

Trademarks of Traditionalism (#2)

Joe Slater

Tradition means something handed down. Paul, by inspiration, called the gospel he had received from Jesus “*the traditions*” (1 Corinthians 11:2). He, in turn, had delivered those traditions to the Corinthians. Divine traditions, then, are to be kept faithfully. Human traditions, by contrast, may be kept only if they are compatible with Holy Scripture. Even then, we must not treat human traditions as though they were divine law. To do so is sin. We commonly refer to it as traditionalism.

One trademark of traditionalism is intimidation by means of personal insults, as discussed last week. A closely related trademark is reliance on the opinions of “big” men. When the officers the Sanhedrin sent to arrest Jesus returned without Him, the furious Pharisees fumed, “*Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him?*” (John 7:48). Their implied answer was “no,” so that meant Jesus was untrustworthy according to them. After all, six dozen experts can’t be wrong!

To this day such reliance on personalities occurs all too often. Brother Famous over at Great Big Church says something is true, so it must be right. An author with half the alphabet behind his name opposes a certain practice, so it must be sinful. Note: This is not to say that all well-known, well-educated, and respected people are always wrong! To presume, however, that they are always right is rank traditionalism.

Jesus’ enemies hated Him because, among other reasons, He hadn’t been trained in one of their rabbinical schools. They envied this mere carpenter’s son and chafed at the fact that “*the common people heard Him gladly*” (Mark 12:37).

Traditionalists trust “big” men. Let us trust in our bigger God whose word is truth! (More Next Week)

Character

“One of the primary building blocks of a nation is the character of its people. Webster, in one of his renderings, notes that character is moral excellence and strength. Our nation, founded upon godly principles, has enjoyed unparalleled success and prosperity. In stark contrast, the French revolution of the eighteenth century, founded upon godless principles, produced anarchy and repression. We may confidently rely on the age-old axiom: “*Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people*” (Proverb 14:34). The building of character will be the key to the continued success of our nation.

Character is that which is supplied by the inward and spiritual part of man. While the Bible stresses the importance of living exemplary lives in the outward man, it does so by encouraging the transformation of the inward man into the likeness of Jesus Christ (Colossians 3:9-11; Romans 12:1-2).

There are three persons in each of us, as Dr. Childress affirms:

- 1) What people think we are.
- 2) What we think ourselves to be.
- 3) What God really knows us to be.

Character, in the spiritual sense, is what God knows us to be. God does not accept pretended religion, but requires service from the heart. When we serve God in the spirit as well as in the letter of the law, we find Christianity to be a character-building way of life. This is not only good for our nation; it is essential to the salvation of our souls.

--Glen Elliott (Greenbriar, AR)

AMERICAN SLAVES

We are blessed to live in a country free from slavery. Abolished by the 13th Amendment to the Constitution in 1865, slavery would become a thing of the past. Even though slavery in the traditional sense has been done away with, many Americans have allowed themselves to become slaves.

Living in the richest nation on earth allows us to enjoy many things. Solomon wrote, “*I know that nothing is better for them than to rejoice, and to do good in their lives, and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor, it is the gift of God*” (Ecclesiastes 3:12–13). The problem with being blessed with so much is the possibility of becoming enslaved to the blessings themselves. Once we become obsessed or enslaved to something, even things that are inherently good, our passions become sinful. The Bible says, “*Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?*” (Romans 6:16). Most Christians know that for them, the elements of immorality are things of the past (1 Corinthians 6:9-11) But when we allow the components of a good life to overtake us and consume all of our time and effort, we become guilty of modern-day idolatry; and idolatry is sinful (Colossians 3:5)

American Christians can become enslaved to countless things, placing priority on them over the Lord. Our jobs, hobbies, children’s activities, and social events all have the potential of making us their slaves. God and our service to Him must be placed first and foremost in our lives and once that is done, we can break free from the sin that so easily ensnares us. (Hebrews 12:1)

--Jay Launius (Maud, TX)

The tragic flaw with “My body, my choice,” is that there are actually two bodies and one of them doesn’t get a choice.