

### **III. SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY**

## **SCRIPTURE-TRADITION-CHURCH IN ORTHODOXY AND PROTESTANTISM**

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**ABSTRACT.** The St. Scripture and St. Tradition have the same value and authority, they are two forms of communicating the revealed truth, inseparable, complementary.

In essence, the content of the St. Scripture and of the St. Traditions is identical, so the St. Tradition cannot be placed in opposition to Scripture, unless its being is altered. Between Scripture, Tradition and the Church there is no relation of super-ordination or subordination, but coordination.

The way of understanding the Scripture-Tradition ratio by the confessions is reflected in their ecclesiological and soteriological conception. Due to an underestimation of St. Traditions, the lack of an authentic interpretation of the Scripture led inevitably to a misconception about salvation and the Church. The protestants maximize the Scripture, which is the *norma normas* and minimizes Church, rejecting any extra-biblical authority.

**Key-words:** Scripture, Tradition, Church, Revelation, authority

The Holy Scripture is an unquestionable source of faith. No heresy, religion or denomination did rejected it once. The Churches differ in their interpretation of it, according to their position on The Sacred Tradition. Thus, The St. Tradition has become a field of great interfaith controversy.

According to the protestants, the fundamental norm of the Christian theology, is Scripture alone (*sola Scriptura*). St. Scripture is the only source of divine Revelation. It contains the Word of God, unadulterated and uncorrupted and is normative for faith, alone, it provides the doctrinal and moral content, being a completely and sufficient code. Dogma is only what the Scripture teaches and commands, for them there is no dogma itself, but only God's word.

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The intention of the reformers was to overcome human subjectivity, manifested in traditions, and papal arbitrary interpretations, but this just led to total affirmation of subjectivity, because everyone is entitled to interpret Scripture, as the Holy Ghost illuminates him during the reading, without the help of the Tradition and a reading independent of any authority (Church), "the greatest ideal of the Protestants will be, thus, the one of not being submitted to doctrines of men, but only to God and His teaching"<sup>1</sup>.

The St. Scripture is the authentic testimony and the only legitimate of the divine Revelation, whose main author is the Ghost of God. It has an unique meaning and authority. All must be subject to biblical criterion. The true Tradition is God's saving word that existed before the Church. This word is the Gospel, the good news. Reform rediscovers *viva vox Evangelii*.

The St. Apostles fixed in writing the tradition, and that is Scripture Itself, which alone comprises revealed truth. "The St. Scripture of the New Testament came into being gradually, fixing from oral tradition, from the gathering of the ancient Christian writings (Epistles, Gospels) and until its definitization and canonization "<sup>2</sup>. The fixing of the canon means giving up to look as norm the other traditions, which have not been fixed in writing by the St. Apostles. The Church's Magisterium could not keep the clean apostolic tradition without a superior norm, which is Scripture. The existence of the church tradition is respectable and useful, but contingent and human.

The Protestant Reformation broke out as a revolution against the traditionalism in the forms that had developed and the importance it had gained in the Western Church in the late Middle Ages, against the corrupt tradition of the papal Church, with its collection of customs on indulgences, the magisterium and primacy, as a movement against institution, against clergy and against ritual, raising the issues of reconsidering The Scripture and ended by the rejection of Tradition. The totally negative attitude of the Protestantism towards the St. Tradition and the vast polemic that ensued is based on the way how tradition was used in Catholicism, which tried to build on it all the innovations and exaggerations of the papacy. The formal principle of the Reformation, *sola Scriptura* was directed against the scholastic Theology, the tendency of Roman Catholic Theology was to formulate groundless doctrines, under the conception of virtual revelation, contained in the so-called ideal tradition, or Subjective tradition, *traditio constitutiva*.

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<sup>1</sup> Adrian Niculcea, *Sfânta Treime în ființa și viața Bisericii*, (Ed. Arhetip, 2001), 59.

<sup>2</sup> Ferdinand Hahn, *Die Helige Schrift als älteste christliche Tradition und al Kanon* in Beiheft Ökumenische Rundschau, (42)1982, 47 c. f. Constantin Pătuleanu, *Teologia Ecumenică, Istoria și evaluarea dialogului teologic bilateral dintre EKD și BOR*, (Craiova: Editura Mitropoliei Olteniei, 2003), 30.

The reformers were taken by the stream beyond their original intentions were. "How well they say, Protestantism replaced the infallibility of the Church and of the pope with the infallibility of the reformers and changed the Church's Tradition with the tradition that had to create for its organizations"<sup>3</sup>.

Sola Scriptura is fundamental hermeneutic principle of the Reformation. Scripture is sufficient to itself: *Scriptura sui ipsius interpres*. Its text is supernaturally inspired and no one can interpret it correctly, than He that inspired it, the Holy Ghost. In this sense Calvin says: "Let us, therefore, decide this thing: that those whom the Holy Ghost instructed in their soul have full confidence in Scripture and that Scripture indeed authenticates itself (ἀυτοπίστον)... And the certainty it deserves to be granted by us, is gained through the witness of the Holy Ghost." <sup>4</sup>.

