

THE DANGERS OF CHURCH TRADITION

by David Ben Ya'akov

© 2007 / 2019 David Ben Ya'akov / The Delusion Resistance

This is the second part in answer to a letter that I received from a gentleman in the recent past. The first article in answer to him concerns the heresy which speaks of the Church replacing Israel, and in essence becoming “The New Israel.” That article can be found by searching the website. I couldn't understand where the gentleman was getting his information from. He never quoted scripture but was very critical of my position of being pro-Israel and a supporter of Jewish people. After being pressed time and again for who he is and where he got his information, he finally told me that he is Greek Orthodox and that what he believes is Church tradition, passed down supposedly from the Apostles Peter and Andrew. My study of the Bible found his contentions to be in great error, so therefore, Greek Orthodox Tradition must be in great error also, and not based on a Biblical foundation. Because of that, we will now endeavor to research what Tradition really is, and see if it is a danger to Bible believing, Spirit Filled Christians, and to the rest of the Christian world.

What is the definition of Tradition:

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines the word Tradition as:

Main Entry: tra·di·tion

Pronunciation: tr&-'di-sh&n

Function: noun

Etymology: Middle English tradicioun, from Middle French & Latin; Middle French tradition, from Latin tradition-, traditio action of handing over, tradition — more at TREASON

Date: 14th century

1 : an inherited, established, or customary pattern of thought, action, or behavior (as a religious practice or a social custom)

2 : the handing down of information, beliefs, and customs by word of mouth or by example from one generation to another without written instruction

3 : cultural continuity in social attitudes, customs, and institutions

4 : characteristic manner, method, or style

My Ordeal with Traditional Religion:

I'm no stranger to Tradition where the church is concerned. When I was a child I my family attended the Episcopal Church in our home town and they were quite traditional. I was informed that the Episcopal Church is the closest one can come to being Roman Catholic, without actually being brought up in the Catholic Rite. One of the things that always bothered me, even as a young child was what I perceived to be a false sense of piousness that emanated from the ministers and their lay helpers. They looked so pious walking down the center aisle with their robes and garments, walking so that everyone could see them and how Holy they wanted everyone to see them. I always wondered why there wasn't angelic music for them, just like there always was in the movies about Christ that we watched every year. Even as a child I thought, this is phony and if this is what religion is all about, I don't want anything to do with it. And, as soon as I was old enough to make my own decisions, I quit going to church. I'd start going to church years later, but under different conditions as I will mention later in this document.

When I looked up the word "Tradition" in the dictionary, it brought back a lot of memories. I remember going through the motions of preparing for my first communion, and all of the classes we took to prepare for it. In the classes we heard all the nice stories from the Bible, but that's all they were, stories. No one dared to peel back the veneer of those stories and give us the meat and potatoes. There were a thousand why's that I needed answered and those questions were never met, let alone addressed. We were taught about Jesus and His death, and even that He died for us, but they never taught us why He had to die, or about the sinful nature of mankind. Without having that information, Jesus was just some guy who died on a cross and that's all.

One thing that I can remember probably clearer than anything else is one day in my mother's kitchen I wanted to have a little theological discussion with her. I told her that they taught us in Sunday school that God lives inside people. She said that was correct, and then added that God lives inside everybody. This caused turmoil in my soul for many years because if that were true, included in the list of everybody were Adolph Hitler, Joseph Stalin, John Wilkes Booth and Lee Harvey Oswald. And if God lived inside everyone, how come there was so much murder? Why were my parents so intent on moving us out of the city to get away from the bad elements if God lived inside everyone. It was not until years later that she had learned that in Church and was just echoing what she had been taught.

My father on the other hand was very pragmatic. He had stopped going to church years earlier and only went during special holidays and such, probably from the prodding by my mother. My dad could see a bovine scatologist from a mile away and he avoided them the best he could, and the ones he couldn't avoid, he would debate in a no-nonsense way. Not only did he hate Tradition, but he hated favoritism, which he saw consistently in the Episcopal Church. If you wore the leash that they supplied you were taken care of, but if you asked legitimate questions, you were shunned.

I lived my life trying to fill the void that the Traditional church could not fill. I tried drugs and other different philosophies, but nothing filled the void. It was like I was trying to force a square peg down a round hole; it just wouldn't go. I ran into a friend who was what he called "Born Again," and I really didn't want to know about it. It was religion again and I shunned him. He was faithful though and hanged around, always talking about Jesus. I was stubborn and went for a couple more years trying to fill that still empty void. Then one day, after a day of hatred toward everyone, another friend asked me why I was acting so evil. That phrase hit me like a board upside my head and I realized that I had decayed in my condition. I got back together with my Jesus Freak friend and asked a lot of questions. He explained to me that Jesus wants to have a personal relationship with every person and to save them from their sins. So, one day I asked Jesus to come into my life and my heart and make me new. I knew that something happened because that void that I had been trying to fill for years through other means was now filled up. It was later that I learned that that void (present in everyone) is shaped like Jesus, and He's the only one that fill it the right way. That was almost twenty-three years ago and I haven't regretted that decision once. Like flying in a rocket to the moon, words can't really express what living a life for Jesus is like. You have to do it to know.

