition, these two factors kept the Holy Church safe. Today, this is still true and as important as ever.

## CHAPTER THREE

# WHAT IS APOSTOLIC TRADITION?

Here is an excerpt from the book *Doctrine and Scripture*.

The Holy Tradition of the Old Testament is expressed in the Old Testament books of the Bible and in the ongoing life of the Israelites (God's people) till the birth of Christ. This tradition is fulfilled, completed and transcended in the time of the Messiah and in the Christian Church. The New Testamental or Christian tradition is also called the Apostolic Tradition or the Tradition of the Church. The central, written part of this tradition is the New Testamental writings in the Bible.<sup>1</sup>

The Apostolic Tradition is what the apostles handed down to the church with a living voice. A portion of it was written down later and that is the New

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Testament. The written part, the Holy Scripture, is God's revelation—it is absolute, infallible and without error. But, when we completely ignore the other part, the Apostolic Tradition, that was orally told by the apostles and passed on from one generation to another for hundreds of years, it is like saying “one wing of the eagle flying way up in the sky is perfect and flawless.” While the statement itself is right, it is erroneous, since the other wing is equally important for the eagle to make its flight. Hence, we need both the apostles' doctrines (one wing) and the apostles' traditions (the other wing) too.

Let's look at it this way. We read St Paul's writing to the Corinthian Church where he tells them of the many things he told them (as doctrines and practice) and how he praised them for obeying the holy traditions he handed them. Yet, all of the things he told them in words and practice are not explained in the letter he wrote to them. Let's ponder over the number of things he must have taught and told them as he lived amongst them, teaching them day and night, for three years.<sup>2</sup> He demonstrated how it all ought to be. Yes, he talked about the relevance of women covering their heads and the significance of Holy Communion. Yet, surely there was a lot more he must have told them as a living voice. In fact, true to its calling to

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safeguard the faith, the church that embraced the apostolic faith and traditions, passed them down to the next generation, and this continued for two thousand years, along with apostolic succession. So, isn't it only reasonable that the holy traditions of the apostles be given careful attention along with the written Scripture? At the same time, no tradition of any kind should violate or go against the Word of God, which is inspired and infallible.

In fact, this is exactly what St Paul tells the Church at Thessalonica:

So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings (paradosis) we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.<sup>3</sup>

It is a very clear reference to the fact that the Holy Tradition (mentioned here as teachings) include those written down as well as what is passed on orally.

To make it clearer, let me explain it in another way.

When were the books of the New Testament (which we often use to defend and explain our faith) written?

- ◆ The Gospels of St Matthew, St Mark and St Luke were written between AD 50 and AD 61.
- ◆ The book of Acts was written by St Luke in AD 62.

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- ◆ All of St Paul's letters, thirteen out of the 27 books of the New Testament, were written between AD 51 and AD 67.
- ◆ The Gospel of St John, the epistles of St John 1, 2, 3 and the book of Revelation were written by the apostle between AD 80 and AD 96.<sup>4</sup>

We know of the beginnings of the Holy Church in AD 29, how St Stephen was stoned to death in AD 34, Paul the radical Jew became a Christian in AD 35 and how Antioch became the new centre of the Christian faith in AD 42. And all these were retrospectively written by St Luke, the physician, in AD 62, and we know this as the book of Acts. If all this is true, it raises the question of how the Holy Church functioned and spread all over the world when the written copy of the New Testament was not available. The answer is clear and obvious. It was by means of the apostles' oral, living voice—the Holy Tradition of the church.

You might be surprised to note that we see a similar pattern in the Old Testament. Throughout these 4,000 years (from the first man to Moses' time), Holy Scriptures neither existed nor was the Sabbath considered a feast among the people. During those many thousands

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of years, the faithful and chosen people were guided to the path of salvation only by the Holy Tradition, namely, from the teaching about God which they received from a living voice. Only for the duration of 1,400 years—from the time of Moses until the advent of Christ—were they guided by the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament. Just as before the books of the Old Testament were written the people were guided in the knowledge of God and in the path of salvation only by the Holy Tradition (tradition with a living voice), so were they precisely before the writing of the books of the New Testament.<sup>5</sup>

As I said earlier, just as it was true of the people of God in the Old Testament, in the life of the Holy Church, it was the Holy Tradition that guided the first church in the ways of God.

Let us not forget that Jesus never asked His apostles to write any book. He told them to go and preach the Gospel to the whole world.<sup>6</sup> So, the church was guided safely through the first four hundred years, not with the canonised New Testament, but through the living voice to the hearers, just as Jesus taught and did good deeds for three-and-a-half years during His public ministry before His sacrificial death on the Cross.

## **How the Apostolic Tradition Helped Preserve the Truth**

Imagine you were a Christian during the first four centuries; if someone came to your door and told you about a new “teaching” (a heresy—there were plenty of them as you will see later) about Christ or the church, how would you respond to it and defend your faith? Remember that you had no written word of God with you. Today, if a cult knocks at a Christian’s door, we have the New Testament to defend our faith, but that was not the case for the people of God in the early centuries. For them, the only weapon they had to deal with heresies was the Holy Tradition. In other words, your answer to the heretical teaching would be: “The apostles and the church fathers taught us our way of faith, and that is what we will follow.” This should tell us why the church placed such a high degree of value upon the Holy Tradition.

We know that the apostles themselves fought against such false teachings as we read in the Epistle of St John.<sup>7</sup> St Paul writes a great deal against false teaching in his letter to the Galatian church.<sup>8</sup> When the Apostle Paul urges the Thessalonian church to discern the prophetic utterance,<sup>9</sup> he does so on the basis of the Apostolic Tradition “passed on to you.”<sup>10</sup>



## What is Apostolic Tradition?

When he instructs the Christian community in Corinth to judge a prophecy,<sup>11</sup> he does not place the responsibility of discernment on the shoulders of a particular individual.”

In fact, an important litmus test the early Christians used to determine true doctrines was the baptismal formulations. Before being baptised, candidates were to publicly proclaim their faith, and those creeds of confession, like the Apostles’ Creed, became one of the earliest forms of the Holy Tradition. These creeds were the church’s way of protecting its faith.

For our information, here are some (there were many more) of the major heretical teachings which came up during the early centuries.

1. In the first century, the Cerinthians, a heretical cult, taught that the world was formed out of pre-existent matter, possibly by angels, and not by a supreme God. They further claimed that Jesus began His life as a human; the divine power, Christ, descended upon Him at His baptism, guided his earthly ministry, and left Him before the crucifixion.

Then there were the Ebionites. They taught that Jesus was not born of a virgin, and that He was only the son of Joseph and Mary. They claimed

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that Jesus kept the law so well, that God claimed Him as His son, and so the Holy Spirit came upon Him during His baptism.

2. In the second century, the Gnostics, a major heretical group, came to exert widespread influence. They taught a wide array of pseudo-Christian doctrines. They said there was a distinction between God who created matter and the supreme and unknowable divine being. The world was, therefore, imperfect and unspiritual. The true knowledge of God could only be obtained through their mystical “gnosis” or knowledge, which would be possible only if one were to be a part of the group.