Luther, trying to differentiate the true tradition from the false one, of the Roman Catholic Church deformations, violently attacked the Roman Catholic customs and practices of his time, even uses the interpretation St. Scriptures of St. Fathers (Augustine), but he considers them *human masters and private teachers*, also he appeals to arguments from the St. Tradition concerning The Baptism. Somehow he recognizes the traditions, insofar as they do not contravene or not contradict St. Scripture (God's word): "Quod ergo non est contra Scripturam, pro Scripturam est, et Scriptura pro eo."<sup>5</sup> It is rejected the so-called extra-biblical tradition, oral, which was transmitted by the Church's Magisterium to the next generations. St. Scripture is the word of God clothed in human words, in-literate, Luther said, "just as Christ, the eternal Word of God is incarnate in the garment of humanity"<sup>6</sup>.

But *Confessio Augustana* expressed an absolute opposition between Tradition and Scripture: apart from Scripture, not all the other teachings formulated by the Church comprise the apostolic tradition, many are human traditions, opposed the Gospel and teaching the faith."<sup>7</sup>

Calvin rejects everything that does not contribute to the maintenance of venerating God. In this category is also the tradition of St. Fathers, about the cult and discipline, because they stand out from the apostolic faith rule. "The Lord included in His law everything that regarded the perfect rule to live properly, in such a way that He left nothing men could add to it".<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Teodor M. Popescu, *Sfânta Tradiție în Biserica Ortodoxă spre deosebire de celelalte Biserici* in Studii Teologice, (7-8)1952, 409-410.

<sup>4</sup> Jean Calvin, *Institutio christianae religionis*, (Genevae, 1568), 26.

<sup>5</sup> C.f. N. Chițescu, *Scriptură, Tradiție, tradiții* in Ortodoxia, (3-4)1963, 406.

<sup>6</sup> *Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 48, (Weimer-Böhlau), 31.

<sup>7</sup> *Confessio Augustana*, art. XV în *Die Symbolischen Bücher der evangelisch lutherischen Kirche*, (Gütersloh, 1929), 42.

<sup>8</sup> Jean Calvin, *Institutio christianae religionis*, Book IV, chapter 10,17, 766.

The sufficiency of the Scripture is affirmed by the Calvinist confession of faith, too: "We believe that the Holy Scriptures contain all the fullness of God's will and that all that man must believe to be saved is in their teaching. And because everything that regards the way God asks us to serve Him is shown in the Bible in detail, people, be they even Apostles, should not provide other teachings"<sup>9</sup>.

According to the Protestantism, The Tradition, or traditions, as they preferred to express "are not a divine institution, but human, because even if they contained something divine, the divine altered in the course of time, mixing with many human doctrines. Secondly, because between the apostolic age and appearance of the teachings of the tradition are inserted space for centuries"<sup>10</sup>.

The protestants identify Revelation with the inspiration. Unlike St. Scripture, the documents of St. Traditions are not inspired, but contain the Divine Revelation that remained unwritten and then fixed in the monuments of St. Traditions. Originally, St. Tradition is no stranger to inspiration, whereas the apostle, as an organ of Divine Revelation was equally inspired when he wrote down the divine word and when he proclaimed by word of mouth, too. Between the two treasures of Revelation there is only "a certain shade of difference. Compared to St. Tradition, that is proper to the documents of Sacred Tradition and above their narrow St. Scripture possesses a particular quality, so unique, that is to be composed under the direct divine influence... in the St. Tradition, God does not speak directly through the prophet or apostle, but parents bear witness of the Church's faith"<sup>11</sup> so Scripture maintaining a position of pre-eminence to Tradition.

But "revolted against any religious authority, Protestants were forced by circumstances to impose their communities Confession of faith with authority. The concern was not to lose any of revelation of God. They felt the need to establish the true teachings in writing, not only against Roman Catholics, but also against the inner centrifugal trends. Fighting against all traditions, they had to build up one, proclaiming their symbolic books identical in teachings as the word of God"<sup>12</sup>. They made these symbolic books a kind of *regula fidei*, similar to church tradition, accepting in a way, in practice, tradition. The Protestants created, also, their own worship, church organization, pastor special clothes, etc.

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<sup>9</sup> *Confesiunea belgiană*, art. VI în *Confesiunea belgiană. Canoanele de la Dordrecht*, translated by Constantin Moisa, (București: Editura Stephanus, 1997), 11.

<sup>10</sup> Hristu Andrutsoș, *Simbolica*, translated by Iustin Moisescu, (Craiova: Editura Centrului Mitropolitan al Olteniei, 1955, 104.