What's so bad about Tradition? Let's take a look at some of the things I noticed from the letter that I got from my Greek Orthodox friend and see where tradition has gotten him:

Tradition is a separator of people:

One of the first things that I noticed from my orthodox friend was that he attacked me without even knowing me. Sure, he read my web page, and although that says a lot about me, it isn't a map to my heart or my mind. The concluding sentence of his short letter read, "I think you need to study theology more pal." In essence, he was calling me stupid or perhaps uninformed. There was the first separation, one of intelligence quotient.

I was curious about where the guy was coming from, so I persisted in writing him. I want to know my attacker and if I can know where the attack is coming from, I can formulate a plan to counterattack. I think it was in the third letter that he told me that he was Greek Orthodox, and that theirs is the true tradition because it has been passed down from the Apostles Peter and Andrew. That was the second separation, one of religious superiority.

The third separator is a racial one. In his letter, my orthodox friend stated in the nicest way possible (pure semantics) that the Jews are Christ Killers. He said that they have been cut off (despite scriptural evidence against his claim) from God. So, God transferred His favor to the Church. His doctrine cut off a whole race of people. Therefore, a racial separator.

The fourth and final separator came as what I call the final shot. You see, I had been writing to the guy, and quoting scripture in order to prove my point. I threw lots of scriptures his way and he would never address them. He would only answer me via his view of the world looking through worldly wisdom. So, in his last letter, he was sort of apologetic and knew that he wasn't going to get anywhere. How could he? Doctrines of men never hold up to scripture. His last letter said for the most part, "let's just agree to disagree." Tradition remains, separation remains. I can only hope and pray that he'll realize that there's no grey in God's Kingdom; the Bible is written in Black and White.

Tradition is Man Made:

First, I think that we must differentiate between tradition and Law, because there are those who will read this and say that God laid down a tradition for the Jewish people in the Old Covenant. No, God laid down a law that they had to follow. Later on, in history, around the time of Jesus, the law had evolved into a tradition. Man, always tends to water down and change the things of God, done mostly for his convenience or for lording rules and regulations over other men.

By the time that God had become incarnate in Jesus Christ, the Pharisee's had taken the law and ruined it, much like the lawyers have ruined the American legal system. Jesus constantly condemned the "doctors of the law," for the rules that they had made up for the Jewish nation. Just look at what Jesus said about Tradition, its founders and what he thinks about it, then compare it to your own Church:

Matthew 23

Seven Woes

¹Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: ²“The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. ³So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. ⁴They tie up heavy loads and put them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.

⁵“Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; ⁶they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; ⁷they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them ‘Rabbi.’

⁸“But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. ⁹And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. ¹⁰Nor are you to be called ‘teacher,’ for you have one Teacher, the Christ. ¹¹The greatest among you will be your servant. ¹²For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

¹³“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.

¹⁵“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.

¹⁶“Woe to you, blind guides! You say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.’ ¹⁷You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred? ¹⁸You also say, ‘If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gift on it, he is bound by his oath.’ ¹⁹You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? ²⁰Therefore, he who swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. ²¹And he who swears by the temple swears by it and by the one who dwells in it. ²²And he who swears by heaven swears by God’s throne and by the one who sits on it.

²³“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. ²⁴You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

²⁵“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. ²⁶Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.

²⁷“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men’s bones and everything unclean. ²⁸In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

²⁹“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. ³⁰And you say, ‘If we had lived in

the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’³¹ So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets.³² Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers!³³ “You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?³⁴ Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town.³⁵ And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.³⁶ I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation.³⁷ “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.³⁸ Look, your house is left to you desolate.³⁹ For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’ “

So if Jesus was condemning the Pharisee’s and Teachers of The Law because they had perverted the Law, how much more will he condemn those who pervert the wonderful grace that He has offered us. When people take Salvation by Grace and turn it into tradition, then it is a great sin because it takes away the liberty of the Holy Spirit to conduct God’s work in an individual or corporate body of believers.

Tradition replaces relationship with God:

Living a life in and for Jesus Christ is really an easy thing. It’s always man who makes it look so hard. The basics are simply this. You need to be born again, then God makes you a new creature. He gives you the guide book (The Bible) and He gives you the Holy Spirit to decode the guide book for you and He hangs around to teach you through a variety of different manners. Sure, we are to gather with other believers to keep each other strong, and we have to love our God and our neighbors, but that becomes second nature after the first few things are accomplished.