Then came Marcionism—the teaching that the God of the Old Testament was different from the God of the New Testament, and that Jesus did not really have a physical, human body.

3. In the third century, there was the cult led by a man named Novatian, a terrible narrow-minded legalistic sect, which taught that there were some sins so bad that they could not be forgiven.

In the same century, another heretical teaching, known as Sabellianism taught that the Godhead

## What is Apostolic Tradition?

did not consist of three distinct persons, but was only a succession of the modes of one person.

4. In the fourth century, one of the worst cults, led by a presbyter named Arius, came up and it almost destroyed the Holy Church. They taught that the Son, Jesus, was not God—He was not equal to or of the same substance as the Father.

In those early four hundred years of the Holy Church, the church survived amidst this forest fire of false teachings, heresies and persecution by relying on the Apostolic Tradition that was passed on—both in written and oral form.

Then, as is the case now, there were numerous false teachings. Multitudes were led astray by charismatic preachers of the prosperity gospel and false teachings about the Holy Spirit and a “new Jesus” that was not part of the Holy Trinity. Under such trying situations, it only made sense to fall back on the Apostolic Tradition passed on to us to defend our faith.

### **Apostolic Tradition and the Church Fathers**

Orthodox theologian Bishop Kallistos Ware said, “The Bible is the supreme expression of God’s revelation to man.” The early fathers fully agree with this statement.

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St Jerome, who translated the Bible from Greek to Latin in the fourth century, in his commentary on the book of Isaiah said, “Ignorance of the scriptures is ignorance of Christ.”

St Athanasius, whose letter on Scripture is the first known listing of the 27 books of the canonised New Testament, called those who did not care for the scripture, “worthy of utmost condemnation.”

St John Chrysostom said, “The cause of all evils” is when people neglect the scripture.<sup>12</sup>

However, St Ignatius (AD 104) and St Polycarp of Smyrna (AD 106), disciples of the Apostle John and respected church fathers, taught the church to protect itself from the teachings of heretics by fully following the Apostolic Tradition.<sup>13</sup>

St Irenaeus, in AD 180, while putting up his defence against the Gnostic heresy said, “When they [the Gnostics] are confused from the scriptures, they turn around and accuse these same scriptures as if they were not correct ... But, again, when we refer to that tradition which originates from the apostles, which is preserved by means of successions of presbyters in the churches, they object to tradition, saying they are wiser not merely than the presbyters, but even the apostles.”<sup>14</sup>

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Later, St Clement said (AD 202), “Those who explain scripture without the help of church’s tradition cut asunder the significance of truth.”<sup>15</sup>

St Origen (AD 250) said, “Preserve the Holy Tradition in the church.”<sup>16</sup>

St John Chrysostom (AD 407) said, “Hence, it is clear that the Holy Apostles did not deliver everything by epistle; rather, many things they handed down via the spoken word which is also trustworthy. If this is the tradition, then don’t ask anything more.”<sup>17</sup>

The early church fathers—mighty leaders like Irenaeus, Tertullian, Hilary of Poitiers, Athanasius, Basil the Great and many other saints of the Holy Church—protected and preserved the true faith by teaching that the Scriptures were not to be looked upon and interpreted in isolation from the church. Rather it was the heretics who interpreted the Scripture according to what they thought was right in their own eyes. For the fathers of the church and the early Christians, the Bible was most naturally understood in the context of the Holy Church of both the living and the departed, who believed, taught and worshipped in line with the apostles’ doctrines and traditions. Know that in the early centuries, the New Testament was still in its developmental stage. It was the living oral teaching

of the apostles and the church fathers that kept the Holy Church from being burnt down by heretical movements, as we have seen earlier.

Herein lay the problem. The extreme teaching of some of the reformers overlooked the relevance of Holy Tradition that had helped sustain the Holy Church before we had the Bible—as we have today. By doing so, it opened the door for each person to individually and subjectively interpret the Scripture, completely ignoring what the historic church had taught and practised for two thousand years. Reflect on this: why are there thousands of Christian denominations today? They all came up after the Reformation around six hundred years ago. It happened because individuals took upon themselves the right to decide what the true doctrine and practice of the church was.

### **Apostolic Tradition—the *How to Do Things***

The written Word of God tells us a lot of things that we, as the Holy Church, must obey. But it does not explain or tell us the *how* of what we must do to obey the teaching. It is like asking somebody to go to Mumbai, without giving any further details. Nothing about the methodology of how one should go about it is explained. Does one have to walk the miles to

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Mumbai, or go by train, car, or flight? The order, or command, does not tell one the *how* of it.

In the same way, it is through the Holy Tradition that the apostles showed by explanations and examples the *how* of carrying out these instructions. They were:

- ◆ how to baptise,
- ◆ solemnise weddings
- ◆ conduct the Divine Liturgy
- ◆ offer peace
- ◆ bless the congregation
- ◆ prepare the altar for the Eucharist
- ◆ do the censuring
- ◆ cast out demons
- ◆ other ministry outreach as mentioned in the book of Acts, which is the blueprint of the church for the Great Commission

All these instructions were handed down from the beginning from generation to generation by the apostles and the church fathers.

For example, take the Sacrament of Baptism. The Holy Scripture does not tell us the method or details of how it should be conducted; it only gives us the events that transpired, leading to the jailor and his entire family getting baptised, or, as mentioned in

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Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 2, that 3,000 people got baptised. Though water as the means for baptism is mentioned, the method which was used is not told. Which passage in the Bible talks about renouncing Satan three times and receiving Jesus three times before the Sacrament of Holy Baptism?

Likewise, Scripture asks us to confess our sins, receive Holy Communion and solemnise Holy Matrimony; but nowhere does it specify the *how* of carrying out these sacraments. The Bible tells us to pray, but does not tell us where and when. It does not tell us how to make the sign of the cross on oneself or conduct the invocation of the Holy Spirit to bless and sanctify the bread and wine for the Holy Communion. In fact, we do not even have a direct reference in the Bible about the worship of the Trinity—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Things like these are found in extra-Biblical writings, such as the *Didache*, which are part of the Apostolic Tradition.

One of the most important reasons for the church to hold on to the Holy Tradition handed down to us by the apostles and church fathers is that it tells us the *how* of following Scripture. The best example would be the St James Liturgy as I've mentioned before. The apostolic, Holy Church used the St James



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Liturgy to conduct Holy Communion right from the very institution of the church. St James, who was the first bishop of the church in Jerusalem and also the brother of Jesus, put down the *how* to do it. And it was then passed on from generation to generation and today, we, in Believers Eastern Church, use the St James Liturgy as the basis for the Divine Liturgy in our church.

Rejecting Holy Tradition is like cutting off one wing of an eagle and asking it to fly. It will fall. It is like taking out the tracks and expecting the train to move. The engine will make a whole lot of noise, but the train won't go anywhere.