<sup>11</sup> Isidor Todoran, *Despre raportul dintre izvoarele Revelației* in *Mitropolia Ardealului*, (9-10)1958, 726-727.

<sup>12</sup> N. Chițescu, *Scriptură, Tradiție, tradiții*, 487.

The Apology calls *traditiones humanae* those carnal acts, which do not move the heart (ch. VII) and ch XV: The *traditionibus humanae in Ecclesia* which opposes St. Scripture, is a protest against the so-called innovations and warp of the apostolic faith and worship, concluding that there are some ordinances established for the good order and peace inside the Church, but through these, one cannot gain salvation<sup>13</sup>.

The relationship between the St. Scripture and St. Tradition was discussed at the first meeting of the bilateral theological dialogue between the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Evangelical Church in Germany, which focused on Scripture, Tradition and Confession. "The Orthodox theologians could ascertain at this meeting that the Protestant theologians agree with the idea of a comprehensive apostolic tradition, which opens certainly new perspectives for solving controversial themes, now classic between Orthodox and Protestants... After debate and discussion about the sources of divine Revelation, old controversy between the Orthodox position on St. Scripture and St. Tradition and the reformer principle of *sola Scriptura* has considerably mitigated ... The difference between the two Churches is that for the Orthodox Church the compulsory tradition from the first eight centuries is considered as a part of the apostolic Tradition besides St. Scripture, while for the Evangelical Church, the Old Church tradition is also considered as a religious tradition "<sup>14</sup>

From the Orthodox perspective, the St. Tradition is the living memory of the Church, always present, is the life of the Holy Ghost in the Church, not Church history, but her practice, liturgical, sacramental, ecclesial, moral and ascetic spirituality. This makes Christ contemporary, only this way, the reality of Christ is lived and transmitted continuously. The Tradition is not, negatively speaking, mere theory or law book, dead warehouse, museum or collection of antiques, meant to be studied by the archaeology. St. Tradition does not designate a set of vestiges of a past more or less remained aloof and detached from the present, but it remains always alive in the Church and constant, always identical with itself (because of the identity of the Church itself), although it can be experienced in individual Christian conscience in a different way and intensity<sup>15</sup>.

The Tradition cannot be changed or rejected, for a change or denial of it is equivalent to a cutting short of Revelation, of its application in its fullness and authenticity and this would mean a cutting short of the Church<sup>16</sup>. The way of

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<sup>13</sup> *Apologia Confessionis Augustanae XV*, 13 în *Die Symbolischen...*, 208.

<sup>14</sup> C. Pătuleanu, *Teologia Ecumenică*, 33-34, 139.

<sup>15</sup> I. Todoran, *Esența Sf. Tradiții și sensul ei istoric* in *Mitropolia Ardealului*, (4-6)1976, 295.

<sup>16</sup> Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. I, II<sup>nd</sup> edition, (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1996), 49.

manifestation of Savior's teaching ministry was the one through tradition. He urged his disciples to start preaching, considering this means as the most appropriate to make known His teaching to the nations. We have nothing written by Him. The New Testament books are nothing more than documenting the faith of the early Church, whose witnesses are the St. Apostles.

St. Scripture and St. Tradition have the same value and authority, they are two forms of communicating the revealed truth, inseparable, complementary. The 'Oral and written are not only forms of teaching on the revealed contents. So in that order, the written word as well as the unwritten one, have as vehicles of the contents revealed by God, the same content, and are part of the same work of Revelation's propagation, with the same purpose. That this revealed content is expressed to the people by God, it means that under this aspect is it entirely teaching and tradition (παράδοσις, traditio). Therefore, St. Paul could say that the whole Christian teaching is tradition, meaning it is taught, whether by uttered word or written one "<sup>17</sup>. St. Basil the Great expresses this truth thus: "Some of the dogmas and preachings kept in the Church we have from the written teaching, and other we have received from apostolic tradition, handed down to us secretly. Both of these have the same authority for piety "<sup>18</sup>.

In essence, the content of the St. Scripture and of the St. Traditions is identical, so the St. Tradition cannot be placed in opposition to Scripture, unless its being is altered. Between Scripture, Tradition and the Church there is no relation of super-ordination or subordination, but coordination. "The Church, Scripture and Tradition are in an intimate domestic relation, supporting each other and excluding any ranking of them. Only in this unexplainable unit they serve the truth of Revelation and of full communion of believers with God in Christ through the Holy Ghost. The Church appears before the Scripture, but it remains forever linked to the original testimony of Revelation fixed in the Scripture, which it interprets in the light of Tradition"<sup>19</sup>. To place the Scripture, the Tradition and the Church in competition was specific to the western spirit which saw the spiritual realities in the light of legal relations of power.

