

**EPISTEMIC, HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BACKTRACKINGS OF  
ORTHODOX CHURCH TRADITION AS AUTHORITY IN RELATION TO THE  
UKRAINIAN-RUSSIAN HERITAGE AND MODERNITY**

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by  
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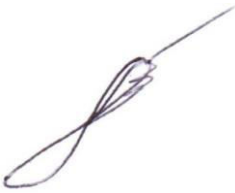
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## DECLARATION

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## **ABSTRACT**

The end of the communist rule in Eastern Europe facilitated the emergence of the modern renaissance of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority in the post-Soviet society. Adopting the fundamental affirmation of the authority of the universal Christian tradition as that which had been believed "everywhere, always, by all [ubique, semper, ab omnibus] (Pelikan 1971:333), the research investigates a threefold paradigm of "universality-antiquity-consensus" of the Orthodox Tradition in relation to the Ukrainian-Russian heritage and modernity. The conceptualization of Orthodox Church Tradition from a relational perspective, both its nature and forms of expression, are explored within the context of the space between the elements involved and the specific eschatological goal popular in the Eastern Orthodox theology - a personal self-realization via mystical theosis. This new dialectic of Orthodox notion of authority, clothed in the Hellenistic philosophy and the ancient Byzantine constellation of values, is still characterized by a tremendous number of more or less obligatory traditions in church doctrine, liturgy, and ethics. The main body of the thesis provides a critical epistemological analysis of Orthodox Tradition. This tradition has become a significant factor in the social scene and a guiding moral force in almost all spheres of the post-Soviet society. Since the world-historical struggle over the reformation of the church was fundamentally a struggle over the primacy of the Sacred Scripture as opposed to church tradition, the history of ecclesial authority within the Eastern Orthodoxy is briefly discussed. This discussion centers on formative influence that Orthodox Tradition has had on the development of Eastern Christianity. The research suggests that all Christian denominations, which are in constant search for consensus, are in need of more relentless inquiry into our common ecclesiological heritage, and that denominations should ask embarrassing but honest questions of one another. A new methodology of reconciliation, juxtaposed with cooperative didactics of possible consensus, is introduced in the research. It is hoped that this methodology can lead both Orthodox and Protestant Churches out of their confessional caves. Elaborating a theological solution of the indicated problem of authority, the Orthodox idea of the normative faith deposit and unique Christian truth beyond time and space as well as the ecclesiastical triumphalism of some Orthodox claims are closely examined in the research. Taking the perspective of Evangelical theology, different longterm trajectories of interaction and consensus between Orthodox East and Protestant West are provided.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Full Title (Author)
<b><i>Ad Haer</i></b>	Adversus Haereses <i>or</i> Against Heresies (Irenaeus of Lyons)
<b><i>Adv Herm</i></b>	Against Hermogenes (Tertullian of Carthage)
<b><i>Ad Serap</i></b>	Ad Serapionem <i>or</i> Epistle to Serapion (Athanasius of Alexandria)
<b><i>Adv Marc</i></b>	Adversus Marcionem (Tertullian of Carthage)
<b><i>Ann</i></b>	Annals <i>or</i> Annales in Latin (Tacitus)
<b><i>ANF</i></b>	Ante-Nicene Fathers (Roberts, Alexander, and Donaldson, James (eds.) 1981. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans)
<b><i>Apol</i></b>	Apologeticum (Tertullian of Carthage)
<b><i>Calv. Institutes</i></b>	Institutes of the Christian Religion, author John Calvin
<b><i>Cant</i></b>	Commentarius in Canticum Canticorum, GCS 33 (Origen of Alexandria)
<b><i>C. Cels</i></b>	Contra Celsum <i>or</i> Against Celsus, GCS 2-3 (Origen of Alexandria)
<b><i>C. ep. Manich</i></b>	Contra Epistolam Manichaei quam Docant Fundamenti (Augustine of Hippo), CSEL 25/1,197
<b><i>CIS</i></b>	the Commonwealth of Independent States
<b><i>1 Clem</i></b>	First Epistle of Clement (Clement of Alexandria)
<b><i>De corr. Donat</i></b>	De correctione Donatistarum <i>or</i> On the Correction of the Donatists, Letter 185 (Augustine of Hippo)
<b><i>De pallio</i></b>	On the Mantle (Tertullian of Carthage)
<b><i>De Prae Haer</i></b>	The Prescription against Heretics (Tertullian of Carthage)
<b><i>NIV</i></b>	New International Version
<b><i>Phil</i></b>	Philadelphians (Ignatius of Antioch)
<b><i>ROC</i></b>	Russian Orthodox Church
<b><i>Strom</i></b>	Stromateis (Clement of Alexandria)
<b><i>WCC</i></b>	World Council of Churches

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## CHAPTER 1

### 1.1 Introduction: Research Background

In the twentieth century, the demise of the USSR and sweeping radical changes in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) profoundly affected the Orthodox spiritual landscape through the spontaneous development of theological, sacramental, and ecclesiastical forms of authority. Orthodox Church Tradition was rediscovered as one of the principal authority agents and re-employed in the process of spiritual restoration of collective and individual religious identities. Church tradition was the central normative and symbolic core of the Orthodox faith, as well as an example for *a sui generis* within the modern theological trajectory in the post-communist society.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union was accompanied by decreased state control over religious institutions in the early 1990's. This created a negative response of the Russian Orthodox Church to western globality since it violated the ancient Byzantine formula of church and state "symphony" that had been accepted and enforced in Eastern Christianity. Unprecedented freedom of institutional autonomy and freedom of religious expression of other Christian denominations became the main challenge for the Russian Orthodox Church, which has always considered itself "the organic and extended body of Christ and the divine mystery of renovation by the power of the Holy Trinity" (McGuckin 2011:44). Thus, the religious legitimization of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority in the postmodern context aimed to restore the traditional understanding of the national Church as a conservative social force able to reflect the icon of the Holy Trinity on earth in a mystery of Koinonia.

In analyzing the complex relationship among different Slavic groups of believers, particularly their history and increasing receptivity to religion, the present research examines the role of the Russian Orthodox Church and its leaders as potential re-constructors of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority. The Eastern Orthodox Tradition, expressed in countless confessions of faith, conciliar, Episcopal, and patriarchate documents, in theological Bible commentaries and manuals, liturgical formularies and saints' legends, has endorsed another form of an anti-western reaction along with ethnonationalism and fundamentalist protectionism.

## **1.2 Value of the Research**

The lack of theological elaborations in the field of contemporary Orthodox Church Tradition as authority, suggests that it may be reasonably asserted that the current understanding of similarities and differences of the traditional authoritative impact between post-soviet Evangelicals and Orthodox believers in the Commonwealth of Independent States can be improved. A fundamental theological problem, which emerges here, is the validity and the authority of Orthodox traditions for Evangelical Christians who live and serve the Lord in a predominantly Orthodox setting. In recent years, division and tensions between post-Soviet Evangelicals and postmodern Paleo-Orthodox believers have been intense, creating a need for a new investigation to extend the boundary of fundamental knowledge of Eastern Orthodoxy, in general, and the authority of Orthodox Church Tradition, in particular.

## **1.3 The Problem and Status Question**

In the twentieth century, Christianity experienced, "somewhat paradoxically, both the thirst for unlimited freedom and authority" (Negrut 1994:1). As a result, "one of the basic problems theologians confronting today is knowing how to discern between the holy tradition of the Church – the expression adequate or appropriate to Revelation - and mere human traditions which only express Revelation imperfectly and, very often, which even oppose and obscure it" (Meyendorff 1960:ix). Trying to overcome the state-promoted atheism and communism in Europe and the Soviet Union, many Christian churches in the Commonwealth of Independent States have discovered that "authority lies at the heart of the issues that separate the Eastern Orthodox Church from Roman Catholics and Protestants" (Nassif 2010:36).

The key problem in distinguishing Tradition from traditions appeared when "the Proclaimer became the proclaimed" (Bultman 1951:33). The entire structure of the event and divine interaction with humanity through revelation are "not given in a static manner. It is not a system of statements for a man to take and use" (Bruner 1950:58). Jesus enters our personal history and "speaks to us in our time-conditioned language. Without lifting us out of our cultural and historical milieu, he gives us a glimpse of eternity so that our confidence is no longer in the merely human and temporal but in the divine and transcendent" (Bloesch 1994:28).

The great divergence between the Orthodox and Protestants in CIS states is still preoccupied with the question whether the unique content and authority of Orthodox Church Tradition can be examined, attested, and proved by the sound scriptural theology, a balanced, self-aware history, and authentic apostolic practices in accordance with the criterion of universality required for "Orthodox consensus" (Pelikan 1971:333-357). As Cullmann has argued, we need to diligently reassess the controversial question of whether the gulf which separates Orthodox and Protestant doctrines, which centers on the relation between Scripture and Tradition, is unbridgeable (Cullmann 1966:98). "The necessity of approaching the complicated issue of Scripture and Tradition relationship and its authority from the perspective of contemporary Evangelical theology does not only include a theological interest and practical implications, but also presumes (1 Peter 3:15) that all Christians, including Protestants, have always been called on to defend their integrity of faith, certainly no less today than at any other time in history" (Lykshosherstov 2013:163).

Taking these uncertainties at face value, a threefold research framework: (1) epistemological universality; (2) historical development; and (3) theological consensus of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority, was used in a critical enquiry of appropriate epistemic, historical and theological concepts and theories related to Orthodox Church Tradition. Various highlighted elements of authority in the construction of Orthodox Church Tradition can be explained theologically from the perspective of the dichotomous space between the Apostolic and the ecclesiastical traditions, between office and charisma, between coercion and liberty, between hegemonism and a culture of dialogue, between oppression and persuasion, between Orthodox conservative substance and Protestant corrective principle, between structure and liminality, between institutions and pilgrim people of faith, and, finally, between Scripture and Tradition. The study suggests that all Christian denominations, which are in constant search for consensus, need to inquire a more relentlessly into one another's ecclesiological heritage, asking embarrassing but honest questions of one another. The research also suggests that a new approach, that of reconciliation, should be used in conjunction with cooperative didactics of possible consensus, in order to lead both Orthodox and Protestant Churches out of their confessional caves.

The status question of this study was: In what similar and different ways is Orthodox Church Tradition truly authoritative for Slavic Protestants in Ukraine and Russia, considering a unique diachronic mode (Orthodox notion) of *episteme* in the expression of complex, static-dynamic relations between theological *gnosis*, historical *eschata* and religious *praxis*? Based on the central topic of the research, the following qualitative sub-questions were discussed in the thesis to make data collection more systematic:

1) In terms of epistemic backtracking of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority, the study sought to provide a cogent, sustainable and biblically nuanced solution to the core epistemological inquiry: how to regard the weight we give to a specific ecclesial tradition on the grounds of its being endorsed not by scriptural (proximal), but by confessional (subsidiary/auxiliary) authority. Furthermore, once the problem of definition and trust of Orthodox (or Protestant) traditions is solved, and its authoritative endorsement is determined, how we can integrate this theological attitude into a strictly confessional epistemic outlook? For confessional evangelicals, like Michael Horton, "Orthodoxy is no more successful than Rome in explaining (1) how Scripture justifies extracanonical norms and (2) how such practice obviates the difficulties of interpretative multiplicity" (Horton 2004:127).

2) Historical and hermeneutical considerations of the research problem relate to the question that confronted the early church: "Whether tradition was creative or subordinate. Does church tradition simply reaffirm the revelation given in Scripture, or does it contribute new light not to be found in Scripture? Is tradition dependent on what Scripture records or is it independent in the sense that it can define a new truth? Or, are Scripture and Tradition interdependent in the sense that neither has efficacy apart from the other?" (Bloesch 1994:143). The research affirmed that it is essential for the Eastern Orthodox to question the past, since the Orthodox have often been far too uncritical in their attitude to the past, and the result has been spiritual stagnation and backwardness. In line with this question, the thesis suggests that further delineation of Orthodoxy as a theological category should consider that the early Christians understood orthodoxy in terms of general concepts, not meticulous theological definitions;

3) The inclusive effect of a potential consensus within contemporary Orthodox theology in the thesis investigates to what extent the concept of properly transmitted Christian Tradition as authority and as a fundamentally theological imperative is rooted in the Orthodox Church identity as a witnessing community. The main problem here is that the dynamism of the religious and historical reconstruction of Orthodox Church tradition as theoretical and practical phenomena resides in the dissemination of the same message of the gospel within different historical, geographic and cultural contexts, through the duality of orthodoxy (the correct opinion or belief) and orthopraxy (the correct practice) faith matrix in a particular community. Thus, due to the inevitable impact of preferentialism and contextualism, such theology of consensus does not attempt to develop a systematic whole. Rather, it aims at formulating genuine tendencies and reflecting on the living experience of Eastern Orthodoxy. The dissertation attempts to answer a major praxiological question whether the institutional framework of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority can function adequately in the post-communist environment of modern Russia and Ukraine to establish and constrain a new Orthodox autocracy without the state's involvement as an enforcer.

#### **1.4 Objectives and Rationale**

Historically, the task of the Church has been to expound the message of the Bible and to defend it against misinterpretations (Richardson and Schweitzer 1951:7). A general epistemic approach to biblical theology refers to the way (mode) of knowing religious truths (religious truth-claims), and the epistemological dimension to the specific way in which religious truth influences or shapes the life of an individual or of communities which adhere to the respective religion; that is, the way in which religious truth becomes *de facto* normative (Gunton 1993:11-40). The task of theological epistemology is to identify that "ultimate reality" which can serve as a "legitimate ground for religious praxis" (Lamb 1989:63-103). Exploring given relations between Scripture and Tradition, the main objective of the study was to investigate the complicated issue of authority in various strains of the postmodern notion of orthodoxy and to provide a scholarly critical but theologically sound exposition of the contested concept of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority from the perspective of contemporary Evangelical theology.

Both Orthodox and Evangelical theologians of Slavic background have, for a long time, been involved in the task of formulating distinctive features of their Christian identities from their respective ecclesial contexts. Echoing this approach, the study supports a conclusion that "the struggle over the visible unity of the church continues to revolve largely around the vexed issue of authority" (Cary 2010:4). In recent years, the issue of Orthodox Church Tradition as the ultimate authority has been at the forefront of theological discussions both in Russian Protestant and Orthodox literature (Prokhorov 2011, Popov 2010, Nichols 2010, Roudometof and Makrides 2010, Kuznetsova 2009, Negrov 2008, Puzynin 2008, Pomazansky 2005, Kuraev 2003, Podberezsky 2000, Raphael (Karelin) 1999, Negrut 1994; Meyendorff 1983, Florovsky 1974, Lossky 1952). Each of the observed traditions demonstrates a distinctive theology, hermeneutic methodology and rich history. While many Evangelicals in Russia and Ukraine placed in a predominantly Orthodox environment are constructing their dialog with Eastern Orthodoxy in terms of ecumenism, understanding, and cooperation, the national forces in Russia have been successful in harnessing both Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism for their own ends to justify further discrimination against religious minorities or even aggression against other nations.

### **1.5 Design and Methodology**

The impact of different factors on the Orthodox approach to the question of authority is investigated in six sections in this thesis. The theoretical framework for doing theology in the present research suggests that methodology serves best in developing "a thick description" (Clifford 1973:3-10) of certain aspects of a concrete church tradition. This distinctive, but closely related, tactical trajectory of the research methodology broadly categorizes a tradition-based inquiry of authority in both study groups of Christians (Evangelical and Orthodox). Since the development and dissemination of a tradition is best understood in conjunction with comprehensive and contextually informed history of tradition, a threefold method of tradition analysis (history-method-theology) was employed to trace: "(1) the historical origins and development of a tradition; (2) the role and method of theology in that tradition, then (3) distinctive characteristics and beliefs of the tradition" (Buschart 2006:23).



### **1.5.1 Paradigm Shift in the Research Strategy**

The research was deliberately configured to avoid the traditional theoretical approach, which emphasizes the issue of tradition authority (confession-minded vision of the problem - incomplete definition of authority - analysis of the phenomenon - hypothesis formulation - conclusion), concentrating instead on theoretical discussions and the construction of epistemological, historical, hermeneutical, theological aspects of the impact of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority. A brief outline of these four points of the Eastern Orthodox theology of tradition proceeds from the concept that the authority of Orthodox Church Tradition objectified itself in history not as a precise theological category but, rather, as "a conservative force," "the ultimate safeguard," an invisible, yet ever-present "concerning" (McGuckin 2011:599).

Re-appropriating and incorporating traditional Orthodox teachings and practices in a post-modern context, this work's research proposal was based on the concept that Orthodox Church Tradition as authority is intimately related to the very deep spiritual perception of the Orthodox notion of life. The Orthodox concept of life reflects a more subtle reality: just as a magnetic field crosses space and time, the Orthodox church conducts its life and translates a proper "electromagnetism" of its authority to the most distant members of the body of Christ in the most mystical and organic way. Scientifically, a magnetic field can be defined only in terms of interacting forces on moving charges, but not in precise knowledge regarding the internal matter of the magnetic field. In a similar way, the theoretical *locus classicus* for any discussion of ecclesial Tradition as authority is always limited by our theological capacity to postulate and claim any super-eclectic vision of Orthodox Church Tradition.

### **1.5.2 Research Methods**

The research was theologically comparative in design but limited to Orthodox Christians (Moscow Patriarchate) and Evangelical Christians in Russia and Ukraine. A practical theological model, with the emphasis on historical reflection and concrete suggestions for action, was chosen as the focus of this research. The thesis was framed on four elements: (1) observation-reflection; (2) analysis-conceptualization; (3) interpretation-reformulation; and (4) action-application. This structure was designed to introduce and develop a holistic and meaningful approach toward Church Tradition authority based on Richard Osmer's

"consensus model" (Osmer 2008:102) for descriptive-empirical, interpretive norms of practice and pragmatic research goals.

In order to avoid the peculiar constraints of a theoretical research model, and to enrich the application-oriented approach of the chosen research design, qualitative methods of the research analysis (e.g. thematic, dogmatic, grounded theory, and ethnographic study) were used to enquire about the present situation in Orthodox and Protestant churches in Russia and Ukraine, particularly in regard to their missions, activities, spiritual climates and current memberships. These findings were then considered in line with the epistemological universality, historical development and theological consensus in the postmodern context, which should promote interreligious and intercultural understanding and tolerance. Patterns of theoretical, methodological and practical variance were then delineated and competing single-factor explanations regarding the outcomes were eliminated.

During the initial observation (reflection) descriptive stage of the research, the thesis available data describing the relevant aspects of epistemological, historical, dogmatic, canonical, hagiographical, ascetical and liturgical developments of Orthodox Church Tradition, regarding its authority for Christians, was identified and analyzed. In a literature review, previously conducted studies on Eastern Orthodox Church Tradition were categorized in order to understand main current theological trends and to provide a new synthesis of the research findings (Prokhorov 2011, Popov 2010, Nichols 2010, Roudometof and Makrides 2010, Kuznetsova 2009, Negrov 2008, Puzynin 2008, Pomazansky 2005, Kuraev 2003, Podberesky 2000, Raphael (Karelin) 1999, Meyendorff 1983, Florovsky 1974, Lossky 1952).

The disagreement on authority debate reveals divergent methodologies and exegetical styles appealed to by both Evangelicals and the Orthodox. This thesis shows that Eastern Orthodox epistemology constitutes not so much a rival methodology to the Protestant approach, but a methodology that aims at a different goal – deification via mystical gnosis. A strict attitude of the post-conservative Eastern Orthodox theological method analyzed in the first four chapters returns the researcher to the original inquiry point: "What do we take as our first theology?" Having examined the epistemological role of tradition in the authority of the Orthodox Church, the present research will argue that there is an obvious

methodological discrepancy between the contemporary scholarly descriptions of a theological phenomenon termed "early Christian tradition" and the Eastern Orthodox notion (ecclesial interpretation) of "Orthodox Tradition", key elements of which do indeed go beyond factual history, human comprehension and teachings of the Holy Scripture (Eph.3:19; Phil.4:7).

A common epistemological mistake in the formal methodology of such investigation suggests that the inclination of a particular tradition towards continuity and stability has been replaced today by an uncritical acceptance and institutionalization of inherited norms or "patterns" of doing things. Thus, the respective communities run the risk of directing their resources towards the defence of their status quo. In such a case, praxis becomes "repressive" because it either opposes or manipulates the discovery of new truth (or new aspects of truth), and knowledge stagnates (Jeanron 1992:49-55). Historical-critical methods (historical-descriptive questions and reproductive reasoning) were also used in the research to explore in greater depth the historical dimensions of geopolitical, social, cultural, economic, spiritual and religious factors. These factors may have contributed to further phenomenological descriptions of Christian faith and practice developed in Slavic Orthodox communities out of, or in direct relation to, the Byzantine Church Tradition (Putnam 1981; Kung 1989:6).