Holy Tradition has been handed down by the apostles themselves; it has helped preserve the faith of the church through the stormy heresies of the early church; the church fathers attest to it; it gives us the *how* to practice our faith and when we follow it, we are following in the path of the “one, holy, apostolic and catholic church.”

The way to be part of the “the one, holy apostolic and catholic church” is to follow the apostolic teaching and tradition which encompass the written and oral teachings of the apostles, the teaching of the church fathers and the lives of the saints. Many became

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martyrs of their faith, being obedient to the church councils, following the liturgical worship that is God-centered, wherein we honour God, gather in front of His throne and altar and worship Him along with the angels and archangels and the host of heaven. The consecration of the Eucharist that is done the way it is today was handed down to us by the Apostolic Tradition and the church fathers. The canon laws of the church, the creeds such as the Nicene Creed, the Apostles' Creed, the iconographic tradition that reminds us of the deep, spiritual values of the saints, and our call to follow their faith are all great traditions that were bequeathed to us by generations.

And the Scripture reminds us, “Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.”<sup>18</sup>

## CHAPTER FOUR

# WHAT MAKES UP THE HOLY TRADITION OF THE HOLY CHURCH?

*We do not change the everlasting boundaries which our fathers have set, but we keep the Tradition, just as we received it.<sup>1</sup>*

—*John of Damascus*

As we have already seen, the Apostolic Tradition has two parts in it. One is the teaching and explanation of the doctrines, and the second is the practical *how* of doing them. Both are equally important. When we *do*, we need the complete involvement of our five senses in the sacrament. Then, the transient meets the imminent and we grow in grace.

It is again important that we don't overlook the fact that in the early centuries of the Holy Church, the apostles and church fathers defended the holy faith,

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protecting the church from dozens of heretical groups and errors using the Holy Tradition of the church.

St Ignatius, St Polycarp, St Irenaeus and St Clement of Alexandria said that those who explained the Scripture without the help of the church's tradition had cut asunder the significance of the truth.

St Basil the Great said, "Among dogmas and kerygma [evangelical truths] that were safely guarded by the church, some we have from written teachings while others we have received orally from the tradition of the apostles by a concealed succession. The latter holds the same legitimacy and force as the written text."<sup>2</sup>

Yet, if one asks, "What makes up Holy Tradition," how will we answer that?

Here is what Bishop Kallistos Ware says about Holy Tradition:

Orthodox are always talking about tradition. What do they mean by the word? A tradition, says the Oxford Dictionary, is an opinion, belief, or custom handed down from ancestors to posterity. Christian tradition, in that case, is the faith which Jesus Christ imparted to the Apostles, and which since the Apostles' time has been handed down from generation to

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generation in the Church (compare St Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:3). But to an Orthodox Christian, Tradition means something more concrete and specific than this. It means the books of the Bible; it means the Creed; it means the decrees of the ecumenical councils and the writings of the fathers; it means the Canons, the service books, the Holy Icons. In fact, the whole system of doctrine, church government, worship, and art which orthodoxy has articulated over the ages. The Orthodox Christian today sees himself as heir and guardian to a great inheritance received from the past, and he believes that it is his duty to transmit this inheritance unimpaired to the future.<sup>3</sup>

Let us look at what constitutes or makes up the Holy Tradition.

### **Holy Scripture**

The Holy Bible, with both the Old Testament and the New Testament, is the most authoritative and the most important of all traditions of the church. The Word of God is set above everything. Some liberal, so-called theologians say the Bible is not God's Word. Rather, God's word is in the Bible. This is false teaching. Every word in the Holy Bible is God-inspired, infallible

and without errors. God is the divine authour of His Word.<sup>4</sup>

The early church fathers, St Jerome, St Athanasius, St John Chrysostom and many others spoke of the utmost importance of the Holy Scripture and how it should not be neglected.

However, as explained by Fr John Whiteford, we are to be careful. “[Removed] from its context of Holy Tradition becomes a mere ball of clay, to be moulded into whatever shape its handlers wish. It is no honour to the Scriptures to misuse and twist them, even if this is done in the name of exalting their authority.”<sup>5</sup>

### **The Church Fathers**

Here is a saying to remember: “Jesus is the truth.” The apostles proclaimed it and the church fathers preserved it.

The church fathers were the immediate followers of the apostles and were taught, consecrated and given all the needed details of our faith and practice. And they, in turn, consecrated and appointed episcopas and handed over to them the Holy Tradition through words and example. The episcopas, in turn, ordained priests and taught them and so on. This is how the

## What Makes Up the Holy Tradition of the Holy Church?

Holy Church maintained apostolic succession to protect itself from falling into error and remaining in truth. The church fathers stood firm for the witnesses of truth and many became martyrs of the faith.<sup>6</sup>

### **Major Church Councils**

Another Holy Tradition we follow is the validity of the councils that established the faith of the church. A key area they established regards the Christological dogma, that Jesus Christ is true God and true Man, that the Second Person in the Holy Trinity assumed perfect humanity, thus saving mankind and opening the path for man to “partake of the divine nature” (theosis).

The apostolic church held its first church council in Jerusalem to decide the will of God for the gentiles—whether they should be part of the church or not.<sup>7</sup>

After that, many other councils were held involving episcopas, priests, elders and deacons from all over the world, like in Nicea, in AD 325, to discuss important matters of faith and holy practice of the church.

Seven major ecumenical councils were held, and their decisions have been accepted and acknowledged by the Orthodox church, as we have done in Believers Eastern Church.

Those seven councils are:

- ◆ Nicaea I in AD 325
- ◆ Constantinople I in AD 381
- ◆ Ephesus in AD 431
- ◆ Chalcedon in AD 451
- ◆ Constantinople II in AD 553
- ◆ Constantinople III in AD 680
- ◆ Nicaea II in AD 787

In all those councils, absolute non-negotiable doctrines of the church were established—especially the details and implications of the right teachings on Christology.

### **The Liturgical Life of the Church**

The apostolic Orthodox church is known for its rich liturgical tradition. The worship of the people of God in the Old Testament was liturgical. The very meaning of the word liturgy is “the worship of the people;” in other words, it is people worshipping God in unison. God is the audience among His people. Liturgical worship is the most logical way for the people of God to offer Him worship. The more we delve into this study, the more we realise that the Holy Spirit guided the apostles and church fathers and led them to formulate the worship patterns as God directed. The



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church's liturgical and prayer life is one of the most powerful elements of the Holy Tradition.

The Divine Liturgy of Believers Eastern Church follows in the tradition of the St James Liturgy, which was created by the first episcopa and leader of the church in Jerusalem at the very beginning of the Holy Church. The liturgy was faith expressed in prayer. The liturgy contained all that the early church believed. That is the reason why St Basil, in the fourth century, used the church's liturgy to defend the holy faith of the Orthodox church against heretics by pointing out the deep theology, songs, prayers, and the worship of the Holy Church, which is the essence of the holy faith.

