

THE TRADITION OF THE APOSTOLIC AGE

Tradition in the Church during the Apostolic Age was a very important issue because most of our rituals depend on this tradition. Tradition includes all teachings and religious rituals that the Apostles gave to their successors orally through discipleship and Christian life day by day and these teachings and rituals were transmitted generation after generation without any adding or deletion to the present day. It is not necessary to find for every teaching or ritual a verse or verses in the Holy Gospel as the Holy Gospel does not include whole disciplines of teachings and rituals but it offers us the faith that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God to have the eternal life through His name (John 20:31). Therefore, the Church considers the tradition is the second source of Christian teaching after the Holy Bible. It is historically accepted that Christian teachings in the early Church were through tradition before writing of any Holy Gospel or Epistle.

The Lord Jesus Christ followed the oral discipline in teaching that was common among Jewish Rabbis during His time on earth. So the Lord instructed disciples through living teachings that means the teachings acquired during living discipleship and so He told his disciples to go everywhere in the world to disciple and teach what He taught them (Matthew 28:19&20). Likewise, St. John the Beloved said *“that which we have seen and heard we declare to you that you also may have fellowship with us and truly our fellowship is with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ”* (1 John 3 &4).

Our Apostles themselves when founding churches declared and ministered with the Holy Gospel orally. They set their successors and those set their successors and so on and each generation declared the Christian teachings orally in perfect honesty. And so St. Paul said to his disciple St. Timothy *“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”* (2 Timothy 2:2). The three words (heard, commit, teach) mean tradition in its perfect meaning. Yousabious from Caesara said *“our apostles ministered with the mysteries of Kingdom of Heaven without writing many books but through the living fellowship and discipleship”*.

All believers accepted the faith through ministry and hearing of teachings of the Apostles and so we read about believing of Eunuch of Candace, the Queen of Ethiopia and Cornelius through hearing of teaching by St. Philip and St. Peter.

The evidences of tradition in the apostolic writings include (1) St. John the Beloved said *“And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God and that believing you may have life in His name”* (John 20:30&31). (2) Holy Books of the Gospel don't contain all teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ as St. John said *“I had many things to write but I do not wish to you with pen and ink. But I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face”* (3 John 13 &14). (3) St. Luke said *“To whom he also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom”* (Act 1:3). But not one of the evangelists recorded these things. (4) The Apostles sent St. Paul and St. Barnabas to declare the decision of the Council of Jerusalem to the believers *“It seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas who will also report the same thing by word of mouth”* (Acts 15: 25-27). (5) St. Paul said *“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread (1 Corinthians 11:23).* (6) Also, St. Paul said *“And the rest I will set in order when I come”* (1 Corinthians 11:34). (7) St. Paul ordered his disciple Titus bishop of Crete

“For this reason I left you in Crete that you should set in order the things that are lacking and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you” (Titus 1:5). (8) St. Paul said to the Philippians *“The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me these do and the God of peace will be with you” (Philippians 4:9).* (9) St. Paul encouraged his disciple St. Timothy saying *“Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 1:13).* (10) Also, to the Thessalonians, St. Paul said *“Therefore, brethren stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught whether by word or our epistle” (2 Thessalonians 2:15).* So traditions are equal to the writing books. (11) *“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 have received from us” (2 Thessalonians 3:6).* (13) St. Paul praised the Corinthians because they kept the tradition *“Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you” (1 Corinthians 11:2).* (14) St. Paul told the Ephesians priests *“I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).* You should note that these words were not mentioned in any Holy Book of the Holy Gospel so from where St. Paul obtain these words? And the word “remember” denotes that this saying was common.

Our Apostolic Fathers in their writings support traditions that they had from the Apostles: (1) Eusabious the historian wrote that St. Ignatius during his trip to martyrdom used to support the Churches encouraging them to commit themselves to the traditions of the Apostles. (2) Papias the disciple of St. John the beloved said “what was to be got from books was not so profitable to me as what came from the living and abiding voice”. (3) St. Polycarp the Martyr commanded the Philippians to commit themselves to the traditions of the Apostles against the heretics.