The analysis of different systems of thought, theological schools and doctrinal platforms of Eastern Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism was conducted in the second stage of the research using comparative methods of doing theology to answer the question: "To what extent are our doctrinal beliefs and faith practices influenced by our own cultural context and our denominational traditions?" The comparative method, widely used in comparative religious studies, aims to shed light on both Evangelical and Orthodox doctrinal systems providing an inherently necessary transition from thematic comparison to further theological articulation (Prokhorov 2011; Sauve 2010; Oden 2009; Theokritoff 2008; Morey 2008).

Interpretation, as a way of theologizing, was carried out at the final stage of the research in order to re-conceptualize the theological, biblical and church-related aspects of the Orthodox Church tradition phenomenon. For this reason, a traditional dogmatic-didactic method of organizing Orthodox and Evangelical theology, from dogmatic (systematic)

theology and its divisions of exegetical and historical theology, was used to interpret the issue in the light of theology and to explore biblical texts and church doctrine on related subjects of church tradition. This coincides with the concept that "the Bible is not used by the Orthodox as a system of belief or as a 'summa theologiae,' but as the authentic record of the divine revelation" (Florovsky 1972:29).

## 1.6 Hypotheses

This research highlights similarities and differences between the concepts of Tradition as authority in Eastern Orthodox and Evangelical approaches. The purpose was to analyze and compare the respective prototypes and to review, summarize, and synthesize the phenomena of 'Tradition as authority' in Orthodox and Evangelical contexts. In order to further distinguish between biblical and propositional notions of the truth, and to deconstruct traditional concepts of orthodoxy and heresy in the early church, some key qualities of the *Classical View* of Orthodox Tradition which facilitate formative influences of apostolic and patristic eras along with the ecclesiastical discourse on authority and power were brought into focus, as described in the third chapter of the research. This analysis of the modern responses to the classical theory of orthodoxy and heresy typically revolved around the following three sets of concepts (inquiries): (1) the concept of truth in the Early Church; (2) diversity and primacy of Orthodoxy in primitive Christianity; and (3) continuity and discontinuity issues within Eastern Orthodoxy (*orthodox homeostasis*). Since the territory under study is so inextricably linked to the national identity of Russians, the study further examined the "territorial" notion of pan-Orthodoxy, which is constructed on the insights of superiority associated with the entire philosophical system of Orthodox legitimization of expansionism and "land" patriotism.

The ethnonational discourse of autocratic legitimacy discussed in the research shows that Tatars and Mongols played an immense role in the evolution and development of Russia from a political, social and economic perspective. In this regard, it is difficult to underestimate a thousand-year-long legacy of Orthodox Christian thought that had laid the foundations for moral and spiritual values and worldview in Russia. The study suggests that many Russian theorists (both theologians and historians), inspired by the Byzantine legacy (political advancements) and Peter's achievements, creatively elaborated the mythologeme about Moscow as the Third Rome, anchoring a legitimacy of Rurikid's and Romanov's lines

to Roman-Byzantium models of autocracy. Nevertheless, a more detailed examination of the same subject deals with a valid criticism and the failure of the contemporary Orthodox theology to explain the bias of the "Third Rome" concept in the light of a modern historical research.

Additionally, selected matters of Eastern Orthodox consensus regarding Church Tradition as authority, focusing on a broader level of ecclesial authority, which involves sorting different consensus sub-themes into potential themes for future theological consideration, were examined. The main problem considered was whether the present structure of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority can directly claim its divine origin or whether it stems from the later insertions of theological and liturgical developments. The discussion here also engages the major representative sub-themes of contemporary Orthodox and Evangelical theological consensus with a respective recognition that a gap between ecclesial theory and praxis regarding authority of tradition is a challenge to all who try to interpret it. A conceptual typology of Orthodox Tradition, which integrates historical orthodoxy and practices within a congregational context, is discussed in order to avoid a short-sighted interpretation, traditional self-affirmation, and human imperfection in the area of authority.

## **1.7 Assumptions**

The issue of Eastern Orthodox Tradition as authority is not a self-explanatory exposition. Controversial debates regarding Orthodoxy and Heresy are closely associated with non-theological argumentation "in terms usually reserved for one's worst enemy rather than for those with whom one supposedly wishes to explore the truth" (Rommen 2004:240). Eastern Orthodoxy vigorously opposes the idea of diversity in the early Church since "the monopoly of medieval Catholicism was eroded as the laity turned to explore alternative religious options" (McGrath 2009:19). Therefore, prior to the historical and theological delineation of "normative Christianity," the whole structure of Orthodox operative assumptions and categories needs to be reconsidered and envisaged. Historically, in traditional Orthodoxy, the epistemological inquiry about self-validating continuity of authoritative teachings of tradition invokes neither the Church's magisterium (like Roman Catholicism) nor Scripture

alone (like Protestantism), but the Orthodox Tradition, as it has been embodied by the Fathers or patristics. It is a "theology of the Fathers" (Kung 1988:57).

The main operative assumption of Orthodox theology of tradition is that early Jesus Tradition (all that he did and taught) naturally developed during post-canonical transformations into a living Church tradition. Tradition, therefore, becomes a type of reciprocal product of divine intervention in the Church that ensures that every succeeding generation may have the same faith and communion with the risen Lord (Kuraev 1995:39-97). Nevertheless, the real epistemological crisis of such an apologetic construction lacks credibility because "the infant Church itself distinguished between *apostolic tradition* and *ecclesiastical tradition*, clearly subordinating the latter to the former, in other words, subordinating itself to the apostolic tradition. The fact of the priority of the oral apostolic tradition over its fixation in writing will prove nothing about tradition as such" (Cullmann 1966:87).

Whenever a religious cult demands and enforces conformity, authentic Christianity cherishes true diversity (see 1 Cor.12:4-26). Taking into consideration that "a combination of both unity and diversity is one of the characteristics that distinguish a genuinely Christian tradition from cultic distortions of Christianity" (Buschart 2006:24), theological recognition of this true unity and diversity constitutes one of the main operative assumptions of this thesis. The action plan of this research encourages a new and better form of praxis where church tradition may exist not as a canonical source of revelation but as a subordinate element under the primacy of the Scriptures, creating strong self-consistency of conceptual and practical theologies (Prokhorov 2011, Popov 2010, Nichols 2010, Roudometof and Makrides 2010, Kuznetsova 2009, Podberezsky 2000, Negrut 1994). The study also assumes that "the contemporary Evangelical theology needs to facilitate the formation of a distinctive Evangelical approach toward the issue of authority of Orthodox Church Tradition for Evangelical Christians in Russia and CIS countries in both conceptual development (theological articulation of the modern Protestant position) and practical apologetic implications of theological advancement in understanding historical, hermeneutical, Christological and theological aspects of the issue" (Lyksherstov 2013:120).

## **1.8 Limitations**

The design of the thesis was limited to addressing a very specific knowledge gap, which still exists in the contemporary evangelical theology, with regard to the authority of Eastern Orthodox Church tradition for Evangelical Christians in Russia and Ukraine. It also introduces a fundamental idea for a new in-depth study on this issue within the dominant paradigm of a practical theological model by means of observation, analysis, interpretation and action plan strategies.

One major limitation of the study, which was beyond the control of the researcher, was the obvious inability to deal with all historical, cultural, national and theological aspects of Orthodox Church Tradition in terms of: (a) time - predominantly contemporary theological discussions; (b) the subject - the issue of authority of Orthodox Church Tradition; (c) the location - Russia and Ukraine; and (d) the people involved – Protestants of different denominations and Orthodox Christians in Russia and Ukraine. In order to maintain this study's necessary focus, "Sola Scriptura" arguments were not reconsidered, core operational definitions of ongoing theological debates between the Orthodox and Protestants were not revised, and the current situation with Evangelical Christians and Orthodox Church Tradition in Western Christendom was not analyzed.

## CHAPTER 2

### APPROACHING THE MYSTERY OF AUTHORITY: *GNOSIS* AND *EPISTEME*

#### 2.1. Introduction

*"This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD, who exercises kindness, justice, and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the LORD" (Jer. 9:23-24).*

Depending on where one stands on the doctrine of epistemology, the basic premise of the doctrinal teachings of the Church may allocate both sensitivities to the ultimate mystery of divine transcendence and the ability of human being to know in truth the immanent God. Orthodox theology begins with the humble presupposition that humans can barely articulate, with the help of our language, Apostolic dogma and kerygma regarding the historical crucified Jesus and the transcendently glorified Christ, whose great "*Missio Dei*" has been handed down to us in mystery (εν μυστηριο). Nevertheless, the whole dispute over Orthodox Tradition in the theological discourse remains unresolved today since the root for Orthodox *episteme* is a mystical *gnosis*.<sup>1</sup> Exploring appropriate sources of revelation or *loci theologici*, Vladimir Lossky, in *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction* (1978), suggests that theological teaching locates itself with difficulty between *gnosis* — charisma and silence, contemplative and existential knowledge — and *episteme* — science and reasoning. Therefore, theological language uses *episteme*, but cannot reduce itself to it without falling yet from this world. It must set the spirit on the path to contemplation, to pure prayer where thought stops, to the ineffable (Lossky 1978:14).

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<sup>1</sup> In a general sense *gnosis* (*gino skein*) can have such a varied meaning as "to detect" (Mk.5:29), "to note" (Mk.8:17), "to recognize" (Lk.7:39), "to learn" (Mk.5:43), and "to confirm" (Mk.6:38), with the suggestion of awareness (Mt.24:50), or understanding (Lk.18:34). The compound *epignosis* can take on almost a technical sense for conversion to Christianity, and *epiginoskein* has the same nuance in Tim. 2:4; Tit. 1:1; 2 Tim. 2:25, though not in Rom. 1:28. However, a strict differentiation from *gnosis* is hardly possible. *Ginoskein* plays a bigger role in John and 1 John. It denotes personal fellowship with God or Christ. Because the Father and the Son have life, to know them is to have eternal life (Jn. 5:26; 17:3). Thus, knowledge is neither observation nor mystical vision; it comes to expression in acts. Observing the commandments is a criterion of knowledge (1 Jn. 2:3ff). It is not direct knowledge of God (Jn.1:18) but knowledge through the revelation in Christ, so that all knowledge is tested by Christ's claim (Kittel and Friedrich 1985:121-2).



Correspondingly, Eastern Orthodox theological epistemology starts with "the faculty of hearing the silence of Jesus" (Lossky 2004:133), with divine assistance of the true and holy tradition, which "does not consist uniquely in visible and verbal transmission of teaching, rules, institutions and rites", but, rather, in "an invisible and actual communication of grace and of sanctification" (Florovsky 1937:178). Building on Lossky's interpretation of the dichotomy on *gnosis* and *episteme*, Papanikolaou points out a more general trend within Eastern Orthodoxy, namely, deification as a natural state of the *nous* and recipient of the divine light. He argues, that for St. Maximus, Evagrius and many other Orthodox theologians, deification is "the supreme end of the human will" which "determines all the rest" (Papanikolaou 1998:58). Additionally, Papanikolaou (1998:58-59) argues that *agape* has the priority as a way to transcend the limits of nature in union with God. *Agape* supersedes *gnosis*, since "it constitutes the highest form of knowledge in which lies the intellect and involves the whole person. It constitutes the end because it constitutes the beginning". Empirically speaking, one may become a Christian by joining the community of faith, tradition, and new life to preserve its proper *perspicuitas* from the conflict of hypotheses, however, theology is, first and foremost, a personal faith seeking imperative, which begins in response to the divine gift — his Word that God has spoken to us in Jesus. If there was no real union (*gnosis*) between God and humans in the incarnation, "then the Eucharist itself would be meaningless" (Nassif 2004:50).

In this relationship between *gnosis* and *episteme*, *gnosis* "points toward wisdom and ethical action," while *episteme* refers primarily to "mundane information, facts, know-how, and so on." *Gnosis* "looks to the mysteries and depths of the transcendent and intuitive." As a category of knowledge, *episteme* "points to the rational and pragmatic competencies that enable us to function well in the physical world." Both indispensable entities would be impoverished without the other, since *gnosis* "tends to look backward in time to ask big questions about the way things are, whereas *episteme* is looking, reaching into the future with questions about the possibility" (Brent 2008:30). The concept of traditional Orthodox theological episteme presented by Ouspensky (2004:38) describes a man as "a microcosm, a little world. He is the center of created life; and therefore, being in the image of God, he is the means by which God acts in creation". For that reason, Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos, in *Orthodox Psychotherapy: The Science of the Fathers* (1994), suggests epistemological inquiry should be entered into with a proper conversion of mind (*metanoia*)

and a "the eye of the heart" attitude. Therefore, even though personal gnosis with God is theoretically possible, the Orthodox methodology works in the context of the metaphysical assumption about "incomprehensibility" of God, importing the same apophatic attitude to the epistemic structures of philosophical theology.

To know in fullness does not mean 'to have the fullness of knowledge'; this belongs only to the world to come. If St. Paul says that he now knows 'in part' (1 Cor. 13:12) this *ἐκ μέρους* does not exclude the fullness *in which* he knows. It is not later dogmatic development that will suppress the 'knowledge in part' of St. Paul, but the eschatological actualization of the fullness in which, confusedly but surely, Christians here below know the mysteries of Revelation. The knowledge *ἐκ μέρους* will not be suppressed because it was false, but because its role was merely to make us adhere to the fullness which surpasses every human faculty of knowledge. (Lossky 2004:141)

It can be reasonably argued that, like many other aspects of his thought, Lossky offers the best exposition of Orthodox notion of *gnosis*, namely that *gnosis* surpasses human intellectual capacities, but still is to be communicated and translated into theological language as well as to be subsequently organized into an epistemological system in accordance with the basic Orthodox articulation of the *Oikonomia-Katabasis* concept and *Theologia-Anabasis* consensus.

In his careful study on *The Development of the Concept of Authority within the Romanian Orthodox Church during the Twentieth Century* (1994), Negrut analyzes Lossky's, exploration of Orthodox appropriation of previously overlooked and often neglected relationship between *Oikonomia-Katabasis* and correspondingly between *Theologia-Anabasis*, both of which operate in the realm of searching and reasoning, being a significant characteristic of scientific and philosophical epistemology.

*Oikonomia* and *Katabasis*: *Oikonomia* describes God's movement man-wards, which is a movement of descent (*katabasis*). Negrut observes that Lossky makes a clear distinction between *oikonomia* and *theologia*: "economy is the work of the will, while Trinitarian being belongs to the transcendent nature of God" (Lossky 1985:15). Therefore, for Lossky, *katabasis* is not just a way of knowledge, but only the means whereby "essential goodness, natural sanctity, and royal dignity now from the Father, through the Only-Begotten, to the

Spirit." (Lossky 1985:16) In line with this interpretation of katabasis, Lossky argues that "outside the truth kept by the whole Church personal experience would be deprived of all certainty, of all objectivity" (Lossky 1952:9).

*Theologia* and *Anabasis*: Knowing God means that one has to follow Him in the way of theology, which is gnosis "of God considered in Himself, outside of His creative and redemptive economy" (Lossky 1985:15-16). Following Pseudo-Dionysius (Spearritt 1975:173-182), Lossky affirms that gnosis is a way of a spiritual ascent (anabasis) beyond all perceptive and rational faculties "in order to be able to attain in perfect ignorance to union with Him who transcends all being and all knowledge" (Lossky 1952:27). Following the Greek Fathers' exegesis of Moses' ascent to meet God on the mountain (Exodus 19 and 20:18-21), Lossky affirms that the content of gnosis which one acquires when going beyond everything that exists and arriving at the extreme height of the knowable is, in fact, not knowledge but, rather, a "mystical union with God" (Lossky 1952:28). This is described by Pseudo-Dionysius as knowing nothing (Negrut 1994:17-19).

On the other hand, Orthodox epistemology attempts to limit the idea of personal spiritual knowledge (or "mystical apprehension," "mystical intuition" of the truth) within the known boundaries of dogma, defined by the Church in the form of partial collective progress regarding the knowledge of the Christian mystery. In *The Teachings of the Holy Orthodox Church*, Fr. M. Azkoul argues that it is the "mysticism" of the few who have gone so far to place themselves above the "Church" while privy to a "secret plan" unknown to the Prophets and the Apostles, the Fathers and Councils, perhaps even to the angels their "mystical illumination," their "spiritual journeys," "spiritual discoveries" (Azkoul 1986:23-26). Their gnosis does not belong to the Apostolic Tradition. Their god is not the God of Christians, for the god of heretics is an "alien God", "and their innovations make the gospel worthless" (St. Maximus the Confessor). These Orthodox "mysteries of Revelation" have been deposited in the great ecclesiastical Tradition, granting to us through Christ, not only "mystic newness of gnosis" but also "wisdom to my reasoning" (Azkoul 1986:26).

## 2.2. Synchronic Level of Authority: Divine Charisma versus Ecclesial Office

Another distinctive conviction of Eastern theological epistemology reflects its pivotal ecclesiological axiom – a strong affirmation and belief that the superior apprehension of the revealed truth (in doctrines, worship, mission and office of authority) rests ultimately with the whole Church. This understanding of the synchronic level of authority centers on hierarchical status and hierocratic authority of the Church itself since Eastern Orthodoxy recognizes no single person or single office as having final authority in doctrinal matters. It regards its whole body (ολον το πληρωμα) as bearers of the true apostolic tradition and as protectors of Orthodoxy. This model of collective wisdom suggests that "the hierarchy, which meets at the ecumenical councils, is the voice of the Church; the ecumenicity (the ecumenical character) of these councils, however, and the infallibility of their decisions, are to be tacitly recognized by the whole body of the Church" (Bratsiotis 1951:22). In his book *The Orthodox Church*, Ware notes that "the Orthodox idea of the Church is certainly spiritual and mystical in this sense", and therefore, "Orthodox theology never treats the earthly aspect of the Church in isolation, but thinks always of the Church in Christ and the Holy Spirit" (Ware 1980:239-245). It means that Orthodox presuppositions about the Church start with the special relationship between the Church and God, being manifested primarily in three-mode relations: "(1) the image of the Holy Trinity; (2) the Body of Christ; (3) a continued Pentecost" (Ware 1993:245).

What does matter in Eastern Orthodox objectivity of *gnosis* and *episteme* is not the "*sensus literalis*" but the "*census fidelium*" as a form of inclusive ecclesial awareness regarding the presence of God in a particular community of faith. In *The Orthodox Church*, Meyendorff reflects on the structure of the Orthodox Church, arguing that, at present, "the Orthodox Church is a decentralized organization, based partly on centuries-old traditions and partly on more modern conditions (Meyendorff 1996:130-31). It consists of a number of local or national churches, all enjoying an "autocephalous" status, that is, possessing the right to choose their heads. Bound together by the observance of any common canonical tradition, these churches give expression to their communion of faith by holding general councils from time to time, as the need arises..." Nevertheless, Meyendorff observes "the disadvantages" of this system too: "Independent by right and in fact, the autocephalous churches are too inclined to live in isolation from each other, being unable to take any common action effectively and lacking a common system for the training of the clergy"

(Meyendorff 1996:131). Additionally, Meyendorff identifies the negative effect of Orthodox nationalism, which "ravaged eastern Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries," imposing false self-identity on the Orthodox Church "as nothing more than a mere adjunct of the nation" (Meyendorf 1996:133). In this ambivalent relationship, the unique authority of Orthodox Tradition is exercised in both Christological and pneumatological manner. Accordingly, "the Church's authority to maintain the balance between *episteme* and *praxis* is determined by the relations between Christ and the Church, on the one hand, and between the Church and the Spirit, on the other" (Negrut 2005:31).

Methodologically, these relations focused on communal hermeneutics "could be investigated from the perspective of space between the "Head" and the "Body," and between the "spirit" and the "Institution" (Negrut 2005:31). The entire dialectic of the Eastern Orthodox epistemological interpretation presents the Church as a new milieu where the content of Scripture is being engraved and interpreted through Tradition and illumination of the Holy Spirit (Staniloae 1980:41). Staniloae assumes a certain degree of permanent epistemological error in confusing the Spirit of God with the spirit of the Church, which leads to further "substituting an *ecclesiae* for the *filioque*; the latter confusing the Spirit of God with the human spirit and substituting for the *filioque* a *homineque*". As a result, "the knowledge of the Spirit is dissolved in the subjectivity of the consciousness of the Church or the individual, and the result of this consciousness, in its individual or collective genius, is affirmed as the operation of the Holy Spirit" (Staniloae 1980:41). Lossky (1985:166) argues that the purpose of revelation in Orthodox interpretation is not to provide intellectual knowledge, but, rather, to lead the believers to deification, in which the acquisition of intellectual knowledge is consequently minimized. This approach demonstrates a clear tendency in Lossky's epistemology (1985:166) to downplay the validity of a hermeneutical approach to Scripture. In Lossky's view, the Holy Spirit always imparts His Truth according to the economical needs of the Church:

At every moment of its historical existence, the church formulates its truth of the faith in its dogmas, which always express a fullness to which one adheres intellectually in the light of the tradition, while never being able to make it definitively explicit. A truth which would allow itself to be made fully explicit would not have the quality of living fullness which belongs to revelation. Fullness and rational explicitness mutually exclude one another (Lossky 1985:144-145).