The Tradition is the forming environment of the Scripture, it is the source of the Scripture, the biblical authors used this source in writing the books of the St. Scriptures, which does not contradict the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, which should not be understood as a mechanical act of dictation, verbal inspiration, but a dynamic one. The Scripture resulted from the divine-human cooperation.

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<sup>17</sup> I. Todoran, *Despre raportul dintre izvoarele Revelației*, 719.

<sup>18</sup> Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, *Despre Duhul Sfânt* 27, 66, J. P. Migne, P.G. XXXII, col. 188 A

<sup>19</sup> Valer Bel, *Misiunea Bisericii în lumea contemporană*, (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2002, 36.

The revelation was offered to the Apostles by the Son and Word of God embodied (Acts 1:21-22, I John 1:1-3) and through them, the Church receives, retains and transmits it. "The tradition, from the Orthodox viewpoint, is not made up of only an amount of teachings of the Revelation not included in the St. Scripture, transmitted through an intellectual communication, but in a practical transmission of teachings about salvation from generation to generation, through their practical application itself... The tradition is, therefore, not only the theoretical memory of Christ's teachings, unwritten in the St. Scripture, but the continuous living with Him and in Him through the Holy Ghost. Especially this is the tradition<sup>20</sup>.

The revelation was communicated by the Apostles to the early Church through the Scripture and the apostolic Tradition. "The original apostolic tradition included like an organic and multiple whole what was fixed later in the Scripture and what remained practiced, and therefore, unwritten, as the Tradition, in a restricted meaning"<sup>21</sup>. The Apostolic Tradition clearly express that the essence of apostolic preaching is not an addition to the Scripture. "The Sacred or divine Tradition is the divine Revelation taught by the Savior, preached by St. Apostles, but unwritten by them, instead transmitted in the Church, without change, from generation to generation"<sup>22</sup>.

As the Apostles were chosen by the Savior to convey the revelation given to them, they have elected their successors the bishops, with the same purpose, to convey the same revelation, which became Tradition (II Tim 2:1-2). The only source of salvation is the revelation. The St. Tradition belongs to the Church, it is an essential element of it, alive, organic, necessary, it is part of the life of the Church, of teaching, of worship, of organization and its suppression inevitably leads to the overturning of the Church. Because of the link between the Church and Tradition, realities which occurred at the same time in history, the denial of tradition leads to a misunderstanding of the Church, which was founded by the oral tradition of the Apostles.

The way of understanding the Scripture-Tradition ratio by the confessions is reflected in their ecclesiological and soteriological conception. Due to an underestimation of St. Traditions, the lack of an authentic interpretation of the Scripture inevitably led to a misconception about salvation and the Church.

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<sup>20</sup> D. Stăniloae, *Primirea Tradiției în timpul de azi din punct de vedere ortodox* in *Studii Teologice*, (1-2)1975, 5.

<sup>21</sup> D. Stăniloae, *Sfânta Tradiție. Definierea noțiunii și întinderea ei* in *Ortodoxia*, (1)1964, 88.

<sup>22</sup> I. Todoran, *Sfânta Tradiție și tradiția bisericească* in *Mitropolia Ardealului*, (9-12)1962, 679.

The protestants maximize the Scripture, which is the *norma normas* and minimizes Church, rejecting any extra-biblical authority. "Luther and Calvin place the authority in the Word, to which pastors, teachers and councils are servants"<sup>23</sup>. Luther says: "There should not be articles of faith from the words or writings of the Church's Fathers... This means that only the Word of God shall establish articles of faith, and no one else, not even an angel".<sup>24</sup> So "what the St. Scripture teaches as a whole must be the Church's teaching"<sup>25</sup>. As for the confession of the early Church, respectively the symbol of the Niceo-Constantinople, which he recognizes, Luther believes that "it was received because it expressed the truth of Scripture. It was not valid because it was established by the Church, but because it is in line with the truth of Scripture"<sup>26</sup>. Calvin rose, revolted against the authority of the Church: "There is a more dangerous error that prevail in many places, that Scripture has no more weight than it is given by the consent of the Church. It is like the eternal and inviolable truth of God would depend on people's decision ... wicked men who want to impose an unbridled tyranny under the guise Church."<sup>27</sup> In the same way pronounce the symbolic books: "We believe and confess the canonical Scriptures of the holy Prophets and Apostles, both Testaments, being the very Word of God and their authority itself is enough".<sup>28</sup>

The Protestantism affirms the infallibility of the Bible, its sufficiency and superiority to the Church, because otherwise it would lead to the inferiority of God's word to the Church, meaning of God to the people. "The fact that God's Word is the true judge in the Church does not raise the necessity of the teaching Church as guardian of God's Word"<sup>29</sup>. Protestants have left the Church's authority criterion, because it became their disadvantage in their dispute with the Roman Catholic Church.

Rejection of the Church's authority and infallibility by the reformers had as a starting point the restriction of Roman Catholic Church's infallibility in the Magisterium and ultimately to the person of the pope, but also the separation *Ecclesia docens - Ecclesia audiens*, both stranger to Orthodoxy.