But then tradition steps in and tries to infiltrate. Pretty soon you are approached by a church leader and told that it would be a good idea to join some sort of church ministry. That would make you a good Christian. Or, you might be told that giving ten percent of your earnings to the church is a commandment, and that will make you a good Christian. Or, perhaps you have a special skill or trade, and donating time to the church would make you a good Christian. I explained in the other letter that the true Church, as Jesus intends it to be, is not an organization, but an organism. It’s a living, breathing and growing body and all parts of the body are essential

in order for the other parts to survive. It's not some building, or organized religion that needs to be wet nursed by it's participants. If you see someone hungry, you feed them, and you don't send them to the church food closet. If someone is naked, you clothe them and you don't send them to the church clothes closet. Be a father to the fatherless and help the widow, don't send them away to the organization, but be a nurturing organism.

One sad example of how tradition replaces God is in how many Christians and churches celebrate Christmas and Easter. Over the years I've watched the change and cried out only to be ridiculed about what I've been saying. This year I tried to find a radio station that would have godly Christmas music on it, and found not one. All the songs were about Santa Claus, reindeer and snowmen, or sitting near a fire on a cold winter's night. I tried to find a Jesus movie on the television. I have satellite television with hundreds of channels, and couldn't find anything Christian to watch. I see pagan Christmas trees set up on the altars of churches and all the glitter that adorns the church building. I see little children in droves waiting to see Santa and his reindeer. Houses are adorned with lights, sleighs, snowmen and other pagan themes, but hardly any nativity scenes can be found. I see Easter egg hunts on church lawns, even though rabbits and eggs have absolutely nothing to do with the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The reason why the Church is so ineffective in this world anymore is because it has become the world. And that's what Tradition get you; separation from a relationship with God.

Tradition Leads To Spiritual Death:

Two words that are really synonymous with each other are tradition and religion. It was said by someone much wiser than I, that "religion is man's attempt to reach God, but true Christianity is God's attempt to reach man." These two words, and their practice, only lead to spiritual death. Let's look at some things.

First, the Bible clearly says that God is no respecter of men.

Then Peter opened [his] mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons. Acts 10:34

You can try to do everything right and if you do it in your own strength it is garbage:

But we are all as an unclean [thing], and all our righteousnesses [are] as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. Isaiah 64:6

The word for filthy in that verse in the Hebrew is menstrual, meaning that any deeds done outside of God's will and on our own accord are like menstrual rags, stained and good for no other thing.

The fellow who wrote to belittle me for my love of the Jewish people, and my belief that they're still God's chosen people came to his conclusion through the traditions of man, not the Word of God. His words were words of pride, callousness and bigotry; all things that are contrary to what the Bible teaches. There was a cute little bumper sticker that Christians used to put on their cars back in the late 1970's and early 1980's that so aptly described the truth. That sticker read, "God said it, I believe it, that settles it." That is the true mark of a true believer in Jesus Christ. Everything we do, everything we say and everything we think should line up with what is in scripture, and if it doesn't, it's stubble to be burned up.

People who practice tradition usually rely on others to give them their information. Remember, that is one of the definitions of a tradition; passed on oral tradition. It's possible that he even read it in some Orthodox publication, but it's still passed on tradition, and its rubbish. People don't realize the wonderful gift we have in God's word. There were days back in the Dark Ages when people weren't allowed to have Bibles, because they might find out the truth. People just went to church and heard the Priest speak, and they took it as gospel that the priest was telling the truth. People don't realize that the Bible is the actual Word of God, as transcribed onto paper by His faithful servants. They also don't realize that Jesus is referred to as the Word of God, and if you take it a step farther, the Old Covenant points to Jesus concealed and the New Covenant is Jesus revealed. SO, when you pick up that Bible, you're not just picking up another literary work, you're holding God in your hands. It's His revelation of Himself for you to enjoy and relish. Why do you think that the first book banned in most Communist nations is the Bible? Why is it today banned from most schools while books from other religions are encouraged and even taught? It's because the Bible is the truth, and an unbelieving world system doesn't want people to know the truth. To them, the truth is dangerous because it could harm their traditional system.

Now I'll Go Out on A Limb:

Well, now I'll explore something that came to me while researching for this paper. I thought about not writing it, but I figure that by now you either love me for writing what I have written, or you hate my guts, so a little extra will only add to either side a little bit.