Such assumption arises from the fact that "the primitive Church, in comparison with the epoch of the ecumenical councils, was comparatively adogmatic" (Bulgakov 1988:12). Bulgakov criticizes the Protestant concept (person-Christ-Church), which makes the individual relation to the Church dependent on his relation to Christ. He does not believe that an individual can, himself, comprehend the truth of the Scriptures, what for the Orthodox is completely illusory. The divine gift of the Word of God can be received in its fullness "only in union with the Church, in the temple where the reading of the Word of God is preceded and followed by a special prayer. We there ask God to aid us in hearing His word and in opening our hearts to His Spirit" (Bulgakov 1988:12) This emphasis has important consequences not only for a mystical aspect of this union, but also for the construction of a whole negative approach within the theological systems of Eastern Orthodoxy. It seems to strongly indicate that Orthodox epistemology and ecclesial practice are meant to help the faithful to attain to deification.<sup>2</sup> Thus, "the Bible is not used by the Orthodox as a system of belief or as a *summa theologiae* but as the authentic record of the divine revelation which leads to deification" (Negrut 1994:12).

This basic ecclesiological conviction regarding the Church as a living hierarchical-sacramental community and divine institution replaces an individual search for truth, bearing "witness to the truth not by reminiscence or from the words of others, but from its own living, unceasing experience, from its Catholic fullness" (Florovsky 1972:47). Florovsky refuses to limit the "sources of teaching" to Scripture and tradition or "to separate tradition from Scripture as only an oral testimony or teaching of the Apostles. In the first place, both Scripture and tradition were given only within the Church" advocating the Orthodox notion of the Church as a Receiver of "the fullness of their sacred value and meaning. In them is contained the truth of Divine Revelation, a truth which lives in the Church" (Florovsky 1972:47). Florovsky also, justifiably, qualifies "this experience of the Church" which "has not been exhausted either in Scripture or Tradition; it is only reflected in them." Therefore, according to Florovsky (1972:47), "only within the Church does Scripture live and become vivified, only within the Church is it revealed as a whole and not broken up into separate

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<sup>2</sup> Deification (theosis) is the transformative process of Orthodox "sons of God" into "partakers of the divine nature." "God became a man that we might be made God," said Athanasius of Alexandria (Steeves 2007:874).

texts, commandments, and aphorisms" (Florovsky 1972:47). This reflection on the ecclesial structures of Eastern Orthodox, done in a synchronically structured analysis of tradition, demonstrates that the pneumatic-charismatic and the official sacramental concepts still co-exist today with great difficulty (Ware 1980:197-199; Meyendorff 1996:131-33). The theological challenge in the synchronic exploration of the ecclesial tradition is to determine the right relationship between office organized on a legal basis and free spiritual authority. The two "are not originally identical, and yet they have to be brought into a proper relationship if the office of the clergy is to retain its religious meaning and remain an office of the Church in the full sense of the word" (Von Campenhausen 1969:294).

Traditionally, ecclesiastical preference for authority in the narrower, sociological sense of the word always leans in the direction of the institutional-hierarchical model. However, "the Church lives through the participation of its members, that is, the laity, and the office holders, and is constituted through them by the Holy Spirit" (Volf 1998:222). Stagaman (1999:37) argues that "the core assertion" of the authority subject is a social understanding of authority as a human practice: "human practices and interactions that link individuals together and establish the relationship that constitutes human sociability". It brings out "enhancement of participation and independence" as an important attribute of authority since "any practice of authority must function so that it is understood, organized and conducted such that it maximizes its compatibility with and contribution to the agency of all" (Stagaman 1999:37).

What has been disputed for centuries is how this ecclesial structure occurs and functions. In this regard, Tilley (2000:84) assumes that the ecclesial elite is authoritative "*within* the tradition, not *over* tradition". He also suggests that the problem of true identity of tradition takes place whenever theological or liturgical innovations of the tradition are introduced and "enforced not by the intellectual power of the theological argument in support of them, but by the ecclesial power of this office as guarantor of orthodoxy" (Tilley 2000:38). Additionally, Tilley argues that "the Orthodox and the Western churches also have different concepts of tradition, with theologians of the former often writing of "Holy Tradition" and using tradition as a norm in a way significantly different from the Western churches" (Tilley 2008:8). In *Authority in the Church* (1966:15), McKenzie teaches that "the idea of authority in the Church is not the same as the idea of secular authority, and the danger of

assimilation in this area is greater than it is in most others" (McKenzie 1966:15). He does not see any positive development in the theory of authority in the Church corresponding to the political evolution of recent centuries. Similarly, he observes that "there has been no evolution of the forms of authority in the Church; the ecclesial offices are still organized as the staffs of absolute rulers. The theoretical lag is compensated to some extent by the discord between theory and practice, but when one compares the freedom exercised by subordinates in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries with the tight discipline of the modern Church, one wonders whether theory and practice are not better integrated now than they were then" (McKenzie 1966:17).

This two-fold polycentric tension between the fixed constitutional framework of the emphatically *episcopo-centric* model in tradition-oriented denominations and a more personal, dialogical and sensible concept of *charisma*, given inextricably as a spiritual gift, requires further theological analysis and the correct epistemological application. The prospective orientation of Eastern Orthodox synchronic understanding of the *charisma* and *office* dilemma presents the Church as a potential development agent:

In a certain sense, the greatness of Orthodoxy rests on the very fact that the doctrine is not so carefully defined down to details, is not so strictly regulated by canons. Orthodoxy's system is by no means closed; it is still full of potential. The charismatic life of Orthodoxy has not been confined within sets of legal and institutional forms. There is a significant degree of intellectual mobility, even in theology; thus, teachers of theology are frequently laymen rather than ordained priests. Alongside the offices of deacon, priest and bishop, the Church has from the beginning left room for the office of the teacher — *didaskalos*. (Benz 2009:208-209)

Ecclesial canonicity, which is generally taken in the Orthodox epistemic perspective to imply normativity, assumes it is the responsibility of the entire ecclesial community to know Christ and to live in the truth. Regardless of which Orthodox sub-traditions one may currently live by, the authority that maintains the balance between *episteme* and *praxis* in the retrospective development-in-continuity paradigm belongs to the entire community (Thiel 200:26-31). In *After Our Likeness. The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (1998), Volf considers the process and consequences of communal de-individualization of Orthodox and Catholic believers in relation to the catholicity of the church. He suggests that the participative character of Christian communities presupposes the identification of a church



members with that church. However, this model can be characterized by a low degree of social ascriptivism and by the corresponding privatization of decision. Since catholicity of the individual Christian is unthinkable without relationality, in his conclusion, Volf agrees with Von Balthasar and de Lubac (1998:280) that "the relationship 'Christian-other Christians' does not correspond to the relationship 'church-other church'". For Volf, epistemological deficiency is possible on both sides: "a church can reflect in and of itself the eschatological catholicity of the people of God (albeit in a broken fashion) because it is itself a communion. By contrast, a Christian alone would be an isolated individual, unable to reflect the catholicity of the people of God" (Volf 1998:14-25).

Negrut (1994) also assumes that, because the Orthodox Church is a sacramental-hierarchical community, the role of the *sensus fidelium* is limited to that of the bearer of the revealed truth, while the hierarchy defines, examines and expounds the truth. Considering this concentration of authority in one office, Negrut concludes that "the space between *episteme* and *praxis* has been reduced to the point where the two are merging" (Negrut 1994:84). Furthermore, this shift from ecclesia as a hermeneutical community to the episcopate as the Church's organ of theological definition of truth was followed by the development of an "ideology which affirmed that only within such a hierarchical-sacramental ecclesial community can one attain deification. In this case, the dynamic between episteme and praxis is replaced by an institutionalized epistemology which is intended to justify the traditional practice" (Negrut 1994:84-85).

### **2.3. Diachronic Level of Authority: Tradition and traditions**

The third major factor in Eastern Orthodox epistemological attempt to determine what is authoritative for faith and morals employs the notion of tradition as a unique diachronic mode of *episteme* in the expression of the static-dynamic relation between theological *gnosis* and religious practice (*praxis*). The discourse of Orthodox Tradition as authority has been facing a significant interpretive pitfall: "how to speak well of tradition's continuity in light of the real development (often a religious euphemism for "change") that all things historical undergo while respecting the facts of historical research?" (Thiel 2000:vii). The diachronic inquiry into the process of formation of church tradition reflected in Orthodox theology is similar to with the Catholic presupposition that "the Church precedes

chronologically the writings of the New Testament. They [Catholics] see the fixation of the canon as an act of Apostolic Tradition" (Creemers 2015:217).

In his famous book *The Meaning of Tradition*, Congar asserts that "Tradition is not disjunctive. Tradition creates a totality, a harmony, a synthesis" (Congar 1964:98). Nevertheless, claiming that "both Scripture and Tradition are human and divine" (but in different degrees and conditions), Congar concludes that "the Holy Scriptures have an absolute value that tradition has not, which is why, without being the absolute rule of every other norm, like Protestant scriptural principle, they are the supreme guide to which any others may be subjected" (Congar 1964:98). At the same time, Ware believes that it is essential to question the past, since "the Orthodox have often been far too uncritical in their attitude to the past, and the result has been stagnation" (Ware 1980:197) and that the Orthodox are forced "in this present century to look more closely at their inheritance and to distinguish more carefully between Tradition and traditions" (Ware 1980:197). This concept of a properly transmitted Christian tradition is fundamentally a theological presupposition, rooted in the Church identity as a witnessing community. There has not yet been a successful attempt within Eastern Orthodoxy to investigate and develop a proper theology of biblical inspiration that would provide a reliable differentiation between Tradition and a tradition. Notwithstanding traditions being closed in content, Orthodox theologians currently believe that a critical distinction must be made between the basic Tradition and Church traditions. As a living experience of the Holy Spirit in the Church, Tradition must always be open to new interpretations (Fahlbusch and Bromiley 2008:518) Orthodox theologian Hopko (1970:67-8) believes that the Orthodox Church, as a whole, is both inspired and inerrant being indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Thus, the classical formulation of this question regarding tensions arose outside of the Orthodox Tradition and was imported into Orthodoxy through westernized schools in recent centuries.

Underscoring this tradition-centered ecclesial identity, Lossky critically assumes that the attempt "to avoid mutilation of the idea of tradition by eliminating some of the meanings which it can comprise along with attempts to keep them all, is reduced to definitions which embrace too many things at a time and which no longer capture what constitutes the real meaning of 'Tradition' " (Lossky, 2004:126). As a result, Tradition (*paradosis*) becomes

"one of those terms which, through being too rich in meanings, runs the risk of finally having none" (Lossky 2004:126).

The main problem in distinguishing Tradition from traditions appeared when "the Proclaimer became the proclaimed" (Bultman 1951:33). The total structure of the event and a continual divine interaction with humanity through revelation "is not given in a static manner. It is not a system of statements for a man to take and use" (Bruner 1950:58). Jesus enters our personal history and "speaks to us in our time-conditioned language. Without lifting us out of our cultural and historical milieu, he gives us a glimpse of eternity so that our confidence is no longer in the merely human and temporal but in the divine and transcendent" (Bloesch 1994:28). Expounding on the Jewish typology of tradition as *paradosis*, Orthodox theology develops and promulgates a theocentric-organic model of Tradition, in which "the observer – a personified traditional authority – always stands, surveying the entirety of tradition from its own definitive perspective" (Thiel 2000:80). This perspective of continuity is, in turn, situated in an authoritative past and "is summed up for the Orthodox in the one word Tradition" (Ware 1980:196). Thus, Orthodox Tradition "that constitutes the theology, spirituality, and life of the Orthodox Church embraces the Holy Scripture, the decisions of the seven ecumenical councils, the consensus of the Church Fathers, liturgies, orders, and the spiritual forms in which the ancient Church expressed itself" (Fahlbusch and Bromiley 2008:518). It is also claimed that tradition reflects "this victory over time", so to learn from a tradition is "to learn from the fullness of this time-conquering experience of the Church, an experience which every member of the Church may learn to know and possess according to the measure of his spiritual manhood, and according to the measure of his Catholic development. It means that we can learn from history as we can from revelation" (Florovsky 1972:46).

In *Doing Theology in an Eastern Orthodox Perspective*, Meyendorff suggests that "biblical science does not possess its own proper integrity and methodology," therefore in a long-standing relationship between *gnosis* and *episteme*, "tradition becomes the initial and fundamental source of theology" (Myendorff 2004:83). Here, the long-standing challenge for Protestants is accessing epistemological methods and tools in Eastern Orthodox Tradition, which are completely "spiritual," "mystical" and "experiential". The same pneumatic trend of interpretation is continued by a Romanian Orthodox theologian Staniloae (1980:24), who

argues that the communicative action of the Holy Spirit pertains to a more complex reality than the visible Scripture. He assumes that Scripture speaks of "receiving" the Spirit, but not seeing the Spirit. For Staniloae, the Spirit is only the spiritual light in which Christ is seen, as objects are seen in the material light. "And just as we cannot say that we see the material light, only objects in it, in the same way, we do not say that we "see" the Spirit, but Christ in or through the Spirit. The Spirit is the milieu in which Christ is "seen," the "means" by which we come to Him..." Matching these determinative categories with Orthodox epistemology, Meyendorff observes:

Thus, in doing theology today, an Orthodox theologian is answerable to Scripture and to tradition, as expressed in the reality of communion... But his responsibility is that of a fully free person, entrusted by God to learn the truth and to communicate it to others. This freedom could be restricted only by the truth itself, but divine truth does not restrict human freedom but makes us free (John 8:32). The early church did not know – and the Orthodox does not know today – any automatic, formal, or authoritarian way of discerning the truth from falsehood. To quote Irenaeus again: "Where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and every kind of grace; but the Spirit is truth. (Meyendorff 2004:86)

The point of correlation for Meyendorff (2004:87-88) is that this mystical and experiential approach to the theology proper does not mean that the Orthodox Church does not possess dogmas that are considered final and are, therefore, authoritative expressions of Tradition. It would be simplistic to believe pretend that one can give a full diachronic description of the inherent components of the Orthodox Tradition, however it seems appropriate, in the context of this research, to describe some aspects of the Tradition.

Eastern Orthodox Tradition is integral to understanding reverence for the past and for continuity with that past. The distinctive emphases within Eastern Orthodox tradition that have developed over the course of several centuries have been being rooted according to the different ways in which the gospel was appropriated by Latin and Greek cultures (Payton 2007:19). Orthodox theology is largely a matter of Byzantine tradition. Orthodox theology claims to possess a particular unity and coherence in its historical development, continuity and theological orientation of mother church advancements. The Orthodox scholar Panayotis Bratsiotis argues that, "according to Orthodox theology, the Church is the guardian (Θεματοφυλαξ) of supernatural revelation – in its historical development, and the store (Ταμείον) (of supernatural revelation) is the Bible on the one hand and the apostolic

tradition on the other hand; the Bible constitutes the written, and tradition the spoken, Word of God, yet both are the authoritative source of Christian teaching" (Bratsiotis 1951:19-20).

The Eastern Orthodox Tradition can generate new beliefs only in the context of previously held beliefs. Because we cannot have pure experiences, we must necessarily construe our personal experiences in terms of a prior bundle of theories. Benevich, professor of Russian Orthodox Church Theology at St. Petersburg School of Religion and Philosophy, sees Eastern Orthodox Tradition as depending on three associated sources: "the Church's liturgical life, its Holy Scripture, and its doctrine, respectively. The Holy Scripture, being the Word of God directed to the Church, is in itself a subject for understanding. That understanding derives from both the framework provided by the dogmatic teaching of the Church Fathers, while the Church's liturgical life is precisely where the Church comes to understand and obey the teachings of the Lord and the Holy Fathers" (cited in Pecherskaya and Coates 1995:74). Benevich continues: "It is, therefore, the practice of liturgy that provides the true testimony to the Church's life. That is why Orthodox Christianity shuns any attempt to separate Scripture from the teaching of church authorities, which is a common argument between Catholicism and Protestantism. The liturgical life of the Church, Church tradition, knows no contradiction between the two" (cited in Pecherskaya and Coates 1995:74).

Human beings consistently arrive at beliefs through a prior set of beliefs. In his research on tradition, Bevir argues that those beliefs can be generated by experience "only where there already is a set of beliefs in terms of which to make sense of the experiences" (Bevir 2000:30). He further observes that strict empiricism is highly implausible because "we can not have pure experiences, we must necessarily construe our personal experiences in terms of a prior bundle of theories" (Bevir 2000:30). Consequently, Orthodox Tradition claims to be rooted in the Holy Scripture, and the apostolic and the patristic traditions as faithful continuations of the earlier Apostolic Faith. Tradition also includes the Ecumenical Councils and the Eucharist (celebration of communion for the faithful). The interactive parallel between Scripture and tradition interaction can also be illustrated in a practical way by the last phrase of the Kontakion of the Triumph of Orthodoxy: "We confess and proclaim our salvation in words and images." Thus, the *kontakion* ends with our answer to God with the acceptance and confession of the divine economy of salvation. The confession in an

image (or by deed) can be understood as the accomplishment of the commandments of Christ" (Ouspensky 2004:44).

Another diachronic feature of Eastern Orthodox Tradition related the core Orthodox beliefs is a strong sense of tradition superiority regarding Scripture on both collective and idiosyncratic levels. This diachronically stable attitude assumes that the Bible is neither self-sufficient nor self-evident. As Berzonsky explains: "The Bible is, in Orthodox terms, an image, or icon of truth, but is not truth itself in the same way Christ is truth. To say it is so it is to limit Christ to the Bible and deprive the church of his continuing presence in history" (Berzonsky 2004:175). For Orthodox believers, tradition is the source of all their doctrines and practices in the Church. According to the Orthodox account of the matter, the Orthodox Church as the Body of Christ exists and acts in history as an organic community guided by the Holy Spirit. Benz emphasizes that Orthodoxy sees the formation of tradition "as a divine and human process modeled upon the incarnation of the divine Logos in the man Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit, proceeding from God, intervened in the history of human thought." (Benz 2009:41) The conclusion for Benz (1971:32) is obvious - "the rites of the Church, and especially the liturgy of the Eucharist, are not magic but guidance and direction to mystical experience in a complicated mystery play, the structure of which was essentially shaped by Hellenistic mystery religions and which originally offered the creed as a secret formula" (Benz 1971:32).

In simple terms, "the canons of the Orthodox Church... form a huge body of material, and in any age, there are never more than a few people who master it in detail" (Ellis 1986:67). In this setting, the difficulty of a structurally congruent epistemological approach to the Tradition-and-traditions dispute is that "the ontological and explanatory notions of tradition clearly overlap with one another" (Bevir 2000:29), confusing "the gospel message with its historical concretizations" (Boff 1985:86). Boff vigorously insists that there is nothing further from the Gospel than "the encapsulation of Christianity in one unique and exclusive expression than the inability to recognize the Gospel if it is not expressed through a unique doctrine, a unique liturgy, a unique moral norm, and a unique ecclesiastical organization. Christian experience is replaced by indoctrination in the existing system — a system that lives in the inferno of terms and doctrines that are reinterpreted ideologically to maintain power, an endless chain of interpretations that loses its reference to the one necessary

element, the Gospel" (Boff 1985:86). Boff argues that, in reality, this cultic celebration "does not always lead to conversion and very often, instead, leads away from true Christian praxis. All decisions were centralized in small hierarchical elite through the absolutizing of doctrine, cultural forms, and the distribution of power within the community" (Boff 1985:85-86). Orthodox Church Tradition cherishes a centuries-old "indispensable bond between theology and mysticism" (Lossky 1952:236). The vagueness of this relationship has left the door open for diverse applications. When the proper interplay between *gnosis* and *episteme* occurs in balance, "legitimacy promotes vigor in life," helping individuals to achieve what they could never do in isolation (Stagaman 1999:61). However, in revolutionary situations, "not only the rules for the exercise of authority, but also the very practices of authority themselves can be challenged, changed and replaced. In such periods, we require theories to justify our obedience and to render the power involved legitimate" (Stagaman 1999:59). Thus, epistemological significance of the ecclesial traditions lies in their "ability to confer legitimacy on social practices", which "helps to explain why cultural nationalists, states, and even radical movements have tried to invigorate their political projects by inventing appropriate traditions, symbols, and rituals" (Bevir 2000:28).