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<sup>23</sup> David C. Steinmetz, *Luther and Calvin on Church and Tradition*, în *Calvin's Ecclesiology: Sacraments and Deacons*, (New York & London: Gerland Publishing, Inc., 1992, 13.

<sup>24</sup> *Articuli Smalcaldici*, II<sup>nd</sup> part, art. II, 15, *Die Symbolischen*, 303.

<sup>25</sup> Ștefan Sandu, *Teologia Mărturisirilor de credință luterane și ortodoxe* în *Ortodoxia*, (3-4)1992, 6.

<sup>26</sup> Șt. Sandu, *Teologia Mărturisirilor...*, 10.

<sup>27</sup> J. Calvin, *Institutio christianae religionis*, I, 174.

<sup>28</sup> *Confessio Helvetica*, art. I in *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Reformierten Kirche*, edited by E. F. Karl Müller, (Leipzig, 1903), 170.

<sup>29</sup> Ulrich Kühn, *Kirche*, (Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1980), 51.



The apostolic testimony recorded in the Scripture and vivified by the Ghost founded the Church. The Scripture legitimize the Church as the true successor of the apostolic preaching work. The Church is understood only as an organ that receives the Scripture, as a gathering of the faithful for listening to Scripture, but not its interpretation factor: "The Sufficiency of Scripture works in the context that the Bible is regarded as the book given to the Church, to the faith community, which gathers and is led by the Holy Ghost"<sup>30</sup>, but usually nobody reaches the faith rarely getting in contact with the Scripture, but through the living tradition (the testimony of contemporaries who believe), the transmission of the faith belongs the tradition and takes place in the Church.

The most delicate problem of the Protestantism is that of ecclesiastical authority and it can be said that it constitutes the cause of Protestant issues in general, the relation between authority-freedom of conscience between the "confession of faith, dogma and ecclesiastical magisterium"<sup>31</sup>. But the religious phenomenon cannot be deprived by the principle of authority, and the Church is the establishment which concretely possesses the authority. In Protestantism, the authority is reduced to the authority of Scripture (objective) and of Holy Ghost (subjective). "The Protestantism is... the principle of freedom and individuality, applied to religious matters...Not only that the Protestantism is a tribute brought to the principle of religious freedom, but the Protestantism is but it"<sup>32</sup>.

The inner testimony of the Holy Ghost in each person (testimonium Spiritus Sancti internae) testifies the value of the canonical books, and then it illuminates in their understanding. The Christian understands the more difficult texts of the Scripture by the analogy of faith and the inner enlightenment from God, isolated, out of the relationship with the Church. The Spiritual grace flows into the soul of the believer who reads or listens devoutly St. Scripture and strengthens him, making him to understand the text. The dark or difficult texts are cleared by the light ones and the unsafe texts through the safe and undeniable. Thus, the Scripture interprets itself, *Scriptura Scripturae interpres*, Church's authority is no more necessary and appears the principle of Bible's free interpretation, degenerating into a widespread individualism, purely subjective authority and free from any influence, Christian's autonomous capacity to interpret Scripture.

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<sup>30</sup> Timothy George, *Teologia reformatoilor*, translated by Corneliu Simuț, (Oradea: Editura Institutului Biblic "Emanuel"), 1998, 97.

<sup>31</sup> Hans Jürg Urban, *Bekenntnis, Dogma, Kirchliches, Lehramt, Die Lehrautorität der Kirche in hentigen evangelischen Theologic*, (Wiesbaden, 1972), 170.

<sup>32</sup> Wilfried Monod, *Du protestantisme*, (Paris, 1928), 183-184 cf. N. Chițescu, *Ortodoxie și Protestantism in Ortodoxia*, (3)1950, 390.

It is denied the supernatural character of the Church seen as authority, which has Christ as its Head and the Holy Ghost who guides us into all truth. There is no institutional authority and structure of the Church. The protestant churches have no doctrinal magisterium.

Until the half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, it cannot be said that only the oral tradition had a normative value. The fixing of the canon and of the apostolic tradition is an act of exercising the authority of the Church. The Bible was born in the Church and for the Church. The Church acknowledged in the Bible the inspired word of God. The preaching of God's word in the Church involves a presentation of Scripture in front of its members, so the Church is professing the Scripture. The preservation, the accurate transmission, and error-free interpretation of revealed truth is guaranteed only in the Church. (II Pet 3,16). The Church has not conveyed only the Revelation's content, but it thoroughly studied the content, it explained, deepened, formulated it and systematized the divine teaching.

The Church is the one that, under its divine authority ruled definitively on the inspired character of the St. Scripture, distinguishing it from any other writing. "The Church has perfectly and undefiled preserved both sources (Scripture and Tradition) of the dogmatic truth and through the Church, these sources have been interpreted and defined as infallible and have been formulated by the Holy Ghost"<sup>33</sup>.