The symbols, Word of God, blessings, prayers and rituals reflect timeless church worship that is true; the heavenly worship through which we are brought into the very presence of God, as we read in Isaiah Chapter 6 and Revelation Chapters 4 and 5.

To learn more about the Divine Liturgy, refer to the book *The Worship of the Church*, which is available at [bec.org](http://bec.org).

## **Canon Law**

Canon laws of ecumenical councils are the guiding principles for doctrines and practice of the church (church organisation and discipline). ‘Canon’ means a general law by which things are judged. It helps the church to stay with the ancient timeless church in its non-negotiable doctrines, practical and ethical matters.

## **The Symbol of Faith—the Creed**

One of the most important elements of a church that belongs to “the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church” is that it embraces the Nicene Creed as its official creed. The Nicene Creed is the symbol of our faith. The Creed condenses the entire Bible into a single page. Believers Eastern Church has published a book, *The Plumb Line*, which goes through the Nicene Creed and its importance, and you can download it for free from our website at [bec.org](http://bec.org).

## **Veneration of Saints**

The Holy Church is not restricted or walled by time, space and matter. The church is united and one, both in heaven and on earth. We who are on earth are part of the visible church. But there is a whole other part of the church that is invisible and heavenly.

## What Makes Up the Holy Tradition of the Holy Church?

The apostolic church recognises that worship is not isolated—we are part of the worship that goes on in heaven without ceasing. And so, the saints in heaven are part of our life.

So, we read in Hebrews, “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”<sup>8</sup>

What about those martyrs of faith, especially from the early centuries, that the Holy Church recognised and venerated as saints? We don’t worship the saints in heaven—but we honour them, respect them and love them and we are told in the Scripture to follow their faith. Veneration is not worship; rather, it is deep respect. Only God, the Holy Trinity, deserves worship.

In the catacombs where early Christians went through deep suffering and persecution, there is evidence that the saints, while enduring intense pain, talked to the departed saints in heaven to intercede on their behalf. This was documented in a letter to the church at Smyrna in AD 155.<sup>9</sup>

There is nothing wrong about venerating, showing respect and honour to Mother Mary, who was known from the very first century by the church as the

‘Theotokos’, which means Mother of God. She, like all children of Adam, was born and needed to be saved by her Son, for God was her Saviour.<sup>10</sup> But, it is important that we recognise what God said about her: “Rejoice, highly favoured one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!”<sup>11</sup> Why can’t we see her for what she is and give her the place God gave her? Moreover, in her prophetic song, she says “From now on all generations will call me blessed,” and essentially throughout church history, that has been the case. Let us remember Mother Mary is now with her Son, the Lord Jesus, and she is the most blessed among all women. She is among many saints that the Holy Church venerates and holds in high esteem.

### **Part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church**

A church that is part of the “one, holy, catholic and apostolic church,” universally, uses the following visible symbols of faith from Apostolic Tradition. The church is the reflection of a place of worship both from the outside and the inside. Generally, you see the following as part of the worship and life of this Christian community. The church has a rich

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tradition of iconography, music, chanting, prayer and architecture that expresses eternal or divine reality. The vestment that a priest and episcopa wear, especially during the Divine Liturgy, has symbolic spiritual meaning attached to it. The visible speaks of the invisible.

Gestures like making the sign of the cross, bowing, blessing the people, censing and divine symbols like the candle, thronos, altar, special covering for the altar and the thablitha are not recent inventions or traditions, but were traditions handed down to us from the beginning of the Holy Church, as we have already seen.

It is also important to realise that the church has always accepted and practised the seven sacraments or Holy mysteries:

- ◆ Baptism
- ◆ Chrismation or confirmation
- ◆ The Eucharist
- ◆ Confession
- ◆ Holy Matrimony
- ◆ Holy Unction or anointing of the sick
- ◆ Holy Orders

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I recommend you read our other books that are available from the Believers Eastern Church website ([bec.org](http://bec.org)) which will greatly help in your further understanding of the traditions of the Holy Church.

As I mentioned earlier in this book, there are the apostolic doctrines and then the apostolic traditions. While there are non-negotiable elements of the “one, holy, catholic and apostolic church,” there is also the ecclesiastical traditions that were developed during the early church history for spiritual development. It became a very positive factor in experiencing God in terms of ‘theosis’ or partaking of the divine nature.<sup>12</sup> Many were developed during the first thousand years of the Holy Church by the East and West monasteries, desert fathers and mothers and, of course, the leaders of the church. Without going into details, I will mention a few:

- The Christian tradition of observing the Lenten season with prayer, fasting and meditation
- Living by the liturgical seasons of our faith: Advent, Christmas, Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost and ordinary days
- Making the sign of the cross
- Organising feasts

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- Living by the book of Acts as our blueprint for fulfilling the Great Commission
- Giving alms
- Leading sacramental lives
- Observing the spiritual disciplines of solitude, silence, prayer, and meditation
- Suffering for the sake of living godly lives
- Living in simplicity and leading a humble lifestyle
- Confessing and praying for forgiveness
- Giving tithes and offerings to the local parish
- Having monastic orders for men and women
- Requiring celibacy for episcopas and priests (for those who are called by God for His work)
- Using the prayer rope for praying the 'Jesus Prayer' continually

As you can easily see, this is not the complete list of all the godly traditions that were developed by various church streams at different times throughout the two thousand years of its history. For example, it is Believers Eastern Church that embraced the tradition of taking the book of Acts as the blueprint to be involved in being His witness and fulfilling the Great Commission by word and deed.

## **Conclusion**

All these elements of Holy Tradition are organically linked together in real life. None may be separated or isolated from each other or from the wholeness of the life of the church. All come alive in the actual living of the life of the church in every age and generation, in every time and place.



## CHAPTER FIVE

# SO, YOU ASKED

One of the most difficult things for us humans is to change, inside and out, even when we know that the change is right and good. We are all prisoners of custom, habit and culture. I grew up eating food with my right hand, not with a fork and knife. This was how I ate until I went to Europe and had to adopt a new habit of using a fork and knife at the dining table. Believe me, it was not easy. We resist change at the deepest level within us, even subconsciously. Even if something is scientifically proven correct, we may end up not doing it or following it. We would rather take the easy road by saying, “Yes, that is true, but I don’t feel like doing it.”

But when it comes to spiritual things, one must tell oneself this: “Here, I am not dealing with my life for time and space but for my creator God and eternity; it is important that I make the necessary paradigm shift.”

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When we talk about the Holy Tradition, it is bound to cause many to stumble and reject it without seeking to understand the importance of it. Even though many are sincere, they don't realise the need for change or don't recognise what they are missing because they were raised in a culture that opposed any form of ritual, tradition or liturgical worship.

In this chapter, I want to answer some of the obvious questions pertaining to living out holy traditions in our beliefs and practices.

**Question:** Isn't sound doctrine sufficient to protect and safeguard the Holy Church? Do we really need to add the traditions of the church to this? Rephrasing the question: "Since the canon of Scripture is complete and more than sufficient, what is the need to add the authority of the church's interpretation to it?"