The diachronic economy of Orthodox Tradition fulfills its vocation "according to the differences of the historical period and an environment in which the Church fulfills her mission. The Fathers and Doctors who, in the course of her history, have had to defend and formulate different dogmas belong none the less to a single tradition; they are witnesses to the same experience" (Lossky 1952:237). Such tradition-boundedness renders the Orthodox Church "neither a museum of dead deposits nor a society of research" (Florovsky 1972:12) but is a source of a constant creative and ingenious modernization of the true Christian heritage (Makrides 2012; Lossky 1952; Boumis 1991; Ware 1980). Orthodox Tradition claims to be both a heavenly and an earthly institution. As a historical entity, changes may occur as the tradition adapts to new settings. While basic dogmas and faith do not change, how they are expressed can change. Benz explains the idea of Orthodox dogma as the expression of the mind of Christ. In opposition to Harnack, he considers this attitude "to be an inevitable falsification of divine truths because of the inadequacy of human concepts". Benz argues that "an Orthodox theologian sees the formation of dogma as a divine and human process modeled upon the incarnation of the divine Logos in the

man Jesus Christ." (Benz 2009:41-43). The main component of this concept refers pre-eminently to the immutability of Orthodox Tradition.

Naumescu (2007:20) contends that the doctrinal core of Orthodox Tradition is visible in its literate theological tradition and is, therefore, more rigid than other Christian traditions. Orthodox Tradition confers a permanent reality on to the dialog of the Church of Christ, and even Scripture requires a tradition that is unchanged since the age of the Apostles (Staniloae 1998:45). A sense of Eastern Orthodox superiority toward other Christian denominations is summed up well by Slavyanophil Khomiakov: We are unchanged; we are still the same as we were in the eighth century... Oh that you could only consent to be again what you were once when we were both united in faith and communion! (cited by Ware 1993:43). Khomyakov's approach to the Collective Orthodox sense of "*consensus ecclesiae*" is common in the Eastern conception of the church community (*sobornost'*). Khomyakov teaches that the whole truth is not accessible to individual thinkers, but only to an aggregate of thinkers, bound together by love. Khomyakov's indictment against 'Latinism' is that the Western Church accepted a new dogma (*filioque*) in the eleventh century without the consent of the Eastern Church, thus undermining the moral conditions of knowledge, isolating itself from the truth and falling under the dominion of rationalism (Zenkovsky 1953:191-3).

A negative part of Khomiakov's characterization of the Orthodox is that his approach reflects "a fixed image of what Orthodox religion meant for Russia: rigid, hierarchical structure; the superficial conception of doctrine; and static, repetitive ritualism. Paired with the fast and free use of religion as a key to a purportedly mournful, deep, or fatalistic Russian soul, sweeping statements about Russian Orthodoxy surface frequently in discussions of Russian exceptionalism" (Kivelson and Greene 2003:4). The variety of views and opinions we have analyzed in our diachronic investigation of Orthodox Tradition demonstrates that the experience of God in Orthodoxy is a "transcendence born from the union with divine *henosis* (oneness with God) being the ultimate goal of existence. This makes the requirement for granting true knowledge (*gnosis*) the abandoning of all hope of the conventional subject-object approach to discovery" (Berzonsky 2004:178).



Bevir (2000:28-53) and Tilley (2000:6-61) brilliantly prove that traditions change over time indeed, and the one cannot explain these changes unless one accepts that individuals are capable of altering the traditions they inherit. The view of Orthodoxy as "the universal spiritual ethos" (Agadjanian and Rousselet 2005:38) embraces "the ability of traditions to confer legitimacy on social practices [which] helps to explain why cultural nationalists, states, and even radical movements have tried to invigorate their political projects by inventing appropriate traditions, symbols, and rituals" (Bevir 2000:28). Based on the totality of the beliefs held and the actions performed by individuals in a society as it is, the easiest way to make this point is counter-factually. The notion of Orthodox Tradition being an essentially contested concept arises from the beliefs and actions of numerous individuals reflecting "substantial, longstanding, ineradicable disagreement about what constitutes a tradition, and, thus, what the concept of tradition is" (Tilley 2000:7).

#### **2.4. Authority of Tradition in Theory and Action: *Orthodoxy* and *Orthopraxy***

The dynamism of the philosophical, theological and historical reconstruction of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority, as a theoretical and practical phenomenon, resides in the dissemination of the same message of the gospel within different historical, geographic and cultural contexts, through the duality of orthodoxy (correct opinion or belief) and orthopraxy (correct practice) within a faith matrix. According to Pomazansky, "From the first days of her existence, the Holy Church of Christ has ceaselessly been concerned that her children, her members, should stand firm in the pure truth" (Pomazansky 2005:2). Vrame is convinced that the difference between the study of *Orthodoxy* and the study of *Orthopraxy* might be compared to the difference between "*macro-theology*" and "*micro-theology*" (Vrame 2008:280). He argues that many Orthodox believers have done little systematic investigation as to how parishes or individuals apply such theology to organize parish life in a conciliar manner: "The comparison and contrast between orthodoxy and orthopraxis are the stock and trade of many contemporary books on church renewal which make the familiar point that orthodoxy — understood as right belief, right opinions, right doctrines alone — is insufficient. What God demands of his people is right behaviour, right action, right concrete works - in other words, orthopraxy" (Vrame 2008:272-282). Much of the debate in the contemporary Orthodox theology of tradition has focused on the purity of both Christian teaching (Orthodoxy) and living tradition (Orthopraxy).

The further delineation of "Orthodoxy" as a theological category should consider that the early Christians understood Orthodoxy in terms of general concepts, not meticulous theological definitions (Bercot 2013:4-15). Orthopraxy presumes that knowing a tradition is fundamentally knowing how to live in and live out a tradition. Many recent philosophers and theologians write not of "practice" but of "praxis." Varying uses of the term praxis, a Greek word usually translated "action," are rooted in two different philosophical traditions. Firstly, there is a classic tradition rooted in Aristotle, which links praxis to *theoria*. In this tradition, praxis is a creative and self-creative activity (actions done for the sake of doing them). Praxis is typically distinguished from *theoria* (the activity of the mind) and from *poesis* (usually translated from the Greek as production," meaning roughly actions done as means to a goal that might be reached other ways) and from *techne* (simply making things) (Ackrill 1980:93-101). Tilley argues that the problem is that "praxis (in both senses) has been contrasted with practice, especially religious practice. Praxis is taken to be intrinsically worthwhile while practice is simply "repetitive exercises" both physical and intellectual. Praxis is seen as intrinsically creative or liberating, while practice, especially religious practice, is denigrated because in practices people are supposedly dominated by an external rule in which mere repetition constitutes the practice" (Tilley 2000:62).

What is paradigmatically important for the Eastern Orthodox epistemology is not just scriptural exegesis but the manner in which the highest truth of revelation (orthodoxy) exercises its authority in the tradition of the Church (orthopraxy). In his *Introduction to Three Views on Eastern Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism* (2004), Stamoolis explores what comprises first theology for Eastern Orthodoxy:

While theology is important to the Orthodox, it is also true that the forms have a deep meaning. The etymology of the word orthodoxy is "right [ortho] praise [doxia]." Thus, while Western churches have tended to use the term "orthodoxy" to mean "correct doctrine," the Orthodox Church is concerned with getting worship right. The Orthodox Church focuses more on God than on the individual. Timeless truths and practices become the vehicle to communion with the triune God. (Stamolis 2004:15)

There are various strains of postmodern notion of Orthodoxy. For example, Pope John XXIII argues that Orthodoxy should be studied and taught through "the methods of research and the literary forms of modern thought. The *substance* of the ancient teaching of the *depositum fidei* is one thing; the *manner* in which it is presented is another" (cited in

Blanchfield 1988:46). Pope John XXIII further explains that "the latter must be taken into great consideration; if necessary, with patience everything must be measured in the form and proposition of a magisterium which is predominately pastoral in character" (cited in Blanchfield 1988:46). In his book *Philosophy of Economy*, Bulgakov promotes an idea of "truth as a process, as becoming" (2000:176-7). Instrumentalizing Christianity within a sophiological paradigm, Bulgakov searches for a unifying principle of theological and cultural process, that is for "a theory of action based on knowledge, a praxeology rather than an epistemology" (Bulgakov 2000:178). The most general epistemological approach in Eastern Orthodoxy is that "the Bible as much as the tradition was begotten in the womb of the Church. For her sake both were created, and both were transmitted to her" (Bratsiotis 1951:21). Bratsiotis attempts to reconstruct a harmonious vision of Eastern Orthodoxy, stating that:

the sacred tradition contains nothing contrary to the Bible, with the content of which the content of the tradition essentially coincides, all the more because, as we have said, both are the product of the same divine Spirit, who dwells in the Church; for which reason both are regarded as having equal honour and equal validity in the Orthodox Church. But the tradition which is regarded as having equal honour and equal validity with the Bible in the Orthodox Church is not only ecclesiastical tradition, but principally the apostolic tradition, which, being communicated by word of mouth from generation to generation, under the supervision of the divine Spirit, was preserved without change in the undivided Church of the first eight centuries. (Bratsiotis 1951:22)

Repudiating that sort of "ecclesiastical fideism" (Walhout 2016:38), Hancock-Stefan argues that "the weakness of the Orthodox concept of salvation is that an individual is lost. In the Orthodox Church, one can justifiably paraphrase the jailer's question (Acts 16:30) from "What must I do to be saved?" to "What must the church do in order for me to be saved?.. In fact, if one asks an Orthodox if he or she is saved, the pious answer is 'only the good Lord knows' " (Hancock-Stefan 2004:214-15). Such a praxeological description of Orthodox theological method finds support in a famous statement of Evagrius of Ponticus, disciple of Cappadocians, who "transformed Christian apophaticism into a theology of prayer" (Lasser 2011:39), declaring that "If you are a theologian, you will pray truly; if you pray truly, you will be a theologian" (Casiday 2006:185). A noteworthy corollary to the solution of Tradition-and-traditions dichotomy suggests that Orthodox Church Tradition as authority needs a more balanced interpretation as a communal, social, and historical reality.

Cavarnos, for instance, describes the epistemological locus of the *Orthodoxy* and *Orthopraxy* (community-truth union) in the categories of firm perseverance and faithfulness. He argues that "the Orthodox Church has been the only faithful keeper of Tradition. The Protestants deny the unwritten Sacred Tradition; they accept only the written Tradition, Holy Scripture. The rejection of the unwritten Tradition on their part is a superficial and disastrous act. It is superficial because it disregards the fact that Holy Scripture, which the Protestants generally accept as Divinely-inspired, is a product of oral Tradition, since the writings which constitute Holy Scripture were handed down in the Church only around the end of the Apostolic period" (Cavarnos 1992:12-13). The concept that human individuals and collective existence are inescapably organized by a fundamental divine law is not new. However, it is self-evident that the primary authority over mind and conscience does not reside in "the unwritten Sacred Tradition", but, rather, in truth and right. This and similar proclamations will still have to prove that the primitive Church has always had in her hands the unwritten tradition in an incorruptible way.

Russian Orthodox theologian Kuraev (1995:31-33) reflects the same epistemological stance, teaching that, since the Bible is far from being a self-explanatory entity, it is expounded and supplemented by the apostolic tradition and, furthermore, that it had an origin in the Church (both Old and New Testament) and was intended for the Church. Thus, the main operative assumption of Orthodox theology of tradition is that early Jesus tradition (all that he did and taught) naturally grew through the point of post-canonical transformation into a living and developing Church tradition. Tradition, therefore, becomes a sort of reciprocal product of divine intervention in the church to ensure that every succeeding generation can have the same faith and communion with the risen Lord. For Kuraev, the real epistemological crisis is that the "word of the gospel cannot be comprised of words" (Kuraev 1995:32). His apologetic constructions are very typical of modern theological thinking in Eastern Orthodoxy.

The majority of Protestants believe otherwise: "the infant Church itself distinguished between apostolic tradition and ecclesiastical tradition, clearly subordinating the latter to the former, in other words, subordinating itself to the apostolic tradition... the fact of the priority of the oral apostolic tradition over its fixation in writing will prove nothing about tradition as such" (Cullmann 1966:87). In Cullmann's description of the apostolic tradition and

ecclesiastical traditions, their multifaced interactions are always oriented by the supreme value of the apostolic truth and are always inscribed in a sphere of the Absolute, being intrinsically religious. This conclusion does not limit our inquiry regarding Church Tradition as authority, but, rather, brings a new epistemological perspective to the Scripture-Tradition dispute.

## **2.5 Orthodox Conservative Substance and Protestant Corrective Principle**

A presumption of Orthodox truth (Orthodoxy), preserved by the Orthodox Church in tradition (Orthopraxy), does not render ecclesial practices of authority immune to questioning. How does one explain and present a particular epistemological pronouncement to interpret the God-Bible-human relation one way rather than another? Is there any way to explore connections between universal church and a particular ecclesial tradition? The interplay between orthodoxy and orthopraxy in Eastern Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism can be illustrated by the application of a famous Tillich's paradigm about "Catholic Substance and Protestant Principle." Tillich is able to recognize a basic ontological fact: "without striving for doctrinal or practical correctness, faith wanders astray. However, absent the proper orientation of the heart, orthodoxy turns cold and sterile while orthopraxy becomes legalism and empty ritual" (Wilkins and Thorsen 2010:20). Therefore, "a disproportionate emphasis on one of these elements at the expense of the other usually indicates a disturbed and strained situation on the verge of the conflict" (Von Campenhausen 1969:1).

The theological attempt to rethink and reapply Tillich's notion of the Protestant principle to the modern Orthodoxy can be a new stimulus in the complex task of re-definition and reorientation of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority. The deep sensitivity of Orthodox Church tradition to the oral background of the past is in sharp contrast today with disproportionately "word-oriented" hermeneutic in Protestant biblical studies. As we progress in our debate, striving for an Evangelical doctrine of Scripture or Orthodox doctrine of Tradition, "our effort to determine the proper balance in understanding the divine-human authorship of the written Word, along with the ongoing illumination of God's Holy Spirit, requires much wisdom and humility" (Bacote, Miguez and Okholm 2004:7-8).

In his theological treatise *The Protestant Era* (1948), Tillich presents Catholic substance as the inherited content of Christian faith and practice, which belongs to the entire Church. The

Protestant Principle (or Protestant Corrective) "is the prophetic critique of all human institutions, which have an inveterate tendency to claim absolute and final authority that belong to God alone" (Avis 2006:6). This principle appears as a continuation of Tillich's theology "on the boundary", delimitating the conditioned and unconditioned, since "Protestant principle demands a method of interpreting history in which the critical transcendence of the divine over against conservatism and utopianism is strongly expressed and in which, at the same time, the creative omnipresence of the divine in the course of history is concretely indicated... It continues the Protestant criticism of Catholic historical absolutism; it prevents the acceptance of any kind of utopian belief, progressivistic or revolutionary" (Tillich 1948: xvi). According to Albrecht (1992:85), Tillich affirms that those trends belong together and lead to each other. There is no single route from substance to breakthrough, nor from law to gospel, rather, in reality, the Gospel also calls for a supplement through the law, as the Protestant principle needs Catholic substance or Catholic reality. Tillich attempts to keep these two poles, Catholic Substance and Protestant Principle, together in the creative tension of the both-and. Craig admits that, for Tillich, "this was not with the intent of achieving a superficial eclectic synthesis, but rather with the hope of finding convergence by plumbing the depth of each concrete tradition." (cited in Craig 1998:411)

The positive emphasis of *Orthodox Conservative Substance* relates to the fact that, through the centuries, "Eastern Orthodoxy has maintained its tradition in spite of opposition and immeasurable suffering. The Eastern Church has faced many challenges and has suffered considerably, but it continues to survive and bear witness to its rich heritage" (Calian 1992:1). One of the leading voices of American Orthodox Christians, Nassif (2004:36) asserts that the complexity of the comparison between Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism is evident in the differing ways in which each appropriates the Christian past. In his research, Nassif relies heavily on Angus Reid Group surveys that indicate that the greater part of Evangelicalism adopts a mentality that seeks no validation beyond the Bible due to the increasing influence of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, while Orthodoxy views Scripture within the larger context of apostolic tradition handed down over the centuries in an unbroken succession of truth. Pelikan explains that:

as the twentieth century began, each of the major churches of the divided Christendom was obliged, for reason of its own, to address anew the doctrine of the church, its place in the mind of Christ, its essential message, its nature and identity, its mark of continuity, its authority and structure (Pelikan 1991:282)

On the other hand, providing orienting landmarks on the necessity of the corrective principle in theological epistemology, Horton contends that, "whether you realize it or not, you are a theologian with a working theology: an existing understanding of God (Horton 2012:13-14). Whether you are an agnostic or a fundamentalist - or something in between - "you have a working theology that shapes and informs the way you think and live." This notion of "divine communicative action both clarifies the role and enriches the authority of Scripture in theology and in the Christian life" (Vanhoozer 2002:35). However, since our theological understanding is limited and finite, and is subject to our sinful biases, affections, and errors, we need to examine our theology more closely and recognize along the way proper theological and historical coordinates.

The methodological approach of the Protestant Corrective Principle involves dialectical theology, the theology of paradox, and crisis theology. The use of dialectical thinking goes back to the Greek world and Socrates' use of questions and answers to derive insight and truth. The technique of posing opposites against each other in the search for truth, it is used by Abelard in *Sic et Non*. For Kierkegaard, propositional truths are not sufficient; assent to a series of religious formulations or creeds is not enough. Kierkegaard believes theological assertions of the faith are paradoxical. It requires the believer to hold opposite "truths" in tension. Their reconciliation comes in an existential act generated after anxiety, tension, and crisis, and which the mind takes to be a leap of faith (Schnucker 2001:819-821).

Typological applicability of these admittedly complex conceptions to our contemporary denominational settings facilitates a variety of perspectives on many significant developments in modern Orthodox theology. The dividing "revision point" of Protestant Corrective Principle detects that dogmatic conscience of post-byzantine Orthodox theology of tradition has undergone all sorts of developmental influences and slow erosion. Yannaras in *Orthodoxy and the West: Hellenic Self-Identity in the Modern Age* (1992) considers the western influences as having been so significant that they actually generated a "pseudomorphosis", a "Babylonian captivity," an alienation of Orthodox theology in its

essence. Doctrinal preoccupation may have been typical of early Christianity, but not of the contemporary syncretism in modern Russia. Gasparov in his *Introduction to Christianity and the Eastern Slavs* (1993:2-3) acknowledges the limited utility of the dualistic framework and models that have so commonly shaped perceptions of Russian history and culture. So, both the Church itself and the religious sphere of social life generally "relied more on the continuity of tradition and the collective mind of its members than on objectified and abstracted regulations and institutions".

Ultimately, this collective identity relates to a collective memory through which a contemporary group recognizes itself through a common past, remembrance, commemoration, interpretation and reinterpretation. In other words, memory, as a pre-condition to any sense of identity, came to play a crucial role in the interpretation of the present (Schleifman 1998). Parekh (1999:68) argues that identity is not a property, something we possess, but a relationship, a form of identification. National identity is about whether we identify with a community, see it as ours, are attached to it and feel bonded to our fellow-members in a way in which we are not bonded to outsiders. It implies that — however deep our disagreements and frustrations are — we care enough for each other to want to continue to live together.

In this regard, Slavic national identity can hardly be imagined without the feelings of trauma and pride that arise from external relations (Grosby 1995:143-62). Berger expands this view of "Neotraditionalism" (or "Fundamentalism") with an assumption that, "for the predominant numbers of Orthodox, there has been a taken-for-granted unity between religion and community" (Berger 2005:441). Volf's summary regarding inter-ecclesial conditions of ecclesiality can be seen as a new challenge to the exclusivistic approach of Eastern Orthodox epistemology, affirming that, just as professing faith in the one Jesus Christ implies an openness on the part of a church to other churches, so does professing faith in him as universal Savior and Lord imply an openness on the part of the Church to all human beings. Consequently, "every congregation that assembles around the one Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord in order to profess faith in him publicly in pluriform fashion, including through baptism and the Lord's Supper, and which is open to all churches of God and to all human beings, is a church in the full sense of the word, since Christ promised to be present



in it through his Spirit as the first fruits of the gathering of the whole people of God in the eschatological reign of God" (Volf 1998:158).