The relation Scripture-Church is not one of subordination, because it is the same Holy Ghost present and active in them. There can be no collision between Scripture and the Church as the Holy Ghost who spoke through the prophets, animates the Church, ensuring its infallibility, leading it to Christ, the Truth.

The Holy Ghost updates the words of the Scripture in the Church community, pointing out other and other meanings, according to the needs of the time and to the spiritual understanding level of the community members. The Church therefore always keeps the Scripture new and always the same.

The Revelation continues to be active in the world in and through the Church, the Church's mission is to make the revelation efficient through Scripture and Tradition. It is the organ of making known the wisdom of God the manifold "(Eph 3:10). The Church is also the space where Revelation applies. It is organically united with Revelation, because it is part of the Revelation, meaning the point where it ends, and where the Revelation bears fruits.

St. Scripture is the source and treasure of Divine Revelation, but not the norm of faith. The norm of faith is the Church's teaching<sup>34</sup>. Only the Church teaches us what to believe and what we cannot believe, based on the St. Scriptures and St. Traditions, for it alone is "the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Tim 3:15).

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<sup>33</sup> Zico Rosis, *Sistemul Dogmaticii Bisericii Ortodoxe Sobornicești*, (Atena, 1903), 58 c. f. Șt. Sandu, *Teologia Mărturisirilor*, in Ortodoxia, (3-4)1991, 55.

<sup>34</sup> P. Deheleanu, *Manual de Sectologie*, (Arad: Tipografia Diecezană, 1948), 79-80.

"The Church is the one which explains the whole revealed teaching, which is contained in the St. Scripture and the Apostolic Tradition. Only the Church has the right and obligation to do this ... The Church is not abstract, in itself, and no mistake, for itself, but only as long as it is permanently, in the revealed truth"<sup>35</sup>. The Scripture alone cannot give or elaborate answers to the new problems that arise, this can be done only by the Church, of course, on the basis of the St. Scriptures and St. Traditions, shading, developing, bringing new formulations to the revealed truth, offering a real explanation of the Scripture, not materially completing it, with teachings that would lack from it. The Church provides preservation and fruiting, at the same time, of the Savior's teaching.

The Scripture can be deepened, understood and lived at its true value only in the Church: "If the Bible would get in the lives of the believers differently than the way of the Church, it would not be the word of God, but just a book – worthy, of course of all consideration - which can be an object of historical and literary special research"<sup>36</sup>, to produce redeeming results, word to be transmitted by an infallible and authoritative means.

The notion of supremacy is stranger to Orthodoxy, either of the Church or of the Bible, it is a secular concept. The Church has no authority in the interpretation of the Scripture and Tradition in the sense of superiority towards them, or of the Magisterium to the Church body. The wholeness of the truth contained in the St. Scripture reveals in the Church, in the light of apostolic Tradition. The tradition after fixing the canon of the St. Scriptures is the developing of some taught elements, but left unwritten in the Scripture, combined with the explanation of the Scripture by the Church. "This tradition is Church's rule of faith (regula fidei)... the internal bond between the St. Scripture and the rule of faith is established only through the Church"<sup>37</sup>.

Only the Church can appreciate over time and highlight the Scripture and Tradition. It is the subject of interpretation and understanding. To remove the Holy Scripture from the context of the Holy Tradition means to documentarise it, to turn Divine Revelation into a chronic and removing The Tradition from the confirmation made by the scriptural text, means making it liable to all innovations ... Only in the integrity Scripture - Tradition, the Revelation becomes fully accessible through the Church for the believer "<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>35</sup> Ioan Ică, *Protocolul discuțiilor în Sfânta Scriptură și Tradiția apostolică în mărturisirea Bisericii*, (Sibiu: Editura Universității Lucian Blaga, 2007), 252.

<sup>36</sup> Gr. T. Marcu, *Cuvântul lui Dumnezeu în viața Bisericii după Noul Testament* in *Studii Teologice*, (1-2)1971, 49.

<sup>37</sup> D. Stăniloae, *Sf. Tradiție...*, 65-66.

<sup>38</sup> Costache D. Buzdugan, *Relația dintre Revelație și dogmă în Teologia ortodoxă* in *Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei*, (5-6)1971, 339.

The Church, Body of Christ and interpreter of the Revelation cannot be in contradiction with its Head Christ, Who gave Revelation. As body of Christ, the Church is the only one able to identify the true meaning of the Scripture and Tradition, giving them an authentic interpretation.