**Answer:** To answer this question well, we need to look back at history. For one thousand years, there was only one church that held on to the Orthodox faith and holy traditions. Then, in 1054, the East-West Schism took place.<sup>1</sup> The western church came to be known as the Roman Catholic Church and the rest as the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Then five hundred years later, a German priest and monk of the Catholic Church named Martin Luther

started the Reformation movement. He and his close friend Zwingli launched a massive attack on the Roman Catholic Church. Please remember that the attack was targeted against new practises the Roman Catholic Church had taken up after its schism with the Eastern Orthodox Church. The faith and traditions of the Eastern Orthodox Church have continued without change till date. The rallying cry of the Reformation movement, ‘sola scriptura’, meaning “Word alone,” led to individuals deciding that interpretation of the Scripture was to be done without context of the beliefs and practices of the church. It was the catalyst that eventually led to the breakup of the western church into thousands of denominations.

Here is an illustration which may make the danger of subjective interpretations clearer. Look at the following sentence.

I DID NOT SAY YOU STOLE MONEY.

What does that sentence really mean? At first glance, the sentence seems obvious and easily understandable. Yet, if you think about it, the above-mentioned sentence is open to so many ways of interpretation. For example:

- ◆ *I did not say you stole money. It could mean, I didn't say it, but someone else did.*

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- ◆ I did not *say* you stole money. It could mean, I didn't say it explicitly, but maybe I wrote that you stole money; or my body language conveyed the same or maybe even by my gestures.
- ◆ I did not say *you* stole money. It could be that someone else stole it.
- ◆ I did not say you *stole* money. Maybe, I meant you misplaced it; maybe you burned it or did something else with it.
- ◆ I did not say you stole *money*. Maybe you stole something else and not money!

You see, just that one sentence alone has five different ways of understanding. If this one sentence is likely to be misinterpreted, how much more could the Holy Scriptures be misinterpreted?

Because of the depth of the Scripture, they are not interpreted in the same sense by everyone. One understands a text to mean one thing, and another thinks it means another. Sometimes it seems there are as many interpretations as interpreters. Consequently, because of the intricacies of all these heresies and incorrect doctrines, we may formulate our understanding of the writings of the apostles and prophets in

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harmony with the standards of the ecclesiastical and orthodox interpretation.<sup>2</sup>

Am I saying that I should no longer read or study the Bible because I will not be able to understand it clearly? No! What I am saying is that when it comes to core doctrines and the way they are interpreted and understood, one must not do it in an isolated way. One must not ignore the Apostolic Tradition, what the church fathers taught and what the church has understood and practised for thousands of years.

When we ignore apostolic traditions, we are running into dangerous territory.

Taken from its context within Holy Tradition, the solid rock of Scripture becomes a mere ball of clay, to be moulded into whatever shape its handlers wish.<sup>3</sup>

It would be like a doctor ignoring laboratory blood results when they are prescribing a course of treatment for a patient—the entire treatment will be wrong! This is literally true today.

Today, one can be approached by the Jehovah's Witnesses, the next day by the Mormons, then by those who baptise only in the name of Jesus, and yet again by a group who says wearing ornaments is sin, or by those who believe the gifts of the Holy Spirit

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have stopped, or by those who refuse to use musical instruments for worship—they will all claim that their interpretations and practices are from the one and same Bible. Now, who do you really believe? How do you know the truth?

What the reformers, Martin Luther and his followers, began as an attempt to purify the western (Roman Catholic) church not only led the church to splinter into thousands of Protestant and Evangelical groups (some studies say there are more than 45,000), but has also failed to be the guardian of the radical faith once delivered to the saints.

Maybe, a more serious and dangerous deception that was unleashed upon the church was the charismatic, prosperity, health or wealth movements in the last century. These were led by individuals who were very charismatic and gathered many followers for themselves. Certain charismatic leaders today claim a spiritual authority that far surpasses that of a pope or a church council. The leader, they claim, is the specially “anointed” person through whom God reveals His will to the church through a “prophetic” word.” And the masses that follow these men are innocent lambs that are taken to the slaughter and destroyed. Yet, this is exactly what the reformers fought against.

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It is easy to see that the teaching of sola scriptura did not help the church, but rather, created mass confusion for those who followed it. It is sad to note that Martin Luther and his co-worker Zwingli became bitter enemies due to their disagreement over the Eucharist because each believed their own personal interpretation was right; they ignored the church fathers or councils of the church's unified view and decisions on the sacrament.

Holy Tradition refers to the totality of God's divine revelation, and includes our liturgies and hymns, the lives of the saints, the writings of our fathers, and the decrees and canons of ecumenical councils. Atop this foundation rests the Holy Scripture. To divorce Scripture from tradition—or vice versa—is akin to needlessly and dangerously tearing apart the whole of divine revelation.

The Word of God is absolute, infallible and inerrant. Yet, we have seen the danger of Scripture being taken in isolation and interpreted without the support of the teachings of the apostles and church fathers, the decisions of the councils of the church, and the symbol of the church, the Nicene Creed. In other words, this interpretation is done without taking into consideration the Holy Tradition.

**Question:** There are thousands of Christian denominations, all claiming to be true to the original faith. Is there a way to know the right from the wrong?

**Answer:** If we wanted to know the real meaning of some phrase or word in the constitution of a country, wouldn't it be best to actually meet those who created those documents and hear directly from them to know what they meant when they wrote it? If that is true, don't you think it would be more accurate for us to go back to the original, first church and find out what they meant by what they said and learn how they practised their faith and worship? I'm sure you would agree with me on this reasonable conclusion.

In the table below, I have given the names of various well known denominations, the approximate dates of their inception, and who initiated them. It is not a comprehensive list, for there are over 45,000 denominations today. But all of the 45,000, including Pentecostalism, came out of these denominations.



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Name	Year of Founding	Founder
Foursquare Church	1923	Aimee McPherson
Salvation Army	1865	William Booth
Disciples of Christ	1827	Thomas Campbell
United Brethren	1800	Philip Otterbein
Episcopalian	1789	Samuel Seabury
Methodist Episcopal	1739	John Wesley
Baptist	1609	John Smyth
Congregationalist	1582	Robert Brown
Presbyterian	1560	John Knox
Calvinists	1555	John Calvin
Anglican	1534	Henry VIII
Lutheran	1517	Martin Luther
Roman Catholic	1054	Leo IX
Orthodox Church	33	Jesus Christ

Where would you turn to, to learn the original faith and holy traditions of the church? It is obvious to go to the Orthodox church, the one that held on to the apostles' doctrines and practices.

I am not saying that these groups or other denominations are completely off the mark. But, the most important question is: "How best can we be as

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real as possible with our faith, practice and worship?”. We can only do this by truly being part of the “one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.”