Taking this approach, our first and all-important concern is to analyze a close link between ethnic and religious identity in "ethnonational discourse of legitimacy promoted by the Orthodox Church" (Flora 2005:111). The difficulties of such approach are great as "the language of theological paradigms can be easily translated into the language of institutional and spiritual competition" (Agadjanian and Rousselet 2005:39), where the Orthodox idea of *symphony* — the harmonious unity between society, state, and church — constitutes a distinctive mode of Eastern Orthodoxy in Russian ideology throughout history. For example, Orthodox ideas about communal solidarity (Russian *sobornost*) make it difficult to accept a market economy based on competition and individual entrepreneurship. Indeed, the market economy (or capitalism) is seen as "a morally repulsive expression of ruthlessness and greed" (Berger 2005:439), in opposition to the Orthodox sense of identity. In relation to modernity, this tension has the following effect:

Through most of history, most people lived in homogenous communities that interacted very little with outsiders and, if they did, did so in an antagonistic way. Modernity undermines such homogeneity. It brings about a situation in which insiders and outsiders constantly rub up against each other—either physically (though urbanization and travel) or virtually (through mass literacy and all the modern media of mass communication). Pluralism becomes a pervasive fact of social life, but it also penetrates the consciousness of individuals. This process of steadily spreading pluralism has been going on for a long time in the lives of human beings in modern and modernizing societies. (Berger 2005:439)

This concept of fixed, homogenous community of believers reflects the dramatic changes that have occurred in Orthodox consciousness: a dynamic universalistic tradition of the Byzantine past in terms of preservation of supra-national character of Orthodox identity (Kitromilidis 1996) has "altered so deeply Orthodox consciousness that the various national Orthodox Churches worldwide are hailed today as a protectors of the respective national identities and collaborate closely with the respective nation states" (Makrides 2005:198). This dynamic intertwining between national and religious identity has contributed to the "preservation of the traditional Eastern Orthodox identity and created a social-cultural milieu in which religion persisted as a fundamental element of community value systems" (Flora 2005:137). In the era of modern globalization, it is appropriate to contemplate why the

Eastern Orthodox reject both the West's "depersonalizing monoculture" and "unlimited personal freedom" (Kluchnikov 2000:246). Since Christianity cannot be reduced to mere doctrinal (theological) or moral (ecclesial) propositions, we need to examine more thoroughly the nature of the relationship that exists between beliefs and practices if they are to constitute a Tradition. Investigating the theological frame of Eastern Orthodoxy from a Reformed Protestant perspective. For example, Letham argues that there is some misunderstanding on both sides: "there are clear and significant areas of agreement, a common allegiance to the triune God, to the person of Christ, to the authority of Scripture and the truth of the gospel. At the same time, there are many areas of disagreement, where it seems that Orthodoxy and Protestantism are at odds." (Letham 2007:13)

In the epistemological puzzle of Orthodox Conservative Substance and Protestant Corrective Principle, one may recognize that idea of Tradition is "a highly evaluative concept" (Bevir 200:28), which derives from a sense of holism and "evolving reality" (Stagaman 1999:61). The dichotomization and fragmentation of individual experience, described by Tillich as a critical and creative power, which is the measure of every religious and cultural reality, has been a valid point of criticism on the part of many Orthodox scholars. This kind of counter-proposed rationality demonstrates that the Eastern Orthodox Tradition is not an individual intellectual enterprise. The main problem here is that "Eastern Christianity since late Byzantium has been contaminated in total Western rationality and has finally lost touch with its own authentic roots, thus experiencing a hard and long identity crisis" (Makrides 2005:186). The aforementioned incompatibility between Orthodox Tradition and Protestant Corrective Principle also demonstrates that, in this setting, the Orthodox Tradition is still vulnerable in its cultural matrix while, in Tillich's words:

Protestantism neither devaluates nor idealizes culture. It tries to understand its religious substance, its spiritual foundation, its "theonomous" nature. And Protestantism neither idealizes nor devaluates religion. It tries to interpret religion as the direct, intentional expression of the spiritual substance which in the cultural forms is presented indirectly and unintentionally. In this way, the Protestant principle denies to the church a holy sphere as its separate possession, and it denies to culture a secular sphere that can escape the judgment of the boundary-situation. (Tillich 1957:205)

In line with the global trend connected to the Freedom Syndrome. Protestant Corrective Principle does not idealize Orthodox culture but, instead, it reflects a considerable tension between personal freedom and institutional authority (Boff 1985:32-65), a real complexity and legitimating capacity of Orthodox Church Tradition in the post-Soviet era. The main part of the Protestant Corrective Principle that is pertinent to this point, in Scripture, is the *principia* for theology. Protestants do not attempt to ground their authority and certainty in some indubitable principle outside of Scripture because our God has communicated his perfect will to the humanity - Christians can always examine themselves on their spiritual journey to the truth.

## **2.6 Divine Darkness and Scriptural Affirmation: *Apophasis* and *Cataphasis***

The Orthodox Tradition of apophatic theology (from Ancient Greek: *ἀπόφασις*, from *ἀπόφημι* – *apophēmi*, "to deny"), also known as negative theology (*via negativa* or *via negationis*), affirms that God immensely surpasses human knowledge, language and experience. Orthodox theology makes a sharp distinction between "*Theologia*" (God in Godself) and "*Economia*" (God for us and in us). St. Basil the Great explains this inevitable inaccessibility of God to human inquiry: "We know our God in His energies. For although His energies descend to us, His essence remains inaccessible" (Basil. *Letter 234* in *PG 32*, 869). St. John of Damascus operates in his discussion with the same logic of negation: "God, then, is infinite and incomprehensible, and all that is comprehensible about Him is His infinity and incomprehensibility. All that we say about God cataphatically does not show forth His nature but the things that are related to His nature" (John of Damascus. *On icons* 2.12, in *PG 44*, 1297B). Nevertheless, while God's essence remains unapproachable, what can be known of God comes down to us by his loving will (*ekstasis*) in his energies (Tibbs 2008:248-249).

The Greek term apophasis denotes a manner of doing theology by "not speaking." As the alpha-privative prefix suggests, the term is concerned with "a negative function. In some forms, apophaticism exists as a check on *kataphatic* or *assertive* theology or philosophy. The style of apophatic theology was first developed by the Platonic school philosophers, and creatively used by Plotinus, as well as appearing in some of the Gnostic literature (*Apocryphon of John*, *Trimorphic Prottennoia*)" (Lasser 2011:38). In Lossky's exposition, apophaticism "constitutes the fundamental characteristic of the whole theological tradition

of the Eastern Church" (Lossky 1952:26). It is "not a branch of theology, a chapter, or an inevitable introduction on the incomprehensibility of God from which one passes unruffled to a doctrinal exposition in the usual terminology of human reason and philosophy in general. Apophaticism teaches us to see above all a negative meaning in the dogmas of the Church: it forbids us to follow natural ways of thought and form concepts which would usurp the place of spiritual realities" (Lossky 1952:42).

Methodologically, this fundamental characteristic points to a conflict between "biblical theophanic accounts expressed this *apophatic-kataphatic* dichotomy particularly through various symbols and images" and Hellenistic theologians, who "re-expressed it through a discourse about the inaccessible divine nature and its accessible *ekstasis*, the divine *hypraxis*, *dynamis*, *dialectio*, *erga*, *operationes* or *energeiai*" (Guilea 2010:25). This may explain why theology in Eastern Orthodox context is experiential rather than intellectual, verging, in fact, into the realm of the mystical. Wary of speculation and rationalism, Orthodox theology is strongly 'apophatic' (Cross 2006:67). One of the main hypotheses of of Eastern Orthodox Cappadocian doctrine is that apophatic discourse emerged in the context of Cappadocian interpretation in connection with "the Second Temple tradition of the forbidden element of mystical experiences within the mystical and visionary context of a theophany. Conceptual apophatic language becomes a new garment for the ancient idea of divine inaccessibility as well as for the articulation of the ontology of the divine substance" (Guilea 2010:1-29).

Historically, "de-Judaization of Christianity" (Dix 1953:109), which "came more by default than by conquest" (Pelikan 1971:22), introduced new elements (arguments) of Greek philosophy in the works of Christian apologies. In some cases, those apologies were compiled in terms of a theology that employed a mythic religion or the cultic proclamation through which the myths describing divine reality are passed on. It is worth noting, for instance, that the Greek notion of perfection assumes that time is a category of change. Therefore perfection (and God himself) is beyond the realm of change because any change would be a move away from the state of perfection. This assumption of an unmovable God and changeless truth was carried from Greek philosophy to its ultimate expression of traditional agenda in Eastern Orthodoxy, which corresponds best to a model of "a closed

system that is connected to the values of the past without attempting openings towards... the present and the future" (Papageorgiou 2000: 284).

It has generally been argued that, as "Christianity became more respectable socially, its apologetics became more respectable philosophically" (Pelikan 1971:39). Meyendorff argues that, more than in other Christian traditions, "the patristic period is accepted by the Orthodox as the preferred model of theological creativity. The earliest apology for Christianity (that of Quadratus), the most brilliant apology (that of Origen), and the most learned apology (that of Eusebius) were all written in Greek" (Meyendorff 2004:91); Nevertheless, Latin writers "Tertullian, Lactantius, and Augustine outweigh all the Greek apologists" (Geffcken 1907:277). The early expression of theology "*via negativa*" is emphatically communicated by Tertullian (*Apol.* § 17):

The object of our worship is the One God... The eye cannot see Him, though He is (spiritually) visible. He is incomprehensible, though in grace He is manifested. He is beyond our utmost thought, though our human faculties conceive of Him. He is therefore equally real and great. But that which, in the ordinary sense, can be seen and handled and conceived, is inferior to the eyes by which it is taken in, and the hands by which is tainted, and the faculties by which it is discovered; but that which is infinite is known only to itself. This it is which gives some notion of God, while yet beyond all our conceptions - our very incapacity of fully grasping Him affords us the idea of what He really is. (Coxe 1887:31-32)

At this point, we can agree with Tertullian that the concepts or the words of Scripture do not fully describe God as He is, in Himself, since He is always beyond everything that exists. Some of the key figures of the patristic period who contributed to the formation of the apophatic trajectory in Eastern Orthodox theology are normally associated with Dionysius the Areopagite, Origen, Tertullian, Athanasius of Alexandria, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, Cyril of Alexandria, Evagrius of Ponticus and Maximus the Confessor. In this stage of the development, initial formation of a specific nature within the Eastern Church Tradition "was the combination of Christianity with the Hellenic culture since the late Roman era. This fusion of between the two equally cosmopolitan, yet radically opposite, cultures of the Mediterranean provided the central foundation for the construction of the Eastern Orthodox Tradition" (Agadjanian and Roudometof 2005:9). Agadjanian and Roudometof further suggest that, from the time of Roman Emperor Constantine until the end of Germanic invasions in the western Mediterranean, "this fusion

took hold and consolidated in the Eastern part of the Roman Empire" and, finally, after Great Schism, "this religious culture became identified with Orthodoxy at large" (Agadjanian and Roudometof 2005:9). Thus, "the very legitimacy of the development of Christian dogma has been changed on the grounds of its supposed Hellenization of the primitive message" (Pelikan 1971:12, while the doctrinal preoccupation of Eastern Orthodoxy relies "more on the continuity of tradition and the collective mind of its members than on objectified and abstracted regulations and institutions" (Gasparov 1993:2-3).

Additionally, the tradition of Christian asceticism, which dates back to the first decades after Christ's death, took on new forms through institutionalized practices of the spiritual discipline. Creative solutions to questions about the limits of language and reason also emerged out of monastic communities, which grew and diversified during the medieval period. Because union with God became one of the primary goals of spiritual discipline, the limits of language itself — the challenge of speaking adequately about direct experiences of union with God — helped contribute to a philosophy of language in relation to God. In particular, medieval theologians saw the value of distinguishing between apophatic and kataphatic approaches to speaking about God. *Kataphasis* says what God is, *apophasis* what God is not (Armour, Capetz, Compier, Schneider 2005:34).

Together, *apophasis* and *kataphasis* attempt to preserve the distinction between Creator and creature, and the infinite and the finite - distinctions that are crucial to monotheism. While *kataphasis* attributes all good things to God supereminently (God is goodness itself), *apophasis* reminds us that the gap between the finite and the infinite is such that the truest statements we can make about God indicate only those things that God is not. Negative theology, or the *via negativa*, also enabled Christian theologians to defer the question of just how trinitarian terms refer to God. God is both one and three, although the mystery of God completely exceeds our capacities to understand how this is so. "*Apophasis* and *kataphasis* provide a helpful way of thinking not just about what we can say about God, but also what we can know about God. Aquinas, for example, argued that God's existence could be known (though God's essence remained unknowable) through observation of God's effects in the world". See more in (Armour, Capetz, Compier, Schneider 2005:34-35).

Contemporary adherents of the apophatic approach in Eastern Orthodoxy (Lossky 1952, Soloviov 1948, Bulgakov 1988, Yannaras 1971, Papageorgiou 2000, Papanikolaou 1988), hold that, outside of directly-revealed gnosis (knowledge) transmitted through Scripture and Tradition, God in His essence is "unknowable" and "infinitely set apart by His nature" as a supreme transcendent Being. Further knowledge of Him "is an existential attitude which involves the whole man: there is no theology apart from experience" (Lossky 1997:36–40). For Lossky, apophatism is not simply "a negation of positive statement but, rather, a way of a being, self-emptying (kenosis), whose result is a mystical union with God. This union with God, between the divine and the human, is the source of true 'knowledge' of God. Thus, for Lossky, true knowledge of God is an experience of the divine through a mystical union, and the condition for the possibility of such a union is the incarnate Christ" (Papageorgiou 2000:5). According to Lossky, apophatism is not necessarily a theology of ecstasy - it is, above all, an attitude of mind that refuses to form concepts about God:

In contemplating any object, we analyze its properties: it is this which enables us to form concepts. But analysis can in no case exhaust the content of the object of perception. There will always remain an 'irrational residue' which escapes analysis and which cannot be expressed in concepts; it is the unknowable depth of things, that which constitutes their true, indefinable essence. (Lossky 1952:33)

In contrast to the apophatic approach, cataphatic (positive) theology tends to be the methodical exposition of revealed truth in which philosophical categories are utilized to unfold the sacred doctrine. Theology and the Magisterium of the Church are closely linked. In the West, the approach has been rather more 'cataphatic.' In its most formative phase, Western theology was influenced by the speculations of St Augustine on God's salvific plan for the rehabilitation of mankind" (Cross 2006:68). From the Protestant perspective, Orthodox apophatism goes too far when it is concluded that "the way of the knowledge of God is necessarily the way of deification" (Lossky 1952:39).

Well-balanced theology does need a progression of solid positive affirmations. Even Lossky admits that "The ladder of cataphatic theology which discloses the divine names drawn, above all, from Holy Scripture, is a series of steps up which the soul can mount to contemplation" (Lossky 1952:40). In order to distinguish further between "substantially normative" and "formally normative" historical data, we need to "identify what properly

functions in this sense as a formally normative witness in fact as well as in principle" (Kantzer 1991:427). This synthetic stage, which is the objective of historical reflection, requires theological validation (appropriateness) of both cataphatic and apophatic methods. Traditionally, a positive "*cataphatic*" theological investigation includes a two-fold approach in doing theology: "positive" historical investigation (*the auditus fidei*); and theological reflections and speculations (*the intellectus fidei*). Previous to this approach, theology was very deductive.

"The idea was basically to prove what the magisterium taught by amassing "proof texts" from Scripture and other theological texts from the magisterium then trying to see how these made sense from reason" (Bevans 2009:139). Unfortunately, there was cataphatic failure in the early mainstream of the Orthodox theology due to the tension between philosophical essentialism and the personalism of religious experience, which was not able to satisfy Greek thought and failed to account for the apparent ability of the creature to conceive of the inconceivable (Cross 2006:68).

At the practical level, critical reflection on these two contradicting tendencies in Eastern Orthodox epistemology reveals significant axiomatic confusion with manifold theological applications. For some Orthodox theologians, like Constantine Cavarnos, the assertion that "Christianity is founded on the views of the ancient Greek philosophers constitutes a great error, unless we mean by "Christianity" a philosophical-theological system, like that of Thomas Aquinas or some other rationalistic Western theologian" (Cavarnos 1992:32). On the other hand, some defenders of the intellectually credible path of Greek philosophy, like Nectarios of Pentapolis, still fully confirm that "Greek philosophy is the tutor of mankind, the guide toward true religion... Greek philosophy was born according to Divine providence on behalf of Christianity, so that it might work for the salvation of mankind.... (Greek) philosophy became a schoolmaster (*paidagogos*) leading to Christianity, in which was found the complete transcendence of the deficiencies of philosophy and the perfect satisfaction of the yearnings of man's heart...." (Kephalas 1895-1896:vi, xv, xvi).

These epistemological pitfalls of naive rational antropomorphism (in *cataphatic* tendencies) or highly personalized mystical eclecticism (in *apophatic* theology *via negativa*) actualize the demand for a middle way of Christian theology, which can re-orient and place itself



"between the univocal and equivocal use of language about God, namely, the analogical or metaphorical use" (Wondra 2002:15). Some scholars, like Negrut, identify a new trajectory for modern Orthodox theologians to re-consider - "the theological problems posed by a purely apophatic approach to theology, and consequently attempt to realize a synthesis between apophasis and catapheasis" (1998:15). A treatise by the Russian theologian Kuraev *On Orthodoxy and Orthopraxy*, is very illustrative in this regard:

It is the uniqueness of the person of Christ that connected with one of the central paradoxes of Christianity: a religion based on the preaching of love and freedom, at the same time is the most dogmatic religion in the world. Other religions have orthopraxy, but no orthodoxy. There is a set of normative acts and rituals, but not a disclosed creed. Islam has nothing to say about the Almighty except for pure apophatic. Buddhism Gautama defiantly refuses to even answer the question, "If God exists or not". In Taoism God is so indistinguishable from the world, that a purely theological judgments, which would not be cosmological in this connection, are simply impossible. The idea of God and other things of faith in Judaism are not expressed clearly, so that every Jew, as a matter of fact, can believe as he wishes. A circle of binding judgments about God Himself has always existed only in Christianity. The richness and depth of Christian dogmatic theology reveal to us the way for the acquisition of spiritual wisdom and spiritual growth. (Kuraev 1995:115)<sup>3</sup>

Kuraev's reflection proves that both *apophatic* and *cataphatic* methods can operate today within a framework of the Orthodox Tradition, being particularly relevant for theological epistemology (Negrut 1998:15). To some extent, both apophatic and cataphatic models of theology are correct, and consideration of the weakness of these models should not blind us to their positive contribution (Bloesch 19994:93). Theology is summoned to serve the Church through the unfolding and elaboration, the explication and clarification of the understanding that is involved in faith (Wondra 2002:4). The divine darkness of Eastern Orthodox '*apophasis*' and Scriptural Affirmation of Protestant '*catapheasis*' can be classified

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<sup>3</sup> "Именно с уникальностью личности Христа связан один из центральных парадоксов христианства: религия, основанная на проповеди любви и свободы, одновременно является и самой догматической религией мира. В других религиях есть ортопраксия, но нет ортодоксии. Есть свод нормативных действий и ритуалов, но нет развернутого символа веры. Исламу нечего сказать о Всевышнем, кроме чистой апофатики; в буддизме Гаутама демонстративно отказывается отвечать даже на вопрос - "есть Бог или нет"; в даосизме Бог настолько неотличим от мира, что чисто теологические суждения, которые не были бы при этом и космологическими, просто невозможны; в иудаизме представление о Боге и о других предметах веры не выражены ясно, так, что в сущности каждый еврей может верить, как хочет. Лишь в христианстве всегда существовал круг обязательных суждений о Самом Боге. Богатство и глубина христианского догматического богословия, открывают нам путь к стяжанию духовной мудрости и духовному росту" (Kuraev 1995:115).

as "different levels in theology, each appropriate to the different capacities of the human understanding which reach up to the mysteries of God" (Lossky 1952:38).

It is a fairly unobjectionable positive contribution and methodological advantage that "the Fathers were quite capable of making use of the "conceptual tools" of Greek philosophy" (Helm 1990:135). Meyendorff vigorously advocates the patristic development of Greek philosophical terminology, claiming that the task of theology was, at the time, primarily apologetic. This task, "pursued and accomplished by the Fathers was to make the gospel acceptable and understandable to a world accustomed to the categories of Greek philosophy. They used Greek philosophical terms to express the teachings of the Church about the Trinity and the divine-human being of Christ... In spite of this critical attitude to the Greco-Roman civilization, to which they culturally belonged and to which they had to announce the Gospel, the Fathers did succeed in their task: Christianity was accepted by the intellectual elite of their time" (Meyendorff 2004:91). Due to this achievement, Eastern Church and theology had the advantage of "connaturality of language and culture with the Septuagint and with the Greek Fathers, through whom it also laid claim to the doctrines of Plato and the concrete analyses of Aristotle, both encountered as a living philosophy" (Barrois 1982:90).