Not every individual decides the true meaning of the Scripture, after subjective considerations or impressions, but the Church, through its Magisterium ei (Mt 13,11; 28,19; I Cor 12,28). The divine truth is not and cannot be dependent on human subjectivity, "Christ's legacy as well as Savior's missionary testament could not stay to chance, without efficacy and soteriological achievement in the Church<sup>39</sup>, for preserving the unity of the ecclesial community, keeping the faith and deliverance from the bondage of sin and death. Hence the compulsory character of its teaching. "The meeting between the Scripture and the Church takes place in Christ's person, on the one hand, because the Scripture is the Word of Christ and the Church is the Body of Christ, and on the other hand, because as Scripture itself says: "The Word became flesh (Jn 1:14), which makes us understand that Scripture has become life and it is the life of the Church"<sup>40</sup>.

The Orthodox Church makes the Bible available to believers, without distinction, it never imposed restrictions on reading it. But its deep meaning can be known only in the gracious ambience of the Church. Its Knowing cannot stop only at the letter, "For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life". (II Cor 3,6). As it is apparent from scriptural texts, biblical interpretation rises enough problems (F.Ap. 18,24-26; II Pet 1,20). A good knowledge of the Scripture does not automatically lead to its correct interpretation. This could be achieved only through the help of the Church's exegesis (I Tim 3,15; II Pet 1,20). Only the Church, as a theandric whole, possesses the charisma of infallibility as an extension of Christ, the Truth, in Holy Ghost. (Jn 14 :6; 26).

The Church, Scripture and Tradition are not separate and autonomous realities, any alteration of the relationship between them leads to adverse consequences "The Church without the Scripture and Tradition loses its identity and content, becoming a mere sect..The Tradition without the Scripture and Church loses its meaning, ceasing to be the way of truth and life... A Church of Scripture without Tradition limits itself in a certain geographical, historical and cultural area, becoming anachronistic and irrelevant. A Church of the Tradition without the Scripture loses its apostolic identity, and opens itself, uncritically, to endless adjustments"<sup>41</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup> Petru Rezuș, Al. I. Ciurea, Lucian Gafton, *Biserica în planul lui Dumnezeu* in Ortodoxia, (3-4) 1964, 313.

<sup>40</sup> C. Davideanu, *Sfânta Scriptură și Biserica* in Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei, (4)1987, 92.

<sup>41</sup> D. Popescu, Doru Costache, *Introducere în Dogmatica ortodoxă. Teme ale credinței creștine din perspectivă comparată*, (București: Editura Libra, 1997), 55.

The Holy Ghost is the principle of truth and of the Church at the same time, St. Irenaeus says: "Where is the Church, there is God's Holy Ghost and where is the Holy Ghost of God, there is the Church and all the grace, and the Holy Ghost is the Truth"<sup>42</sup>.

In the contemporary Protestantism there is a more moderate attitude toward the St. Tradition, but without being accepted as a treasure of Revelation. The Tradition remains inferior to Scripture. The relationship Scripture - Tradition - the Church does not cease to be viewed in the context of power relations. The Protestant theology is seeking a formulation of the principle sola Scriptura which could not exclude from the outset any recovery of the Tradition, it is sought a new presentation of the relationship mentioned above but without reaching the formal principle of the Reformation. "The primacy of Scripture versus Tradition requires more than just a relative difference between an older stage (or earliest) and a newer one in the general stream of Church's tradition. It is about the oldest tradition, which is in the St. Scripture, a tradition with a special rank, which may not have the same rank with the tradition of interpretation and action of the St. Scriptures in history. Neither the reality that it is the oral tradition of yesterday and nor that it's the tradition which existed in the early Church is not enough to determine the nature and particularity of this tradition. It's about its character as an apostolic, compulsory Tradition, which for us only in the St. Scripture is given; for any post-New Testament tradition, no matter how important and no matter as objective would correspond to the biblical witness, it is only a derived tradition"<sup>43</sup>.

In the works of latest Protestant theologians, Lutherans or Calvinists, can be observed an assigning of a certain authority, relative to the Church in the transmission or even in the interpretation of Scripture, standing out that its work is in the service of reconciliation.

Karl Barth affirms the primacy of the Bible over the Church, the Church exists in so far as it comes from the Word of God and turns towards it<sup>44</sup>. The Church is a real Church in so far as it obeys the Scripture and the Scripture is heard in it<sup>45</sup>. Barth admits a relative authority of the Church according to Christ, Apostles and Scriptures. Church's authority is required for a correct interpretation of Scripture as the Church presents, in his conception, as an intercessor of God's supreme authority.

Emil Brunner takes even a step forward towards recognition of a certain church authorities: "Without the Church there is no Bible... We owe the Bible, entirely, to the Church... The Church is the one that makes the Bible understandable,

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<sup>42</sup> Sf. Irineu, *Adversus Haeresis*, III, 24,1 in J. P. Migne, P.G. VII, col. 825.

<sup>43</sup> F. Hahn, *Die Helige Schrift...*, 48 c. f. C. Pătuleanu, *Teologia Ecumenică*, 33.