Most of these denominations started with a powerful, charismatic leader who interpreted the Scripture as he deemed right. Was this not the reason why even the leaders of the Reformation—Martin Luther and his close friend Huldrych Zwingli—became bitter enemies with each other for having a different interpretation of the Eucharist? Some of the 45,000 denominations today are not only spiritually dead, but also anti-God by giving way to the worst kind of liberal doctrines and practices. It is no wonder that western countries today are known as “post-Christian.”

But there are God’s sincere people in all these groups, and God is merciful and loving. Still, it is also our responsibility to be faithful to the apostles and church fathers for they gave us the non-negotiable roadmap for the Holy Church.

In all this, let us remember that love and kindness are more important than any truth, right, wrong, sin, failure, doctrine and a million other things we fight for. God is love and God will have His divine nature in them and be loving to all, no matter what.

Truth without love is a sin.

**Question:** The Bible says we must not follow traditions. Aren't we, thus, disobeying the Word of God when we follow the Holy Tradition of the church?

**Answer:** Your question is based on the words of Christ.<sup>4</sup> If you read this carefully, you will find what Jesus is talking about is “man’s tradition” that violates the Word of God. That is what the Pharisees during the day of Christ were doing. They began to interpret the Law of God in the Old Testament and began to give their own meaning as to *how* people must live, talk, act and behave, to obey God.

Let us be very clear. The Holy Scripture, God’s infallible, inerrant word, is not permitted to be substituted or exchanged with man’s tradition. Among the elements that make up the Holy Tradition of the Church, the Word of God—the Holy Bible—holds the first place.

The Bible speaks of two types of traditions: human tradition and Apostolic Tradition. On one hand, we, as Christians, are warned not to be deceived by the “traditions of men.”<sup>5</sup> On the other, we are commanded by St Paul to “keep the traditions as I delivered them to you.”<sup>6</sup>

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While man's tradition originates from his ideas, Apostolic Tradition originates with God. As we have seen in the last chapter, it only enhances and helps us to know the *how* of what our life ought to be for God as His Holy Church. Apostolic traditions do not contradict the written Word of God.

St John, writing the Gospel around AD 100, said, "And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which, if they were written, I suppose, even the world itself could not contain the books."<sup>7</sup>

Again, the apostle tells, "Having many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that our joy may be full."<sup>8</sup>

The Scripture tells us so much more about the ways of God and God's revelation given to the apostles. This was not written down, but God would, orally with the living voice, communicate to them. This is called the Apostolic Tradition. Let's bear in mind that most of the apostles did not leave anything written, but rather, taught orally, with the living voice of tradition.

St Thomas, the apostle who came to India in AD 52 to preach and establish churches, did not write down the way of worship or how the new Christian culture

should function. But, even today, what he taught has been passed down and the churches that follow the apostolic teaching and tradition practise all he taught. As evidenced by history, the church that St Thomas the apostle started in India grew as a mighty tree and spread all over the world, and all these churches followed in apostolic succession, faith and tradition.

Also, it is important to remember that Holy Tradition is not the creation or philosophy of clever people, like cult leader Aries, but instructions delivered to the church in the very beginning by the apostles and saints. That is the reason St Paul, in his letter to the church in Thessalonica, says, “Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.”<sup>9</sup>

In short, while Jesus specifically says not to follow man’s traditions which contradict the written Word of God, St Paul asks us to follow the apostles’ traditions which have been handed down to us.

**Question:** Why isn’t the Holy Scripture sufficient for faith and salvation, without having any need whatsoever for Holy Tradition?

**Answer:** This question stems from the words of Apostle Paul to Timothy: “And that from a child thou

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hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”<sup>10</sup> These words are clear. Any addition to Holy Scripture is unnecessary.

If you understand the context, St Paul is speaking only about the scripture of the Old Testament, because the New Testament had not yet been written when he said this. St Paul wrote to Timothy that a good teacher could use the Old Testament for the support of his faith in Christ and his instruction in Christianity.

But if you adhere to the notion emphasised in the question above, then none of the books of the New Testament, including those written in the period that followed the epistles of Apostle Paul to Timothy, should be accepted. Since that is definitely not the case, it is obvious that the verse referred to above is not a valid reason to believe and conclude that traditions are invalid.

**Question:** Isn't it highly probable that with the passage of time, the pure holy traditions could have yielded too many illegitimate corrupt elements? In

this context, how can we discern the true Apostolic Tradition from what's false?

**Answer:** As we have already seen, the Holy Church determined the doctrine of faith over a long period of time through apostolic teachings and traditions that were handed down; and also based on the canons of the holy, ecumenical councils, decrees, the symbols of faith, such as the Nicene Creed, baptismal confessions and under the constant watch of the church fathers, episcopas and priests from generation to generation. At the same time, the church fathers instructed that any inconsistencies among the guardians of faith or contradictions with the Apostolic Tradition and Holy Scripture should be rejected.<sup>11</sup>

Even then, Scripture and Holy Tradition are holy truths that have been safeguarded and have had an uninterrupted continuity for two thousand years. Also, the true tradition is not just a local phenomenon, but it is something hallowed that is practised by the entire universal church that is following in the lineage of orthodoxy.

It is hard for some to believe that the church protected and preserved the holy traditions just as they did with the Holy Scripture. Yet, think about the customs and traditions of tribes all over the world—whether

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they still live naked in forests or are in more civilised regions of the world. Although they have no written documentation and some are totally illiterate, their customs have been preserved and passed on from person to person, generation to generation for thousands of years without interruption or any form of corruption.

How much easier is it for us to believe that God, who gave these holy traditions to His people, would care to protect them. St Paul commends Christians of the Church in Corinth for their faithfulness in observing, with care and diligence, the unwritten traditions they received from St Paul. Also, it is good to note that St Paul and St Jude employed in their teaching words taken directly from the Holy Tradition, such as the prophecy of Enoch (as we have seen earlier). St Paul commanded the church in Thessalonica to be very attentive and vigilant to practice the holy traditions: “Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.”<sup>12</sup>

More important is to remember that the almighty God is able to preserve His Word and Holy Tradition for the sake of His Holy Church. One significant proof



is the Council of Nicaea in AD 325 where around two thousand bishops, priests and church leaders met to decide on the faith of the church. How amazing it was that God used the young Athanasius to speak and establish the true Christology; that too before the New Testament was canonised in AD 395. Amazing!

**Question:** Are there examples where the apostles taught truths apart from those that were written in the Holy Scripture?