On the other hand, Hellenic reconfiguration of theological truth in Eastern Orthodoxy began to treat the new body of Orthodox traditions as a *de facto authority* equal to other primitive Christian writings. The proto-apostolic Church, which had newly emerged as an institution, "became in many people's eyes the foundation of authority and the arbiter on all matters of truth. Appeals began to be made more often to tradition than to Scripture. As a result, "extra-biblical doctrines were canonized, and a body of opinion that found no support in Scripture began to be asserted as infallibly true" (MacArthur 1995:157). Thus, Church tradition very soon manifested itself as a supreme regulative norm "*regula fidei*" or (*norma normata primaria*), directly instituted by Christ himself through apostles with a status of sacred legacy, where "authority and doctrinal orthodoxy became intertwined; catholicity pointed to universality" (Blanchfield 1988:21). In this way, theology, itself, contributed to the centralization of authority, "as bishops monitored publications for orthodoxy and developed uniform creed" (Warwick 1974:113). Excessive language of classical Greek philosophy impacted many Protestant scholars who agreed "with those liberal and neo-orthodox

theologians who believed that classical theology's use of Greek philosophy, especially Aristotle, had distorted Christian faith" (Griffin and Hough 1991:230-231). Meyendorff notes that the theological speculation of Church Fathers "often went wrong when it was used as an end in itself and not as a creative tool to answer the questions posed to the church by the surrounding world" (Meyendorff 2004:91).

In contrast to Orthodox theology of *via-negativa*, the Protestant approach defines that "a prerequisite to constructing a theological system is to establish that theological knowledge is possible" based on Jesus' saying that "God is Spirit" (John 4:24) and transcendent "Spatio-temporal existence of man" (Cheung 2003:5). According to Cheung, "there is no higher purpose for which the knowledge of God intends to reach, and there is no higher purpose for man but to know God. God has revealed his existence, attributes, and moral demands to every human being by including such information within the mind of man. The very structure of the human mind includes some knowledge about God. This innate knowledge, in turn, causes the man to recognize creation as the work of a creator. The grandeur, magnitude, and complex design of nature serve to remind man of his innate knowledge about God" (Cheung 2003:5-6).

In all these various approaches, the full knowledge of Christ is not attested merely by the church magisterium, office or institutions. "When we engage in the quest to understand God, it is theology. When our quest is limited to understanding how people react to theology, it is religion" (Sproul 1997:16). In the same way, the objective witness of the Spirit is accessible to all. The subjective witness of the Spirit depends upon his election (John 3:8).

One of the negative consequences of the apophatic methodology is that "Orthodox dares to announce to the modern world that what is relevant is the past, not the present. In this stance, there is both weakness and strength" (Calian 1992:78). Kung (1988:96) positively emphasizes that Christian Church is a "post-Easter community of faith" and not a product of post-Hellenic philosophy. For Eastern Orthodox expositions of the Christian message, "the faith of the 318 fathers of the Council of Nice" continued to serve as a summary of "Holy Tradition and as a basis for defining its content" (Pelican 1991:32). An adherent of the contemporary Orthodox process theology, T.Hopko asserts that there have certainly been

Eastern Christian theologies that were determined by Hellenistic, Platonistic teachings (Arianism, Origenism, Byzantine humanism, etc.). However, "these doctrines were judged by Orthodox Christians to be mistaken and even heretical." As Hopko further explains, "Eastern theology... differs radically and substantially from Hellenistic thought" and for this reason "the unacceptable and heretical traditions found within Eastern Christian history are to be rejected precisely because of their inability to overcome Hellenistic philosophical presuppositions and prejudices, particularly of a cosmological nature" (Hopko 1982:5-6). Therefore, the ever-present danger of excessive apophatism in the theological epistemology of ecclesial Tradition as authority is that "fidelity to the Fathers" can easily "degenerate into bondage to formulas" (Lossky 1981:144).

## **2.7 Ontological Models of Authority: *Autonomy, Heteronomy, Theonomy***

Ontological inquiry into the nature of the ecclesial authority of tradition must apprehend and operate with a certain cogent model to explain how the individual rational is related by some law or authority from the outside and a system of ethics which derives ethics from anything but the nature of the rational will as such. The present research will now look forward to answering two ontological questions: How did authority in the Orthodox Church come to be as it is and what is the ontological source of authority in the Orthodox community? Was it made or found?

Ontologically, from Socrates via the Enlightenment, the appeal to different modes of authority (Autonomy, Heteronomy, Theonomy) has been deeply connected to a profound consideration of the role of personal reason/faith in relation to a communal tradition. Many philosophers and theologians of many persuasions have been able to recognize and identify the particular threefold structure employed here concerning inner-worldly kinds of behavior involving oneself, others, and the material world. Taylor (2007:1-20) attributes this problem to the ancient Greek philosophers and later thinkers. Schmidt notes that "St. Thomas Aquinas observed the four types of law as the eternal, the natural, the human, and the divine. Eternal law (Lex Aeterna) was recognized as God's mind as seen by God (Aquinas 1947, 1, 2, q. 91, a. 1). Divine law (Lex Divina) was God's will, written in the Scriptures, for the purpose of directing humans to attain eternal beatitude. Lex Divina was unable to be in discord with the Lex Aeterna for the reason that it was God's will expressed to and for humans, nor could it be confused with Lex Naturalis, which was directed to

human purposeful ends and behavior on Earth. Lex aeterna, lex naturalis, and lex divina are constant, universal laws always in accord. Human laws (lex humana), developed by human reason within a given historical and cultural context for the welfare of the community, were based upon Natural Law" (Taylor 2012:37-8).

Theological analysis of Divine law (Scripture) and corresponding ecclesial praxis (Tradition as authority) by human reason within a given historical and cultural context opens new vistas for the task of theology and logic. A man of faith is always an active subject of religious life, where church tradition "is not just a conservative force, but rather a principle that ensures the continuity and identity" (Congar 1964:2). Tilley (2000:43) asserts that traditions delineate that path that a community has taken. By conveying a worldview and by discriminating "our" path from other paths, traditions distinguish our community from other communities. Traditions are "communication systems" that provide both "relative stability and relative flexibility to cope with novel situations or data." However much instability and innovation scholars may notice in traditions, people dwell in them as though they were stable and find such scholarship disturbing, at best. Tilley also believes that "traditions provide a sense of stability, a communal space in which people can dwell, and a set of practices that shape how the participants live in the world, even though many people who dwell in those traditions realize that they had evolved from what they were when they were founded" (Tilley 200:43).

Authority of tradition in a paradigmatic sense is, rather, the bond experienced by all members of a community as they interact in certain relationships via we-mode-group perceptiveness. For the primitive community, Jesus was the living Lord and Redeemer, Messiah and Son of man. According to God's plan and design, "the community does not keep itself for itself, but once turns outward on its work of preaching... it does not, therefore, allow itself to be silenced, but spread abroad with explosive force in all directions" (Von Campenhausen 1969:13). Authority gives a particular identity to a community in a manner analogous to the identity individual gains through free choices. Authority resides in human practices that relate persons to persons or persons and things. These practices give one party in the relationship the initiative and place an obligation to heed that initiative on the other party. A human practice is authoritative wherever the rule that governs its right

manner of action also stipulates why this practice is better than its alternatives (Stagaman 1999: xiv).

Stagaman argues ontologically that authority, as a practice, is based on the foundational personal beliefs and values of the community that make the group the particular community it is. Stagaman criticizes other studies that delineate authority as a subjective reality (an attribute of persons) or an objective one (a property of a thing). He also critiques two modern myths about authority: firstly, that authority is opposed to sound reasoning; secondly, that authority is inimical to freedom and/or spontaneity. Stagaman suggests that authority in the Church is not, ideally, concentrated in any one person nor is such authority exclusively or even primarily juridical. Church authorities are endowed with an authority that is best understood as sacramental (in the sense that Church itself is a sacrament, not in the sense of the Seven Sacraments). For instance, the Pope is at his fullest authority when he celebrates Eucharist for and preaches to a local assembly on one of his numerous trips. However, no authority in the Church has taken its present shape over two millennia—without a doubt, these have been two Spirit-filled millennia, but two thousand years where authority has been shaped by choices might have otherwise been made. While the author does believe that predecessors' decisions can be coercive on present conduct, he also insists that these decisions were timely (Stagaman 1999: xiv- xvi).

Blanchfield also assumes that questions of authority have always been important in Christianity, “rooted in the tradition of the Israelite nation, the understanding of authority in the Hebrew Scriptures is foundational. In the Old Testament, all authority clearly comes from God and is exercised in God's name. Israelites understood themselves as bonded to the God who had freed them from the slavery of Egypt. The authority of their leaders, prophets and priests came directly from God and was not to be abused or made absolute” (Blanchfield 1988:1). Gerhardsson (1979:12) suggests, with a certain pedagogical simplification, that the Torah functioned in *Torah-centric Judaism* in three external forms or dimensions: (1) as verbal tradition; (2) as practical tradition; and (3) as institutional tradition. In the same way, Orthodox Church Tradition as authority should to be carefully distinguished in its horizontal (geo-cultural) and vertical (socio- political) dimensions and their corresponding complex interactions. Actual distinctions and superficial similarities between the Tradition of Jesus and later ecclesial Tradition as authority are so crucial that

we need to discover how the ontological pattern that emerges from Orthodox Byzantine Tradition and, later on, from Orthodox Slavic Tradition "homogenized all the stages of development into one statically defined truth" (Pelikan 1971:9). Thus, we may conclude that the ultimate foundation of group authority, in the present sense, is "members' collective acceptance and "construction" of the group's realm of authority, and in a derivative sense, of its directives an action" (Tuomela 2013:162). At this point, the problem of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority is posed in a new way: the fact that this traditional authority continues to exist as a present reality both in the lives of Orthodox Christians and the Church does arise the question of its historical paradigm.

There are three basic ontological models of authority - *autonomy*, *heteronomy* and *theonomy*. The *Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology* (1983) provides the following definitions for them:

Autonomy asserts that man as the bearer of universal reason is the source and measure of culture and religion - that he is his own law. Heteronomy asserts that man, being unable to act according to universal reason, must be subjected to a law, strange and superior to him. Theonomy asserts that the superior law is, at the same time, the innermost law of man himself, rooted in the divine ground which is man's own ground: the law of life transcends man, although it is, at the same time, his own. (Thomas 1983:253-254)

These ontological models of authority correspond to threefold modes of human existence ('I am no-one,' 'I am some-one,' and 'I am one-for-others') with a respective focus on three subjects of human transformation (self, neighbor, and God). Each moment or mode of human life has its own meaning and role, and each mode should not exist without other modes. These three basic ontological approaches to the modes of authority reflect who we are (ontological-theological transformation), how we behave (political-theological transformation), and what we should do (political-theological transformation) (Kim 2013:11-28). The cognitive relations between *heteronomy*, *theonomy*, and *autonomy* reveal the existential and transcending character of authority in human society, church and personal life, correspondingly.

The generally held and supported Protestant approach to the issue of moral/ecclesial/state authority can be expressed in terms of Theonomous Autonomy or "Constitutive Autonomy

(also called Competence Autonomy), taken from the fields of law and political science, and signifying the relative or absolute indetermination of an area or action in relation to another area that is super-ordinated or pre-established" (Horrigan 2009:5). In this concept, "man do as he pleases in freedom and does nothing to reduce him to the status of a marionette. The transcendental causality of the Creator and the total dependence of the world on His creative power do not endanger in the least the autonomy of the world, but rather make it possible. God is not the rival of man and will not drive him from the governing position he has in the world; on the contrary, he wants him to have the most control possible. Obviously, all of this is intelligible only to the believer and could not be demonstrated to a nonbeliever" (Auer 1984:172). Reasonable behavior gives responsible humans with moral autonomy a "freedom to accept or reject his own nature, but only on the condition that he can give a reason for his choice; he never escapes this latter condition" (Schall 1998:82).

Being a strong ethical perspective of Evangelical Reconstructionism, Classic Protestant Theonomy attempts to resolve the issue of how and to what extent Mosaic law and civil ethic should impact New Testament Church and present society. Defending different agendas in theonomies debates, many Protestant counter-heteronomic theologians, including Auer (1984), Bahnsen (1984), Böckle (1966), Jordan (1984), Fuchs (1967), Rhonheimer (1994), Rushdoony (1973), Schüller (1966), promote a concept of a "Creative Reason", "Christian Proprium" or "theonomous autonomy" of man, at the same time preserving a space for theonomous rule of God, since the writing of the moral law on human hearts and its validity "has neither been changed nor abolished by New Covenant, for nine of the Ten Commandments are clearly affirmed as continuing in the New Testament" (Cunningham 2012:8). Tillich (1963:380) argues that, historically, traditional heteronomy has often been used "from outside" as a "strange law" (*heteros nomos*) imposed in order to destroy the autonomy of cultural creativity, its *autos nomos*. In contrast with this, Tillich's idea of a theonomous culture does not imply any imposition from outside, for "theonomous culture is Spirit-determined and Spirit-directed culture, and Spirit fulfills spirit instead of breaking it. The idea of theonomy is not antihumanistic, but it turns the humanistic indefiniteness about the "where-to" into a direction which transcends every particular human aim" (Tillich 1963:380).



In general, the recovery of Protestant autonomy-driven model of authority as an anti-authoritarian, counter-heteronomic movement, during the Enlightenment, was a great achievement in human history. Dodd assumes that ecclesial coercive attempts "to set the authority of the Bible over against that of the Church, and the authority of the Church over against the authority of the Bible, results only in obscuring the nature of this authority, which resides in both together." (Dodd 1951:157) Deconstructing excessive ecclesial heteronomy, Teeple argues that since some vital historical and literary methods of interpreting the ancient literary sources were unknown until recent decades, many ancient church traditions "are faulty and through the centuries have given Christians erroneous views of the origins of their religion..." (Teeple 1992: ix). Fulkerson (1994:368) affirms that every tradition is necessarily mutated, invented, and reinvented as it is enculturated. In their corresponding researches, Jungmann, Hobsbawm, Cuneo show that there have been significant shifts in the content of practices and beliefs we accept as "given" by tradition. Some of these traditions, particularly liturgical ones, changed dramatically in the second half of the twentieth century. These changes have been absorbed into the common beliefs and practices (Jungmann 1951; Hobsbawm 1983; Cuneo 1997).

Finding the theological premise of Eastern Orthodox ontology of tradition, despite the lack of clarity and consensus, is a task of great importance. The ontological meaning of Orthodox Tradition is to be discovered in a more hidden and indirect way. The mysterious notion of "a hidden Christological meaning" of the Bible, which "was held unanimously by Christian tradition until the last few centuries, is what was traditionally called the "spiritual sense" of Scripture" (Healy 2006:33). Healy also argues that both Old and New Testaments "have a "spiritual sense", understood as a capacity to lead us into the invisible mystery of Christ (Healy 2006:33). In apophatic theology, this mystical union with God is "an existential attitude which involves the whole man... a criterion: the sure sign of an attitude of mind conformed to truth" (Lossky 1952:40-41). The mystical ecstasy of the individual in theological endeavors and the liturgical ritual of the church began to speak more and more as an independent authority of the "living tradition" in history (Meyendorff 1984:3-10). This sense of tradition became an essential characteristic of Eastern Orthodoxy - "It is not only a protective, conservative principle; it is, primarily, the principle of growth and regeneration" (Florovsky 1972:47). Thus, Eastern Orthodox theonomy presents a concept of sacred

continuum, that is, "in an uninterrupted continuity throughout history that takes back to the person of Christ" (Constantelos 1999:135).

However, "if negative theology begins by denying the appropriateness of the human mind and language to knowing God, then one may inquire concerning the role of the Scriptures and dogmas, since these are themselves expressed in concepts" (Negrut 1994:22). Dealing with the issue contemporary orthodoxy, as the most potent system of religious heteronomy in the Eastern Christendom, with a strong assertion of a dogmatic authority, is basically reduced to a Participated Theonomy in the form of Imperial Theocracy (Church-and-State Symphony). Orthodox Professor Yannaras explains, that "theocracy is the use of metaphysics (as a supreme authority) in order to impose normative principles of behavior or aims of power by force upon the collectivity" (Yannaras 2002:5). In this form of theonomy (theocracy), "metaphysics are subject to ideology (leading to such phenomena as "theocracy", "kingship by the grace of God", papocaesarism, caesaropapism or fundamentalism) when they conceal their ontological content (i.e. the question about existence, about the cause and purpose of being). Metaphysics without ontology serves individual psychology (the priority of individual feelings, sentimental "certainties," "convictions" which protect the ego). Additionally, metaphysics borrows these psychological "certainties" and "convictions" from ideologies" (Yannaras 2002:5).

Daniel and Duhram argue that, at the very foundation of the Orthodox notion of Theonomy (Theocracy), there is a type of God-sanctioned Tradition, which was established in the proto-orthodox Church by apostles in order to advance the hegemony of Orthodox faith and agenda. Orthodox theocracy tends to focus on the Symphony (Caesaropapism) model of authority in which "the church traditionally accepts political authority, either as part of a relationship such as the Orthodox ideal of "symphony" or as a reflection of something like medieval "two sources" doctrine, with its recognition of the legitimacy in appropriate context of secular power" (Daniel and Duhram 1999:120).

Soloviev has played a major role in the Orthodox development of theocracy as a concept. Early exposition of Soloviev's notion of divine theonomy - "free theocracy" became a central point for him in the 1880s, but his first audience for this concept was not quite responsive to his "fantastic utopia." Soloviev understood that "church and state needed to remain

separate and distinct, in part because each had a different function to perform independently toward the eventual goal of achieving a perfect society" (Wozniuk 2008:6). Valliere (2000:202) assumes that, being a very Russian thinker, Soloviev took up the theocratic theme from the legacy of Slavophilism, while suppressing the proto-nationalist elements. In his famous treatise, 'The Critique of Abstract Principles' (1880), Soloviev criticizes all hegemonic ideologies of the nineteenth century for "abstraction" and stands for "positive" philosophy of life that takes the living experience seriously, including religious experience. Rich and complex in substance, Soloviev's idea of "free theocracy" elaborates the practical task of theonomy - the search for ways to bridge the gap comprising threefold theo-projects: (1) between secular and religious culture ('free theosophy' or the wholeness of knowledge); (2) between society and the church ('free theocracy' or the wholeness in life); and (3) between art and piety ('free theurgy' or the wholeness in creativity) (Valliere 2007:383-384).

In contrast to Soloviev's vision of theocracy, Bulgakov takes theonomic discussion to a new meta-level of the "coming" Kingdom beyond the general framework of human social and political developments. He places history between two 'abysses': the entry of man into the world at his creation; and the 'new time' of the Age to Come: the 'meta-history' of 'Behold, I make all things new' (Rev.21:5). History is, then, a specific condition of being in its becoming. For Bulgakov, the real theonomic question is whether human activity can be exercised in the name of Christ, being a sort of labor of a Christian humanity (Schall 1998:353). Bulgakov personally believes that "organized ecclesiality" can directly influence the history of culture strongly enough to "transmute the elements of the world," overcoming "Luciferian intoxication of creativity." It is just that, like all creative energy, this has to pass through the crucible of the personal - the personal as a contribution to universal history, hence there is a need to expound an authentically Christian teaching in the world. How is this to be done? Bulgakov says this can be accomplished by developing the Chalcedonian dogma, and its corollary (cited in Nichols 2005:217).

Answering the ontological question of how authority manifests itself in the context of the Church's consensual tradition, Nassif (2010:36) admits, that Eastern Orthodox Christianity generally has not raised the issue of authority in the same way that Catholic and Protestant theology has done. Instead, Orthodoxy understands Scripture and other aspects of the

Church's life as expressions of a unified tradition. Orthodoxy's conception of the Church as a whole or "Catholic" community results in a more "lived" and much less "defined" understanding of authority. Promoting an "organic concept" of authority in the Orthodox Tradition, Nassif believes that authority as a theological category can best be understood not in legal or external categories, but, rather, in relation to the Church's corporate understanding of reality, all of which participates in divine life (Nassif 2010:37).