<sup>44</sup> Karl Barth, *L'Église*, (Geneva: Ed. Labor et Fides), 1964, 211.

<sup>45</sup> K. Barth, *L'Église*, 212.

through an unbroken chain of interpretations throughout the ages"<sup>46</sup>. The Church's mission is to proclaim the word, to convey the tradition understood as Scripture: "The Church is the power that bears over the current of the centuries, the word of the Bible in present, the word, the Church's proclamation is, according to its being, a binging up-to-date of the word of Bible"<sup>47</sup>. So "The Church (Ecclesia) is the place where the message of the Gospel is propagated"<sup>48</sup>.

Rejecting the St. Tradition on the line of the Evangelical Theology, Paul Althaus states that "The Revelation comes only through the canon of biblical writings... The authority of Revelation is mediated by the authority of the canon, the latter being nothing but the Church's authority, which forms and forwards the canon"<sup>49</sup>. It is recognized therefore the role of the Church that formed the canon of the St. Scripture and its authority as an organ of Revelation's transmission, even the role of its interpretation, as shown in the following: "The Church forwards to us the canon with a certain understanding of the Scripture through tradition and its contemporary exegetical and dogmatic situation"<sup>50</sup>. Paul Althaus comes to recognize even the dogmatic tradition and to refute even the classical Protestant principle of sola Scriptura, "no one is directly to the Bible"<sup>51</sup>.

According to Paul Tillich, the carrier of the perceived Revelation is the Church, obviously, through Revelation he understands only the Scripture. However, Tillich admits some authority of Church, "The Christian Church is based on the final revelation and must receive it in a continuous process of reception, interpretation and updating..."<sup>52</sup>.

Edmund Schlink recognizes some authority of Church in determining the biblical canon, but not in interpreting the Revelation. During its history, the Church has fixed the New Testament canon recognizing the documents of apostolic origin, has given dogmas - confessing Christ - and rules (canons). "The dogmas have authority in Church's preaching and work, not because they were made by the Church, but because in their testimony Christ is understood, to Whom the Apostles were witnesses... The Church determined how the ministry of preaching and sacraments administration was exercised"<sup>53</sup>.

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<sup>46</sup> Emil Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1941), 138.

<sup>47</sup> E. Brunner, *Offenbarung und Vernunft*, 139.

<sup>48</sup> E. Brunner, *A mi hitünk*, (Budapest: Sylvester Kiadás, 1935), 144.

<sup>49</sup> Paul Althaus, *Grundriss der Dogmatik*, (Erlagen, 1929), 36.

<sup>50</sup> P. Althaus, *Grundriss der Dogmatik*, 37.

<sup>51</sup> P. Althaus, *Grundriss der Dogmatik*, 37.

<sup>52</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. I, (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), 144.

<sup>53</sup> Edmund Schlink, *The Coming Christ and the Coming Church*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 111.

When we say that the Church is the interpreter of the Scripture, we understand the Church as a whole, clergy and faithful, this is the factor of interpretation, not the isolated believer, not the priest alone, not the clergy, in general. The Church as a whole, as the theandric body has the Harima of infallibility. One can talk about an ecclesiality of Revelation's understanding. "The whole Church is a permanent synod, a communion, a convergence, a permanent cooperation of all its members. Only in this state there are preserved and recovered its spiritual goods"<sup>54</sup>.

The Church maintains the fidelity to the Revelation through the Holy Ghost. The authentic meaning of the Revelation's content can be understood only in the Church, the witness of its vivacity, "In the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, as in the Scripture, is present and active the same Holy Ghost. One and the same is the Holy Ghost who spoke through the prophets and inspired the saint authors, the one who descended on the Apostles at Pentecost, at the foundation of the Church... the same Holy Ghost who illuminated the hagiographers is present in the Church, being active even when it decides on its problems"<sup>55</sup>.

Church's authority in matters of faith manifests through: stating the truths of faith, specifying them, defining them better, couching the better in more accurate expressions, protecting them from interpretations, interpreting, explaining the infinite content of dogmas (revealed truths of faith) under the circumstances, always new, in which believers live. The Church does not change the content of the revealed truth. The entire content of Christian teaching is revealed. The truth of faith's formulation, contained in the St. Scripture and St. Tradition, belongs to the Church. The fund of faith, on the basis of which we are saved, is defined by the Church from the Scripture and Tradition.

So, the Church is the organ of storage, interpretation, fruiting and living of God's Word. The Scripture has an ecclesial character, it appeared and is explained in the Church. The Tradition, as well as the Scripture must be understood as a work of the Holy Ghost in the Church, and the Church is the embodied Tradition.

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<sup>54</sup> D. Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, I, 186.

<sup>55</sup> Mircea Basarab, *Autoritatea Sfintei Scripturi în Biserica Ortodoxă* in *Ortodoxia*, (2)1980, 238.