**Answer:** I would like to quote what the Elder Cleopa replied to this question.

The Apostle Jude in his catholic epistle, verse nine, among others, says:

“But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, disputed about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a reviling judgement upon him, but said, the Lord rebuke thee.”<sup>13</sup>

Dearest to Christ, search all of the Holy Scripture and see if you will find this utterance in written form. Still, further down in the same epistle the apostle refers to the prophecy of Enoch, saying:

“And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, “Behold, the Lord

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cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgement upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”<sup>14</sup>

Yet, Apostle Jude is not alone in speaking from Tradition. Listen to what the illustrious St Paul says in his second epistle to Timothy:

“Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.”<sup>15</sup>

And again, renowned Apostle Paul, guiding the priests of Ephesus, says:

“Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, it is more blessed to give than to receive.”<sup>16</sup>

Now, I ask you, who insist on putting faith only in the written word, from where did the two Apostles—Jude and Paul—take the foregoing words, for you will not find them written anywhere in the Holy Scripture.<sup>17</sup>

**Question:** What about churches that hold and practice traditions that clearly go against the written Word of God?

**Answer:** There are sinful and ungodly human traditions that have caused damage to the church and the people of God. Some very liberal and worldly churches have allowed demon-controlled customs to infiltrate the church, and without understanding the deception of the enemy, they have called it their “culture.” This is the reason St Paul said, “You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord’s table and of the table of demons.”<sup>18</sup>

When church leaders hold on to culture which goes against God’s Word, we come under the judgment of God. This is what happened to some churches even in the very first century.<sup>19</sup>

**Question:** Why does the priest face the altar while conducting the Divine Liturgy?

**Answer:** While establishing the physical place of worship for the people of God to gather, the aim of the ancient Orthodox church was to do everything possible to give the people a sense that God is with them, and that it is for God that they have gathered for; to gaze upon Him and worship Him. In other words, everything was done with the sole aim of helping them realise that God, and not a man, was the audience.<sup>20</sup>

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And since God is the reason for our gathering, it is only right to focus on Him, who sits on the throne.<sup>21</sup>

To exemplify this, the altar table from which we receive the Body and Blood of the Lord is placed at the centre of a physical place of worship.<sup>22</sup> At the centre of the altar, a small cross is placed for us to remember that the means of the world's redemption is through the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. It also reminds the worshipping community of God's call for us to follow in His footsteps.<sup>23</sup> The decorations on the altar table, such as the veericoot, thablitha on which the paten and chalice are placed, lit candles, the book of gospels and flowers, all have significant spiritual meanings. We use these elements to help us look through and see the invisible world of spiritual reality. For example, the lit candles speak of the life of the church as the light of the world, reflecting the "light" of the world—Jesus Christ Himself. And there are many other meanings in the use of lit candles and other objects on the altar. Other traditions like censuring, for example, speak of the holy presence of God and the prayers of God's people as one body before the throne of grace.

The priest, when offering the Divine Liturgy, faces the altar along with all the people of God in the church.

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This speaks visibly and loudly of the fact that the priest is not a mediator between God and people. He is part of the body of Christ and all are “priests” and “kings.” But, the priest is specially called by God from among His people to be the shepherd to lead the flock of God in this journey of life towards God. And the priest, as the shepherd, goes before the sheep, and is involved in worship and adoration, confession, prayers and partaking of the Eucharist along with the worshipping community.

This is the reason, in the Biblical worship pattern and eastern tradition, our priest faces the altar during the Divine Liturgy.

Even so, the giving of the blessing, reading of the gospels, doing the ‘Rushma’ (blessing the people in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit), giving peace and giving the Holy Communion are done by the priest facing the congregation. This is because he does these on behalf of Lord Jesus Christ.

**Question:** In the Ten Commandments, God said we should not make graven images.

You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is

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in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.<sup>24</sup>

Since the Bible says so, the question is, don't the icons and paintings portraying Christ, His mother St Mary and other saints come under the category of graven images that God told us not to make?

**Answer:** If the above-mentioned verse is taken to mean that God prohibited the making of any and all visual images, including icons and paintings, then why does the same God command us to have images of cherubim embroidered into the curtains of the tabernacle and statues of the same for the Ark of the Covenant to represent the presence of God?

Moreover you shall make the tabernacle with ten curtains woven of fine linen thread, and blue and purple and scarlet yarn; with artistic designs of cherubim you shall weave them.<sup>25</sup>

And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark

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of the Testimony, of all things which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel.<sup>26</sup>

The reason is because, unlike icons, graven images used in Exodus refers to an idol—an image created to be worshipped as God. Icons are images that are meant to help us look through and see the glory of God. Historically, the ancient church, even in the first century, used icons as a means of instruction in godliness and motivation to stay true to the apostles' doctrines and practices. The very fact that Jesus came to earth and made the invisible God visible is the reason why we depict Him in pictures. An icon of Christ reveals to us the nature of Jesus as He Himself said, when He lived on earth in a human body, "If you see me, you have seen the Father." Icons thus become the window to the invisible world of God and His ways.

Veneration of icons simply means we give honour, regard and deep respect. This never means worship or adoration, which is reserved for God alone. Icons are not ordinary paintings. They are always symbolic in meaning and help us to learn Biblical truth and godliness. If the icon is of a saint who was part of the ancient church, it helps us to feel united with the saints of the timeless church.

For example, the icon on the cover of this book reminds us of two great pillars of the church— St Peter holding the “keys of the kingdom” in his hand (in accordance to Christ’s words to him in response to his confession of Him in St Matthew 16:16–19) and St Paul carrying his epistles.

Let me share this thought with you. The photograph of my parents adorning a wall in my house reminds me of them. In fact, there are a hundred little things I remember about them. Although there is no comparison between an icon and a photograph, it helps us to understand in a small way the meaning of icons, which God uses to draw us to Himself.

The Scripture says, “The heavens declare the glory of God.”<sup>27</sup> The correct understanding of this verse is— the sun, moon and stars are not for us to look *at* and worship, but meant for us to look *through* and worship the Creator, God, through them. In a similar way, icons are powerful visual aids for contemplation and prayer.

Icons of the blessed Mother Mary and all the angels and saints help us to feel unity with Christ and the Holy Church which is timeless and not constrained within time and space. Often, we find the icon of the mother and the child, Christ Almighty, side by side.



The icon of Theotokos (Mother of God) and the child Jesus, tells us the reality of incarnation, the first coming of Jesus. And the icon of Pantocrator (King Jesus) teaches us the anticipated second coming of the Lord Jesus. In this way, these icons remind us that we live between these two events. The icons of saints on church walls remind us how we need to be godly like them, and the empty space on the walls remind us how much work is left for us to become like them. Looking at these icons with our inner eyes and being near them, touching and kissing them is a kind of veneration, an expression of our yearning to follow in their footsteps just as they followed the Lord during their life on earth.<sup>28</sup>

**Question:** What are ecclesiastical traditions and are they the same as apostolic traditions?

**Answer:** A few years ago, I was talking to the metropolitan of a well-known Orthodox church in India. At the time, I was writing on the subject of celibacy in the church and what the Bible says about it.

I asked the metropolitan why his church had this policy of their episcopas not marrying. He replied the following about what the Bible says: “The one who serves the church should be the husband of one wife as it is told to the church by St Paul the Apostle.”

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Then the metropolitan continued saying that this tradition of celibacy was not always present in the historical church; there were several pieces of evidence to prove that popes and orthodox bishops were married and had children.

He said, “You see, during these 2,000 years of church history, there were times our church leaders, for various reasons, made a decision as part of this ecclesiastical tradition of our church, to have episcopas who are celibate. Nevertheless, we do acknowledge that the Bible says what you said, but it also says one can choose to remain single and also could be called by God to stay single.”