Moving on to our final consideration regarding the issue of theonomy (theocracy) in Evangelical and Eastern Orthodox frameworks, we need to draw some loose ends together. Here five more stipulations became appropriate:

Utilizing "seed-and-fruits" concept, Orthodox theology rejects a later tradition as a "final form" and/or "superior norm" for an earlier one, misreading differences in other traditions as "deviations" and/or "errors." Orthodox Metropolitan Hierotheos (Vlachos) of Nafpaktos (1994:10) dichotomises Orthodox and Protestant traditions in the following way:

Protestants do not have a "therapeutic treatment"- tradition. They suppose that believing in God, intellectually, constitutes salvation. Yet salvation is not a matter of intellectual acceptance of truth; rather, it is a person's transformation and divinization by grace. This transformation is affected by the analogous "treatment" of one's personality, as shall be seen in the following chapters. In the Holy Scripture, it appears that faith comes by hearing the Word and by experiencing "theoria" (the vision of God). At first, we accept faith by hearing, in order to be healed, then we attain to faith by theoria, which saves a man. Protestants, who believe that the acceptance of the truths of faith, the theoretical acceptance of God's Revelation, i.e. faith by hearing, saves man, do not have a "therapeutic tradition." It could be said that such a conception of salvation is very naive. (Nafpaktos 1994:10)

From the Orthodox point of view, Church history becomes a sacred history of one specific tradition, elevated above all, in spite of the disintegrating, destructive, and demonic features of life that are shown more strongly; than in secular history. This arrogant attitude makes it impossible to criticize the Orthodox Church in its essentials — in doctrine, ethics, hierarchical organization, and so forth. Since the Orthodox Church strongly identifies its historical existence with the apostolic community, every attack on it (often even on non-essentials) is felt as an attack on the fundamentals of the ecclesial community and consequently on the Spirit itself.

Secondly, as we concern ourselves with methodological conservatism of traditional Eastern Orthodoxy, we have to admit that the widely accepted theocratic model of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority would constitute the boundaries for a merely 'human' morality', being a pure expression of external law (heteronomy), which tradition in a coercive manner lays down for Orthodox Christians and others. Inasmuch as Orthodox idea of theonomy (theocracy) introduces a profound theological change in the way of conceiving the relationship between State and the Orthodox Church, personal and communal faith, public and private ministry, this inclination in essence negates completely the Protestant idea of theonomus autonomy, exercising a principle of a complete sovereignty of Orthodox Tradition in the domain of theology and ethic regarding the right ordering of life in this world. In contrast to this approach, Tillich defends Protestant autonomy as "obedience of the individual to the law of reason, which he finds in himself as a rational being" (Tillich 1951:84), interpreting autonomy as the self-determination of a structure that is already a bipolar structure of subject and object (in epistemological terms) or self and world (in ontological terms). The nomos ('law') of autos ('self') is the law of subjective-objective reason in which the subject-object structure determines and is determined by itself being not heteronomous, but autonomous (Tillich 1951:84-85).

With all due sympathy to Orthodox ecclesiology, Protestant theology attempts to distinguish the ontological source of Orthodox Tradition as a secondary norm (*norma normata secundaria*) from its ministerial function as the "*traditio interpretative et explicativa*" (Purdy 2009:44). These ontological discrepancies can, at least, be partly explained on the basis of origin: namely, Eastern Orthodox Church and Tradition are "largely the product of monastic communities, which were practically the only places where serious full-time attention to the evangelical imperatives was possible" (Pelikan 1977:255). In his recourse to classical theological authors, Pelikan (1977:255) introduces a helpful discussion of Simeon New Theologian, who assumes that the science of contemplative theology was based on a distinction between those were "novices [*arxaioi*] and those who were "adepts" [*teleioi*]. In those days, the number of those who "believe the resurrection of Christ" was large, but only a small minority of these were able to "view it purely" or to worship it properly.

Because "Byzantium" never knew a real tension between ascetic and sacramental spirituality, monastic piety depended upon the sacraments, the liturgy, and the dogmas of

the Orthodox Church (Fedotov 1966:28). In this regard, the positive message of Orthodox theonomy is that the true Christian tradition in the East is more than Writings of Scripture; it is wisdom and power of God himself revealed in history through the Church, that is passing "a hidden spirit underneath the letter" (Confessor 1985:195-96). Protestant theology utilizes the Bible "here and now," while in the Eastern Orthodox Church, Maximus the Confessor saw in Scriptures, a visible letter that never ceases to exist:

We say the entire Holy Scripture is divided into flesh and spirit as if it were a spiritual person. For the one who says that the test of Scripture is flesh and that its meaning is spirit or soul does not stray from the truth. The wise man is certainly the one who abandons the corruptible and belongs wholly to the incorruptible. (Confessor 1985:145)

Thus, the meta-physical authority of Orthodox tradition presents itself as the ultimate phase of dialectic theology. Orthodox theocratic vision conceived Orthodox Tradition as the godly-appointed apostolic manifestation of theocracy (theonomy), which expresses a superior divine law in liturgical forms. Authority of Orthodox Church Tradition was and is attached to the life-time relevance of the Orthodox canons (records) to the apostolic legacy, stressing the enormous importance of the formal ecclesiastical authority of the bishops and Orthodox Patriarch.

Negative experience of direct implementation of confessional theonomous models, such as early Calvinism in Geneva and late Caesaropapism in Byzantine Empire, which was characterized by excessive traditional and triumphalistic tendencies and postures, may eventually repudiate all kinds of theocracies (theonomies). The above-mentioned distortion of theonomy in Church history (Early Calvinism / Byzantine Caesaropapism) resulted in heavy ideological imprisonment of teaching and preaching in state prescriptions. Thus, according to Bolt "the term *theocracy* should be reserved for that specific, historical instance of Old Testament Israel and the *direct*, revealed rule of God over his people. That period is over, done: Even in Israel it no longer exists. Attempts, therefore, to apply Old Testament, Israelite law directly to the rule of modern states, are utterly misguided" (Bolt 2000:208). Kuyper admits here that, "unfortunately, many Calvinists have frequently been guilty of precisely such a move," and that is for him only an additional reason why the term theocracy is simply unusable for Christian political activism in the modern world" (Bolt

2000:208). No church should be given the secular authority to dictate to the civil administrative bodies how they ought to interpret Scripture to the political issues. A plausible solution accepted today by many Western countries was offered by Calvinist theologian Kuyper who, promoting the reasonable and balanced concept of "pillarization" (the social expression of the anti-thesis in public life, whereby Protestant, Catholic and secular elements each had their own independent schools, universities, and social organizations), suggests that "in a pluralistic society, not only do we not desire such a theocracy but rather we oppose it with all our might" (Kuyper 1880:46). Kuyper (1880:46) also teaches that the civil authorities must permit the church an opportunity publicly to express her "feelings" (*Gevoe Len*) about important civic matters but this right is a right of *persuasion* only and must never become a legal right (*jure suo*) dictating public policy. Kuyper also suggests the necessity for the state to promote and protect public justice, based on two reasons: (1) theocracy leads to tyranny and national corruption (*volksbederf*); and (2) the church lacks the competence to determine specific public policy.

Historically, both Protestant and Orthodox models of authority have demonstrated theonomic (heteronomic) and non-theonomic (autonomic) elements. This primarily has to do with pure theonomy (theocracy/symphony) only being possible only in a society where every member of the community is ready to submit himself completely to God's authority, what hardly ever happened in history. As a manifestation of God's Kingdom, theonomy has always been in the ongoing process of "happening," "becoming" - "your kingdom come..." (Matt. 6:10) but never fully occurred yet in the present world. If one were to attempt to finalize an explanation on the issue of autonomy, heteronomy, and theonomy in contemporary concept, it might run as follows: "The Christian life is characterized neither by heteronomy (the Law) nor autonomy (the flesh) but by theonomy (walking by the indwelling Spirit) or Christonomy (living by the faithfulness of the indwelling Son of God). Where there is Theonomy/Christonomy, there is Christian freedom (cf. 2 Cor 3:17)" (Talbert 1995:26). Thus, the task of both Protestant and Orthodox theonomies is to establish and implement a new connection between post-modern culture and sacred ground of Scripture and the Church in a fresh way, without recourse to the traditional coercive heteronomy.

## 2.8 Theological Observations

The study of theological epistemology is interdisciplinary and inter-confessional in nature. There is no pure Protestant or Orthodox "theory of knowledge." The correlation point for theological epistemology is that "historically Christianity claimed to be and was received as *revealed truth*, not truth discovered via human insight or ingenuity" (Sproul 1997:11). This revelation of God in Christ does not require human agents for support or approval. It points and maintains itself in sublime majesty. Its authority is normative as well as causative. "It fights for its own victory. It conquers human hearts for itself. It makes itself irresistible" (Van Den Belt 2008:269). In this connection, revelation is "the giving of signs" or "the self-witness of God," the representation of His truth, in which "He knows Himself," in the form of "creaturely objectivity," which is adapted to our knowledge. (Barth 1961:40). The veracity of Eastern Orthodox theology is rather believed by the Orthodox existentially, as they interact within the framework of one and only "living tradition", which is assumed to be the highest ground for authority in the Orthodox Church, including Unwritten (Oral) Tradition, Scripture, Writings of the Church Fathers, Great Councils, Canonical law, liturgy, etc. In the Eastern Christian view, theology, as we use the term today, is an "intellectual contour of the revealed truth, a 'noetic' testimony to it" (Florovsky 1979:17-18), resulting from man's communion with God through faith.

This style of Eastern theologizing begins, not with questions concerning the unity of God, the 'Treatise on God' of scholasticism, but with the revelation of the Trinity of persons, and specifically, with the Incarnation of the Divine Son of God (Barrois 1982:90). In this way, Orthodox theology is the product of the ascetic, mystical, liturgical and spiritual life of the Church (Hopko 1982:7-8) in which Orthodox Tradition is "the gateway to the theology of revelation" (McGuckin 2011:90). Complete religious truth still remains unapproachable to man's reasoning because man is incapable of fully understanding God, Who is the only Infinite Being (Basil the Great). However, "the Truth of Orthodox Christian Doctrine contains a Mystery that is approachable only by faith but inevitably always remains a "Mystery" even to the pious" (Androustos 1907:18). Therefore, the teaching of the Orthodox Church is not just a doctrine of Christian faith but also a knowledge received within and experienced through faith (John 7:17). This genuine faith continues to be based on Divine Authenticity and is never displaced by knowledge (Trepelas 1978:13). The Divine content of the



Revelation, experienced through true faith, becomes sound and steadfast by the assistance of knowledge and consequently,

Faith is an internal good, and without searching for God, confesses His existence, and glorifies Him as existent. Whence by starting from this faith, and being developed by it, through the grace of God, the knowledge respecting Him is to be acquired as far as possible... Faith is then, so to speak, a comprehensive knowledge of the essentials; and knowledge is the strong and sure demonstration of what is received by faith, built upon faith by Lord's teaching. (Clement the Alexandrian 1989:74-75)

## **2.9 Methodological Observations**

Eastern Orthodox epistemology constitutes, not so much, a rival methodology to the Protestant approach, but, rather, a methodology that aims at a different goal – (deification) via mystical gnosis. The main proponents of the post-conservative Eastern Orthodox theological method, analyzed in the first chapter, returns the researcher to the original point of inquiry: "What do we take as our "first theology?" Having examined the epistemological role of tradition in the authority of the Orthodox Church, the present research demonstrates that obvious methodological discrepancy exists between the contemporary scholarly descriptions of theological phenomenon termed "early Christian tradition" and Eastern Orthodox notion/ecclesial interpretation of "Orthodox Tradition", key elements of which do indeed go beyond actual history, human comprehension and teaching of Holy Scripture (Eph.3:19; Phil.4:7). This discrepancy has become more evident due to the recent scholarship on the early Christian tradition. Niebuhr argues that "the development of the social sciences, the rising of Rationalism and literary and historical criticism have determined the Church to formulate the essential meaning of the Christian Tradition and also its relations, whether positive or negative, to contemporary thought" (Niebuhr 1956:17-27). This disagreement reveals divergent methodologies, exegetical styles, and different authorities appealed to by both Evangelicals and Orthodox. Since it has always been the task of the Church to unfold the message of the Bible and to defend it against misinterpretations (Richardson and Schweitzer 1951:7), a further point of analysis attempts to identify an "ultimate reality" which can serve as a legitimate ground for religious praxis (Lamb 1989:63-103), answering the most fundamental question of any theology – a question of a definite knowledge about God, methodologically guided by an ontologically realist commitment that the truth is one – to the unity of the truth (Mether 2011:179).

More recently, Orthodox theologian Nassif (2004:29) has elaborated on the epistemological necessity of proper method in Orthodox theology, arguing that "The strength of our conclusions will depend largely on the reliability of the research method applied". In his discourse on theological method in Eastern Orthodoxy, Nassif identifies three major tasks:

(1) to define evangelical identity and use the definition to measure the common ground between Eastern Orthodox and Protestant evangelical theology; (2) to see how the distinctive theological themes that comprise the identity of contemporary evangelicalism were interpreted by the classical tradition of the Greek church fathers from the fourth to the fourteenth centuries; and (3) to assess the similarities and differences between the classical and contemporary versions of the evangelical faith as the basis for viewing the extent of conflict and compatibility between both the Orthodox and the Protestant evangelical communities today. (Nassif 2004:29)

It is important to highlight that, in the Nassif's methodology, elements of self-critical awareness simultaneously use "the historical and systematic disciplines to compare Orthodox and Evangelical theologies runs the obvious risk of generalizing at the expense of analytic research" (Nassif 2004:30). In contrast to the metaphysical grounding of Orthodox epistemology, Paul Negrut asserts that, from the perspective of biblical authority within the Orthodox Church, the twentieth century can be described as the century of struggle for space between *episteme* and *praxis*. Negrut (1994:84) identifies outwardly contradictory tendencies in the theory of Orthodox knowledge, which may illustrate a deeper malaise related to the belief that freedom and authority are opposite categories. He argues that, in the area of theological epistemology, a significant number of Orthodox theologians are aware of the risk presented by either a Greek meta-historical or a Jewish historicism approach to the question of truth. Nevertheless, both apophatic *agnosia* and cataphatic "*logo latria*" are rejected in favor of the patristic synthesis between *history* and *eschat*. In this context, the purpose of revelation as the only source of theological knowledge is not the development of a theological system but, rather, deification. In placing the emphasis on mystical union with God, the contemporary Orthodox Church follows the tradition of the Greek Fathers who have considered concepts and language not as absolutes or as an end in themselves but primarily as an instrument, a tool in their effort to make the content of our faith more meaningful, to fight errors, to instruct catechumens, and to strengthen the weak in faith.

In addition to that tension, the absence of reasonable synthesis between cataphatic and apophatic approaches in Eastern Orthodox epistemology creates a rigid theological framework for the role of the Bible and Tradition in the ecclesial community. In Orthodox epistemology, only the Church as a historical-eschatological community continues its ascending dialogue with God through Scripture interpreted according to the Apostolic Tradition, in which revelation, community and deification are inextricably linked together. The basic claim of the research is that the source of Protestant and Orthodox theological differences regarding the authority of Orthodox Church Tradition can be traced in the careful study (analysis) of distinct methods of their corresponding epistemologies.

## **2.10 Historical Observations**

Historical preconditions of Eastern Orthodox worldview on the problem of ecclesial authority of tradition emphasize the whole complexity of interrelatedness between biblical doctrines (*gnosis*), theological methods (*episteme*), church practices (*praxis*) and arrange them in a logical progression – from the Hellenic history of Byzantine Church to the modern Eastern Orthodoxy in a global age. As we noted above, the general epistemic approach to biblical theology refers to the Orthodox way (mode) of knowing religious truths (religious truth-claims), and the praxiological dimension to the specific way in which religious truth influences or shapes the life of an individual or of communities which adhere to the respective religion; that is, the way in which religious truth becomes de facto normative (Gunton 1993:11-40). Historically, in traditional Orthodoxy, the epistemological enquiry with regard to the self-validating continuity of authoritative teaching of tradition invokes neither the Church's magisterium (like Roman Catholicism) nor Scripture alone (like Protestantism), but *Orthodox Tradition*, as it has been embodied by the Fathers or patristics, the Greek Fathers of the Church. It is a "theology of the Fathers" (Kung 1988:57). In this regard, the famous American Orthodox lecturer, the editor and founder of "*Regina Orthodox Press*" F.Schaeffer argues that one of the major differences between the Orthodox East and Latin West is that the Orthodox do not look to reason and science as their primary source of Truth, but, rather, place their trust in "the uncreated light of Holy Mystery", praying for "a flood of divine revelation and a genuine if incremental change of character" and placing great store not only in Holy Mystery but "intuitive spiritual revelation through the process of mystical initiation". (Schaeffer 1995:67,110) This may explain why Eastern Orthodoxy and Western Roman Catholicism have different and contradictory epistemologies. While the

East followed Plato inward into mysticism, the West followed Aristotle outward into rationalism (Morey 2007:29).

The reconsideration of the existing tensions between *gnosis* and *episteme* in the modern theological history led to an increasing awareness that an extended discourse on authority "became a priority task of each major church in the attempt to prove its continuity with the apostolic Church" (Negrut 2005:43). A different criterion of apostolic continuity has been re-envisaged and re-analyzed: apostolic scriptures, tradition, and their office. In the classical expression, each of the three components of the definition of the apostolic continuity,

has become dominant in one of the major branches of Christendom. Thus, the Protestant Reformation elevated the authority of Scripture over that of Tradition and Apostolic Office. The Roman Catholic Church, although professing to retain all three criteria of apostolic continuity (as defined by the Council of Trent), has, in fact, elevated the authority of the Apostolic Office in laying the dogma of papal infallibility. Meanwhile, the Orthodox Church has elevated the authority of Tradition as the sole norm of biblical interpretation and the limits within which the bishops can exercise their authority. (Negrut 2005:43)

Nevertheless, in the light of modern scholarship, it is evident that the authority of Scripture as a ground for faith and practice (unlike the authority of tradition) has always been the main operative assumption throughout the history of the Church (Pelikan 1991:282-283; Staniloae 1980:221). Envisaging the development of the *dominant mode* of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority, the present research will now examine both the historical reasons for the continuous adherence to the traditional Orthodox legacy and some distinctive methods of doing theology in Orthodox perspective.

## CHAPTER 3

### DISTAL AND PROXIMAL AUTHORITIES IN EPISTEMIC BACKTRACKING OF ORTHODOX CHURCH TRADITION AS AUTHORITY

#### 3.1 Introduction

The absence of general theological precision regarding theological epistemology necessitates that "we must go to Scripture as to the flesh of Christ" (Ignatius of Antioch, *Phil.* 4,1). Philosophical hermeneutics correctly assumes that biblical exegesis can never be a purely objective science, since "the Christian mystery is not something to be curiously contemplated like a pure object of science, but is something which must be interiorized and lived" (De Lubac 2000:21). Having discussed basic epistemological premises of Orthodox theology at the beginning of the first chapter, we may agree with Orthodox theologian Lossky that,

Authentic gnosis is inseparable from charisma, an illumination by grace which transforms our intelligence. And since the object of contemplation is our personal existence and presence, true gnosis implies encounter, reciprocity, *faith* as a personal adherence to the personal presence of God Who reveals Himself. (Lossky 1978:13)

These introductory verses as a whole speak of the difference between the way in which the first Christians and, then, the later Church understood the Christological problem: for believers in the apostolic age God was more personal and powerful. In accordance with the main lines of Lossky's theological epistemology, another Orthodox theologian Nassif elucidates and strengthens the combined epistemological proposal of personal union with Christ by arguing that:

theological inquiry does not start with abstract questions over the possibility of belief in God, arguments for his existence, and the grounds for belief, which are all outside of divine revelation, and then, only after those questions have been answered, proceed to the Christian doctrine of the Bible and its authority. On the contrary, Orthodoxy begins where the New Testament and the Church's liturgy would have us to begin, namely, with the reality of the Father-Son relationship given to us in Christ and into which we are drawn by the Spirit... So the general orientation of the Christian East grounds all genuine knowledge of God in the Person of Jesus Christ. Doctrinal authority, like salvation itself, begins not with a verification of possible belief in God as a hypothesis but with trust in a Person. (Nassif 2010:38)

This Orthodox notion of the Father-Son relationship given to us in Christ presents nothing that could be construed as being objectionable to the general theological concord and shared inductive approach regarding sufficiency of human arguments for warranted Christian belief. Healy also critically assessed our presupposition to determine pure biblical exegesis in the apostolic period "given our distance from the event and the meagerness of the historical record. However, this problem should not jeopardize the inquiry into the literal or spiritual senses." (Healy 2006:35). It is significant for our deliberation to recognize that "we cannot explain early Christian preaching and conversion in terms of any single approach" (Shmeman 1963:27).

