

## A Dishonest Appeal to Tradition

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"Tradition" is one of those words that gets used to either defend one's own position or to condemn the position of an opponent. "We represent the Tradition of our Church, while you do not!" The problem is that apparently the word, Tradition, can mean whatever the user wants it to mean. Conservatives, by definition, are those who want to conserve Tradition; but, it turns out, only that part of Tradition that supports their present position.

For example, Anglican Tradition for centuries allowed the ordination only of men to the Priesthood and therefore to the Episcopate. Anglican Tradition for centuries required Confirmation before allowing anyone to receive Holy Communion. The Liturgy of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer and its direct descendants (up to and including the 1928 version used by TEC) was also the Tradition for centuries. Adherence to The 39 Articles of Religion was Tradition for centuries, too. The list goes on.

Both those who are currently in charge of The Episcopal Church and those who are unhappy with it, including those who have separated from it, affirm their allegiance to Church Tradition and accuse the others of breaking it. Yet, folks on both sides of the current divide, the so-called Liberals and the so-called Conservatives, do not abide by much of the Tradition I have just listed. They hold on to only those parts of it which they can use to support their positions on current issues, particularly pertaining to the Marriage and Ordination of Gay persons and to certain exercises of authority in the Church and its Polity.

Many who call themselves Conservatives, therefore Traditionalists, do not support the ordination of men only to the Priesthood and therefore to the Episcopate, requiring Confirmation before allowing anyone is allowed to receive Holy Communion, the Liturgy of the 1662 Book of Common Prayer or its direct descendants including the 1928 of TEC) and adherence to The 39 Articles of Religion.

We should simply admit this selective and inconsistent or even dishonest use of Tradition and stop appealing to it and move on to the real reasons we support whatever our positions are.