So here is an issue; while this church adheres to the timeless Orthodox faith, this particular branch of the historical church makes an “ecclesiastical tradition” in their church. This tells us that in addition to apostolic doctrines and apostolic traditions which are non-negotiable and cannot be added to or changed, there is also a third stream called ecclesiastical traditions. Unless we are aware of it, one can get totally confused about the variations even within the “one, holy, catholic and apostolic church” in our present culture. Believers Eastern Church adheres to the undiluted Orthodox faith and apostolic doctrines and apostolic

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traditions that are changeless, but we also have our ecclesiastical traditions which we cannot say are eternal or part of the timeless church.

As I referred to the issue of celibacy of the episcopas of that particular church, not everything in the church belongs to Holy Tradition. Some things in the church are just temporal—created by human custom, culture and tradition. Such tradition may not be sinful or wrong but it can also be positive and helpful as long as it is not taken as part of the Holy Tradition of the church. These human traditions have no eternal value and are a passing phenomenon.



## CHAPTER SIX

# BENEFITS

1. We become part of the changeless, authentic Holy Church, experience the presence of God and enter into true worship along with the first disciples, the fathers of the church and the early Christians.
2. We enter into the experience of being part of the Holy Church along with Christ, the saints and heavenly hosts in our worship. The 'Mystical Supper' allows the Holy Spirit to change us into the image of Christ, through the energy of God that transforms us inside out.
3. We learn to live with God's calendar in this life journey as we become part of the celebrations, fasting and spiritual disciplines of the sacramental life.
4. We are protected from false teachings and heresies

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that destroy our focus on Jesus and our pure love for Him.

5. The Word of God becomes a living reality as we embrace the holy tradition and live in obedience.
6. If we are united with the “one, holy, catholic and apostolic church,” that is the only authentic church that follows in the Apostolic Tradition and Apostolic succession of the ancient church.
7. We are assured that our faith and practice is true, for this was approved and guided by the apostles, orthodox fathers and the Holy Church councils in early centuries. The teachings and traditions of the councils and the fathers of the church protect us from falling into heresy and being destroyed by false prophets.
8. By subscribing and living by the Nicene Creed, we proclaim the non-negotiable, dogmatic doctrines of the Holy Church, because the Nicene Creed is a one-page summary of the cardinal doctrines of the Holy Scripture.
9. We, as Believers Eastern Church, by our adherence to the apostles’ teaching, Holy Tradition and the St James Liturgy, are part of the “timeless church” the “one, holy, catholic and apostolic church” of two thousand years.

## CONCLUSION

**I**t is, therefore, our responsibility to see that this Holy Tradition continues in the life of the church through the lives of its members. I leave you with the words of the Synodikon (Confession of Faith) which is said every year during the Sunday of Orthodoxy:

As the prophets beheld, as the Apostles have taught, as the church has received, as the teachers have dogmatised, as the universe has agreed, as grace has shown forth, as truth has revealed, as falsehood has been dissolved, as wisdom has presented, as Christ has awarded, thus we declare, thus we assert, thus we preach Christ our true God and honour His saints in words, in writings, in thoughts, in sacrifices, in churches, in Holy icons, on the one hand, worshipping and reverencing Christ as God and Lord; and on the other hand, honouring as true servants of the same Lord of all and accordingly offering them

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eneration. This is the Faith of the Apostles, this is the Faith of the fathers, this is the faith of the Orthodox, this is the faith which has established the universe.



# ENDNOTES

## Preface

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<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah 6:16

## Introduction

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<sup>2</sup> <https://lutheranreformation.org/history/luther-and-zwingli/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.biblestudy.org/beginner/definition-of-christian-terms/sola-scriptura.html>

<sup>4</sup> St Vincent of Lerins, *The Commonitories*, Paraphrased by Fr Jack N Sparks, Selections from the Commonitories of St Vincent of Lerins (St Athanasius Academy of Orthodox Theology, 1998)

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/tradition>

<sup>3</sup> St Matthew 4:8–9

<sup>4</sup> St Matthew 4:10

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.churchhistory101.com/new-testament-Canon.php>

<sup>6</sup> <https://bible.org/seriespage/2-introduction-new-testament>

<sup>7</sup> 2 Peter 1:4

## Chapter 2

<sup>1</sup> Philippians 4:9

<sup>2</sup> 2 Thessalonians 2:15

<sup>3</sup> 2 Thessalonians 3:6

<sup>4</sup> 2 Timothy 2:2

<sup>5</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:2

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<sup>2</sup> Acts 19:8, 10; 20:31

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<sup>6</sup> St Matthew 28:19–20

<sup>7</sup> 1 John 4:2–3

<sup>8</sup> Galatians 1:8

<sup>9</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:19–21

<sup>10</sup> 2 Thessalonians 2:15

<sup>11</sup> 1 Corinthians 14:29

<sup>12</sup> <http://ww1.antiochian.org/content/scripture-and-tradition>

<sup>13</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History*, Bk 4:8

<sup>14</sup> St Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book III chapter 2, translated by Alexander Roberts and William Rambaut. From Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 1, Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885

<sup>15</sup> St Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata*, Library of Alexandria

<sup>16</sup> Elder Cleopa of Romania, *The Truth of our Faith*, Uncut Mountain Press, 2001

<sup>17</sup> St John Chrysostom, *4th Homily on 2 Thessalonians*, Translated by John A. Broadus, From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 13, Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1889

<sup>18</sup> 2 Thessalonians 2:15–17

### Chapter 4

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- <sup>4</sup> St Matthew 15:3, 6-9; 7:13
- <sup>5</sup> Colossians 2:9; St Matthew 15:2-3; St Mark 7:9; Colossians 2:8
- <sup>6</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:2; Philippians 4:9; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6; 2 Timothy 2:2).
- <sup>7</sup> St John 21:25
- <sup>8</sup> 2 John 1:12
- <sup>9</sup> 2 Thessalonians 2:15
- <sup>10</sup> 2 Timothy 3:15-16
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- <sup>12</sup> 2 Thessalonians 2:15
- <sup>13</sup> Jude 9
- <sup>14</sup> Jude 14-20
- <sup>15</sup> 2 Timothy 3:8

## Holy Tradition

<sup>16</sup> Acts 20:35

<sup>17</sup> Elder Cleopa of Romania, *The Truth of our Faith*, Uncut Mountain Press, 2001

<sup>18</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:21

<sup>19</sup> Revelation 2:12–17, 18–25, 3:14–18

<sup>20</sup> Ephesians 2:21–22, Isaiah 6:8, Revelation 4:5

<sup>21</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:16, Revelation 1, 2, 3

<sup>22</sup> St Luke 13:29

<sup>23</sup> St Mark 8:34

<sup>24</sup> Exodus 20:4

<sup>25</sup> Exodus 26:1

<sup>26</sup> Exodus 25:22

<sup>27</sup> Psalm 19:1

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.ocf.net/icons-are-not-idols/>