When I looked up the word “Tradition” in the Merriam-Webster dictionary, I noticed that there is another word that has the same root word in Latin. I didn’t go looking for it, it just fell right before my eyes. The other word that has the same root is the word “Treason.” The Latin word, “*traditio*” literally means to hand over, or surrender something to something else. Interestingly enough, if you study the Vulgate translation of the Bible, you find a variant of the word “*traditio*,” in the Gospel where it talks about Judas betraying Jesus. Some examples are below:

Matthew 27:3 tunc videns Iudas qui eum tradidit quod damnatus esset paenitentia ductus rettulit triginta argenteos principibus sacerdotum et senioribus

Mark 3:19 et Iudam Scarioth qui et tradidit illum

John 18:2 sciebat autem et Iudas qui tradebat eum ipsum locum quia frequenter Iesus convenerat illuc cum discipulis suis

John 13:21 cum haec dixisset Iesus turbatus est spiritu et protestatus est et dixit amen amen dico vobis quia unus ex vobis tradet me (one of you will betray me)

Then I decided to look up the definition of Treason, and it read thusly:

Main Entry: *treason*

Pronunciation: 'trE-z&n

Function: noun

Etymology: Middle English tresoun, from Old French traison, from Latin tradition-, traditio act of handing over, from tradere to hand over, betray — more at TRAITOR

Date: 13th century

1 : the betrayal of a trust : TREACHERY

2 : the offense of attempting by overt acts to overthrow the government of the state to which the offender owes allegiance or to kill or personally injure the sovereign or the sovereign’s family

Now a lot can be gleaned from what these definitions mean. It would seem that following a tradition rather than following Christ Jesus in a Biblical manner is handing over the freedom and liberty that He offers through His grace. You hand it over to the person or entity that is running the “Tradition,” and you surrender your rights to it. In almost every case, that governing body (i.e. orthodoxy or any other clergy) is committing an overt action to overthrow the sovereignty of Christ and His kingdom. They do this by making up their own rules, and they

present them to the person who has given them their freedom, presenting it as the truth, because it has some of the sweetness of the original purity thrown in to make it sound real.

This method of spiritually killing parishioners can be compared to rat poison. If you look on a box of rat poison, you will see that it is 99 percent good food, and 1 percent poison. If it were the other way around, the rat would recognize that it's poison and wouldn't touch it. So the rat eats and eats, thinking it's getting good food while the whole time the poison is building up in its body and it dies a slow and miserable death. Those who kill people spiritually do the same thing. They mix in 99 percent truth, with 1 percent heresy. When the 1 percent of heresy is accepted as common practice, then another heresy is introduced to the truth until it is accepted as common practice then the cycle repeats itself again and again. The poison is never recognized because the clergy tell the parishioners that they don't need to read the Bible because they (the clergy) are there to do that for them. When all is said and done, what once was a true faith has the clothing of faith, but the innards of a monster.

That is why Catholics pray to saints, when it is forbidden in scripture to do so. That is why Catholics put Mary in such high esteem and even worship her, like the heathen worshipped Diana and Aphrodite. That is why so many protestant congregations demand a tithe of ten percent, to obey the commands of God, even though Jesus came to set us free from the Law of sin and death. And finally, that is why, a Greek Orthodox gentleman can write to me and tell me that my theology is all messed up and doesn't follow Greek Orthodox Tradition; when the only words that any of us really have to live by are the Words of God Almighty Himself, in the masterpiece that He has graced us with, The Holy Bible.

What Do I Do Now?

Well first and foremost, if you're not born again, you need to be. Everyone has to experience two births, one physical and one spiritual. It's really easy. First you have to acknowledge that you're a hopeless sinner. Then you just tell the Father that you recognize your plight and ask Jesus to come and live in your heart. He'll move in and make you a new person. For more detail, just go to my page that goes into this in more depth by finding the "saved" link at the front page.

If you're still confused, and don't know what choice to make, then pray that God will further reveal the truth to you. He rewards those who seek the truth.

If you think I'm some sort of lunatic or that I'm an emissary of the devil or something for what I've written, I challenge you to do your own study in the Bible. Dust it off, pick it up, pray that God will reveal the truth to you and read. After you've read the Word and actually realize that you are able to do so, then go to your priest and ask questions. See if the answers correspond to what's in the Bible. Your eternal security depends on these actions. When you find that you've been fed a line of garbage and that the church isn't what it's supposed to be then get out. Don't try to change things because you're fighting the Spirit of Tradition and it's a powerful demonic force. Get born again and get into a Bible believing church that loves Jesus. I'll admit that they're hard to find, but when you find one your life will blossom like the desert after the rains.

In Closing:

If you've been offended by this document I'm not going to apologize. Christians have spent 2000 years talking their way around issues and all it's done is let people continue to walk down the roadway to hell, and I refuse to let you do that without at least warning you. I want to stand in front of my Lord and know that I did everything I could to get people on the right track. So, I won't apologize for being honest and forthright.

If you've been blessed by this article then Praise God! Share it with others who you might think need it. There are a lot of other articles like this on the website, so hit the home button at the end and visit them. The Lord make His face to shine on you and be gracious to you. In Jesus Holy Name – AMEN!

David Ben Ya'akov