A heavy dependence of Orthodox theology on the idea of ecclesial tradition as a main operative principle in Orthodox ecclesiology is limited to epistemological accountability to the scriptural deposit of Christian revelation and to the ongoing authority of the mainline apostolic Christianity. A theological speculation regarding what is believed, taught, and confessed "belongs to the history of doctrine, but not simply on their own terms" (Pelikan 1971:3). No teacher in the Body of Christ is free to overstep the core of his/her denominational beliefs nor conciliar consensus agreements. Basically, any biblical ecclesial kerygma taught and confessed by the Church can "hardly be without any kernel of historical truth" (Von Campenhausen 1969:15). The regulative function of theological epistemology has been expressed by Apostle Paul, "Do not go beyond what is written" (1 Cor. 4:6). Our acceptance of traditional authority-based arguments often facilitates the construction of "Bayesian epistemology" (Garber 1983). However, fair scientific and theological approaches attempt to justify and rightly qualify such authority, particularly when authority is attributed to the whole concept in an aggressive and exclusive way (Kitcher 1993). So, before we rely on someone else's religious experience or theological data, our key question here should concern the researcher's (experimenter's) veracity and competence (Hull 1988).

The significance of distal and proximal gradation of authority should not be minimized in the research. Distal and proximal gradation of authority help to articulate and hold two dimensions of balanced biblical interpretation in full integrity and unity. The phenomenological notion of distal authority in Christian faith relates more to the general effects of the outer expression of multifaceted nature of church Tradition as authority, while

the proximal authority of specific ecclesial tradition can be located nearer to the center of particular Christian community or circumstances in which people find themselves. A praxiological inquiry we have to deal with here is "the question of the circumstances in which we trust other people's assertions — of the circumstances in which we attribute to them epistemic authority" (Strevens 2010:294). Strevens's explanation also immediately appeals to the practical embodiment of authority execution. He argues that, from a pure scientist's perspective, the function of authority can be categorized into two parts: "the proximal, that is, authority concerning matters directly relevant to the scientist's own field of study, and the distal, that is, authority concerning the rest of science. Distal authority is familiar to non-scientists" (Strevens 2010:294). Strevens also suggests that this kind of authority is applied paradigmatically

to all-evidence-considered judgments about theories; in particular, it is the authority that stands behind the public acceptance or rejection of theories: "The caloric theory of heat turned out to be wrong," "There is at this time no credible alternative to the theory of evolution," "The jury is still out on dark matter," and so on. It is also the kind of authority that is more salient in the construction of the big scientific picture, in the big sense of big. The reliable distal authority would not be possible, however, without proximal authority, the kind of authority that drives the short-range informational conveyor belts deep inside the factory of science, and that as such is of more immediate concern to the factory hands, the working scientists. (Strevens 2010:295-296)

The question of how things are perceived by humans and thus acted upon in an authoritative structure of relationship based on human perception and subsequent actions is a problem addressed by ancient Greek philosophers and later by Christian theology (Schmidt 2012:37). Distal and proximal authorities became a dedicated subject of study among many legal theorists, focusing on the relationship between "*nomos*" (νόμος: law) and "*physis*" (φύσις: being or nature), *eternal law* (Lex Aeterna), recognized as God's mind and *human laws* (Lex Humana), developed by human reason (Bicchieri & Muldoon, 2011; Garber 1983; Gilbert 2002; Hull 1988; Kitcher 1993; Maritain 1971; Rhonheimer 2008; Schmidt 2012; Strevens 2010; Von Campenhausen 1969). For example, Gilbert (2002) constructs her distal authority concept based upon two types of prescriptive expectations: *predictive* (what will be done); and *deontic* (what ought to be done). Maritain observes that some types of authority, like laws, are based upon an accepted truth and do not exist outside the norms, for "without trust in truth, there is no human effectiveness" (Maritain

1971:13). According to Maritain, a human society was a natural result of reason and freedom; however, just as one would be subordinate to the social laws for the common good, one would be the recipient of that good as well (Maritain 1971). A comparable position is presented by Schall, who attributes the influential character of distal authority to the sphere of human perception since man, as a rational being, utilizes human reason as the measure of the law. Schall insists on the dignity of the human person, individualism and personality, believing that such metaphysics is an imperative element of moral understanding. (Schall, 1998) Rhonheimer connects the idea of proximal authority with the fact that, on a personal level, "every human action is an intentional action. And this is why it is something that does not simply "happen", but something willingly pursued and as such formed or shaped by reason" (Rhonheimer 2008:59). Rhonheimer's concept of authority, presented in the form of natural law as "something constituted by reason" (*aliquid a ratione constitutum*) and a "work of reason" (*opus rationis*) by reason, proceeds from the light of understanding that God gave to man at the moment of his creation (Rhonheimer 2008:59).

Despite the confusion and some unique challenges, the epistemological difficulties facing theology are, to a great degree, no different than the epistemological difficulties that have always faced any pursuit of knowledge (Diller 2014:29). In this regard, Torrance explains that there are two epistemic terms of tacit knowledge and that one term (the proximal) facilitates attention to the other (the distal). In this process "we use our body, without being explicitly aware of it, in order to attend to things beyond ourselves" (Torrance 1980:143). Torrance recognizes that we rely on our "spectacles", to which we pay no attention, in order to see things and that "proximal/distal thus correspond to the pair of terms subsidiary/focal" (Torrance 1980:143). The same approach pertains to theoretical guidance for the interpretation of misleading raw impressions:

the theory being placed like a screen between our senses and the things of which our senses otherwise would have gained a more immediate impression, we would rely increasingly on the theoretical guidance for the interpretation of our experience, and would correspondingly reduce the status of our raw impressions to that of dubious and possibly misleading appearances. (Polanyi 1958:3)

Thus, the prime task of theological epistemology is to approach the object of its study – God's revelation redemption in Christ – in an appropriate way (Barth 2004:4). The Lord



Himself promised his Church that the Holy Spirit would lead them into all truth (John 16:13). It is by means of this Spirit, "the Word took flesh in order to witness, represent, and be, in the flesh, the truth and life of God" (Von Balthasar 2006:189). Consequently, it is only by obedience to His Word that the Church can have a valid authority as compared with the Bible.

Historical critics have often misinterpreted or or erred in their understanding of the meaning of the Bible by applying their own standards of intelligibility and truth. In this connection, even traditional Orthodox claims, which stress the exclusive role of the interpreting community in correct understanding of the Bible can be self-referential and artificial. Fundamentally, the councils, being a highly revitalized corporate structure hostile to the inter-confessional formulations of truth, cannot represent the whole gathering of believers (*universitas fidelium*). The divine illumination is granted to those who are holy, not to those who are more learned or wise. But the Councils proceed by using the intelligence of those assembled, whose indefectibility with regard to the truth was not assured by Christ, who promised his truth to the whole Church. Since no part of the Church can be identified with the whole, no part can claim unfailing truth. The error is present in all things that rely on human wisdom and virtue (Ryan 1979:14). Avis reminds that "the conciliar thinking that was latent in medieval theology and canon law was given its opportunity to the challenge thrown up by the Great Schism of the West in 1378" (Avis 2006:71). However, the broader canonical context suggests that accumulated human tradition, either in Roman-Catholic papal absolutism or in Eastern Orthodox caesaropapism, cannot be plausibly claimed as truly Orthodox, *avant la lettre*. Hence, "there can be no fail-safe ecclesiastical constitution" (McGrade 1974:73) and it is considered "ecclesiological docetism" to "regard the church as a self-sufficient sphere closed off from the world" (Watson 1994:236-37).

Leading us back to the truth, the Bible message *hic et nunc* endorses the Christ-based agenda for epistemic backtracking of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority to provide a cogent, sustainable and biblically nuanced solution to the core epistemological questions:

- 1) How to evaluate the weight we give to a specific ecclesial tradition on the grounds of its being endorsed not by scriptural (proximal), but by confessional (subsidiary/auxiliary) authority?

2) Furthermore, once the problem of definition and trust of Orthodox (or Protestant) traditions is solved and its authoritative endorsement is determined, how we can integrate this theological attitude into strictly confessional epistemic outlook?

### **3.2. The Problem of Orthodoxy and Heresy: Its Definition, Origin and Influence**

There is no doubt that Christianity came into the world as a religion of revelation, and as such claimed a supernatural origin for its message (Kelly 1968:29). However, the full reality of Christianity as a new Kingdom of God is not yet accessible to us. Throughout its history, "Christian orthodoxy has been forced to define itself in response to heretical teaching" (Rick 2001:551). The question at hand, then, concerns "the reasons for this stability and continuity within the Eastern tradition, as well as the lessons that can be learned from it" (Negrut 1994:11). We have to examine if Eastern Orthodoxy truly possesses organic continuity with apostolic Christianity in an institutional, historical and communal sense, claiming that God would not allow his Body (the Orthodox Church) which he had created for the salvation of the world to fail (Alfeyev 1999, Brianchaninov 1863, Cavarnos 1992). Therefore, it is still a matter of great theological difficulty for Orthodox heresiologists to resolve the issue of "who is within and who is without" (Ehrman 1993 (2011):35). Florovsky argues that the Church does not, currently, have enough information to discern the manner of God's work outside canonical limits of the Church, nor to decide if other Christians in schisms and heresies (meaning, non-Orthodox Christian) receive salvation (Nikolaev 2007:266-267).

On this presupposition, the Orthodox Church considers that other Christian denominations have significantly departed from apostolic and catholic teachings "rooted in holy scripture and holy tradition, an inseparable component of which are the works of the holy fathers" (Alfeyev 2001:1) and that the consensus of the Orthodox faith could not be false because "the very tradition, teaching, and faith of the Catholic Church from the beginning was preached by the apostles and preserved by the Fathers. On this the Church was founded; and if anyone departs from this, he neither is nor any longer ought to be called Christian" (St. Athanasius, *Ad Serap.* 1:28). The great schism between Catholic West and Orthodox East, followed by the centuries of separation and minimal ecclesial interaction between the Orthodox Church and Western Christendom on cultural, ecclesial and theological levels, impacted the Eastern Orthodox notion of "orthodoxy". This emerging divergence on critical

points of conformity and diversity (plurality) in the early Church evokes a number of questions regarding diversity and plurality in early Christianity. Research into the nature of authority of Eastern Orthodox Tradition would not have a proper depth unless we consider the most cogent problems connected with the relation between orthodoxy and heresy in the early Church, and "examine the grounds upon which they based their respective claims to present the fullness of Christian Truth" (Turner 1954:3). The question of Eastern Orthodox Tradition as authority is not a self-explanatory exposition. At this point, we should consider that controversial issues of heresy and orthodoxy are closely associated with denominational argumentation and quasi-theological objectivity. Eastern Orthodoxy vigorously opposes the idea of diversity in the early Church since "the monopoly of medieval Catholicism was eroded as the laity turned to explore alternative religious options" (McGrath 2009:19). The range of agencies that facilitates Orthodox appeal to Tradition is based on the ability of individuals to extend and modify the traditions they inherit. Because traditions are emergent entities, they cannot be altered unless this totality of beliefs and actions changes. Thus, prior to historically and theologically delineating "normative Christianity", a whole structure of Orthodox operative assumptions and categories must be re-considered and envisaged. At the same time, we have to narrow down our developmental inquiry in the research down to the main question of uni-linear development of Eastern Orthodox Tradition in order to decide whether orthodoxy had any static point of origin in time and space in direct continuity with apostolic tradition of the early Church.<sup>4</sup>

### **3.3 Orthodoxy in the Early Church**

Pagan religious syncretism in Roman Empire was such that concepts of *Heresy* and *Orthodoxy* were not central to the pagan religious culture. Bingham suggests that "In the emperor's mind the maxim was clear: *deorum iniurias dis curae*, 'wrongs done to the gods were the concern of the gods' (Tacitus, *Ann.* 1.73.5) [...] divine justice had little to do with human religious administration" (Bingham 2006:45). This doctrinal preoccupation may have been typical of early Christianity, however it did not impact contemporaneous pagan syncretism. Religious pluralism was allowed as long as it accepted other gods and did not threaten the imperial society and government. In this regard, Roman religion preserved both continuity and change. Society was anchored to a belief in divination, while the

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<sup>4</sup> The terms "early Christians" or "early church" are used in the research in reference to the pre-Nicene Christians and the pre-Nicene Church.

practice and techniques of divination developed and changed (Liebeschuetz 1979). "Prior to change beginning in the third century, Roman culture had been satisfied with eclecticism, disagreement, rather than consensus, concord, and uniformity" (Bingham 2006:45). However, by the end of first century A.D., a narrow definition of "Christian" was no longer sufficient for the numerous followers of Christ (Bouteneff 2008:10). The whole of Christendom was inclusively undivided since "at first there were indeed no concepts of orthodoxy and heresy, and this division was late in being consciously developed" (Köstenberger & Kruger 2010:11).

New Christian identity broke up with the philosophical mode of thought, progressively growing out of the polemic against heresy, taking a significant step from *kerigma* to *dogma*. At this time, the Church of Christ was a free entity of "countless groups and congregations" in which "the boundaries between orthodoxy and heresy are fluid; there are no valid guidelines, nor, what is more important, any unified organization (Von Campenhausen 1969:214). Nevertheless, Florovsky insists that this lack of formal definitions of Orthodoxy "does not mean, a confusion of ideas or any obscurity of view. The Fathers did not care so much for the *doctrine* of the Church precisely because the glorious *reality* of the Church was open to their spiritual vision. One does not define what is self-evident". (Florovsky 1972:57) For instance, in his tractate "*De Praescriptione Haereticorum*" ("*On the prescription of heretics*"), Tertullian argues that the philosophical methods of enquiry used by the Greeks had nothing to do with the teaching by the authority of Scripture:

Writing to the Colossians, he says, 'See that no one beguile you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, and contrary to the wisdom of the Holy Ghost.' He had been at Athens, and had in his interviews (with its philosophers) become acquainted with that human wisdom which pretends to know the truth, whilst it only corrupts it and is itself divided into its own manifold heresies, by the variety of its mutually repugnant sects. What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church? What is between heretics and Christians? Our instruction comes from 'the porch of Solomon' who had himself taught that 'the Lord should be sought in simplicity of heart.' Away with all attempts to produce a mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic, and dialectic composition! We want no curious disputation after possessing Christ Jesus, no inquisition after enjoying the gospel! With our faith, we desire no further belief. (cited in Bettenson 1963:5-6)

In studying early Christian Orthodoxy, there is a common mistake of reading Christian writers and apologists outside of their time period, and, unreasonably, expecting expectations to discern great dogmatic theological pronouncements in every word they wrote. In this regard, Bercot (2013:14) notes that, generally, the pre-Nicene Christian writers were not attempting to define precise points of dogma for the rest of the church. "Although theology was important to the early church, "it took a back seat to *living* the Christian life" Bercot (2013:14-15). Most of the pre-Nicene Christian writers' theological discussions were developed in the context of either (1) explaining to outsiders what Christians believed or (2) contrasting the tenets of particular heretics with what the general body of Christians believed. In reality, they were not, usually, trying to convince other "Orthodox" Christians what to believe.

We also must be careful not to read technical or post-Nicene meanings into theological terms used by the pre-Nicene Christians. Very rarely did "Orthodoxy" (itself a fifth-century term) in the early church turn on the issue of using *this* word instead of *that* word. The early Christians understood orthodoxy in terms of general concepts, not meticulous theological definitions. (Bercot 2013:14-15)

As Clement of Alexandria observes: "Those who are particular about words, and devote their time to them, miss the point of the whole picture" (cited in Roberts and Donaldson 1885:2.347). The true origin of Orthodoxy is found in the course of the dogmatic controversies that followed the Constantine Peace. The Greek words *Catholic* and *Orthodox* concurrently served to designate those who held onto the true doctrine.

The first of these adjectives, used for the first time in the first century by St. Ignatius of Antioch (*Smyrneans* 8,2) to describe how the Christian Church — the Catholic Church — reflects the fullness, the universality and also the communal nature of the Christian message: in the face of all "particular" opinions, the Church proclaims a doctrine which is a totality and which is destined for all to hear and believe. (Meyendorff 1996:ix)

Thus, it is apparent that Orthodox self-awareness, as Nicene "Orthodoxy", shaped itself into distinctive church tradition only after many centuries of theological disputes and inner development and that "before the seventh century, what we have called "catholic orthodoxy in the East" bore its own doctrinal identity (Pelikan 1977:6).

### 3.4 Modern Orthodoxy: The Classical Theory

Orthodox theology refers to Classical Theory as the “traditional view” in which the truth of Orthodoxy preceded errors of Heresy. In fact, early Christianity had no other path but to become Orthodox. This Classical view considers Eastern Orthodoxy to be in direct continuity with authentic Christian Church through “unbroken apostolic succession” up to the early first century Christianity, effectively preserving the Sacred Tradition of the Early Church as commanded in 2 Timothy 1:14, “Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you.” (Alfeyev 1999; Bratsiotis 1951; Bulgakov 1988; Cavarnos 1992; Hopko 1982; Kuraev 1995; Kuznetsova 2009; Pomazansky 2005, etc.). The following theological categories of preservative stance, such as "sacred tradition", "ecclesial consciousness", "consensus patrum" (accord of the Fathers), "deposit of faith", "faithfulness", "immutability", "preservation", and "purity", are the key cognitive elements within classical Orthodox theologizing. In Horton’s estimation, the Orthodox vocabulary does not represent an objective description of Christianity, but a notion carrying a significant theological freight,

One of the best ways to recognize the different linguistic paradigm of Eastern Orthodoxy and evangelicalism is to examine the indices of any number of primary and secondary works on Eastern Orthodoxy. One will find such entries as chrismation, deification, energies of God, recapitulation, theosis, and the like, but notable absences will include original sin, grace, justification, sanctification, substitutionary atonement, and related terms that are familiar to Protestants - or at least once were. (Horton 2004:117)

It is natural that dogmatic truth in this approach should be apprehended not in the experience of isolated individuals but, rather, in "the experience of the Church in its totality as a divine and human organism" (Benz 2009:42). Classical Theory also presumes that doctrinal development in early Christianity was a long and glorious journey from primitive apostolic Christianity to the modern Orthodoxy (right belief), both in the forms of written word and oral tradition. Or, as Russian theologian Kuraev explains: "Orthodox Tradition is an ontological act committed in people. And as such it can not be fitted into the books. What Christ did is inexpressible, and hence, it can not be transmitted only by words."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> "Предание — это онтологический акт, совершающийся в людях. И в качестве такового он и не может быть вмещен в книгах. То, что сделал Христос, словами невыразимо, а значит, и не может передаваться лишь словами" (Kuraev 1995:41).

The basic claim of Classical Theory in Orthodox interpretation is that the Church preserved the Lord's teaching untainted along with pure apostolic tradition. Theoretically, it is also suggested that Orthodoxy appeared prior to Heresy. Consequently, heresy was

a crooked deviation from orthodoxy, a heretic one who departed from the truth. Orthodoxy's temporal priority could be seen in Scripture's prophecies of heresy while the crookedness of the heretics' doctrine was believed to follow from the adulterous, factious, criminal intent of their motives. They preferred to choose novelty rather than to receive that which was handed down. For early Christianity, the ideological variety and diversity of heresy confirmed its corrupt nature. Heresy's illegitimacy was also evident in its geographical limitation, while orthodoxy was assumed to be universal. Heresy also had to be other than Christian, for it was thought to be an alloy forged from Hellenistic philosophy and apostolic tradition. (Bingham 2006:48-49)

Thus, it is evident that in Orthodox theology, "traditionalism" has a different connotation, that "It is the method of theology that treats tradition as an authoritative source and norm for Christian belief and practice alongside or over Scripture itself" (Olson 2008:46). The closest approximation to a doctrinal definition of "Orthodoxy" in the Classical Theory is the clause in the Creed, which affirms that the Church is "One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic". The Church is the place *par excellence* of a believer's participation in the mysteries of God (Grdzeldze 2011:125). Professor Osipov connects the idea of classical "Orthodoxy" with the right way of life (the laws of a spiritual life), which indicates its purpose (the deification of man in Christ) exactly and provides a unique means of assistance (sacraments). Some beliefs suggest other ways, means and goals, which are often not only different in many ways from the Orthodoxy, but can also completely disorient a person (Osipov 2011:132). The problem is that the Orthodox "make what may seem at first a surprising claim: they regard their Church as the Church which guards and teaches the true belief about God and which glorifies Him with the right worship, that is, *as nothing less than the Church of Christ on earth*" (Ware 1993:8).

### **3.5 Heresy in the Early Church**

Problems with doctrinal deviations and schismatic tendencies have plagued the Christian church from the beginning (Ferguson 2013:213). In response to this challenge, the early Church adopted different theological methods and apologetic strategies to decide how the true faith and practice could be discerned and defended. Professors Lindsay and Robertson

are remarkably correct in their observation that "the early Christian writers say a great deal about heresy, but commonly refrain from telling what it is. [...] It is possible, indeed, to collect from these one or two leading tests of heresy, but no definition is to be found" (Lindsay and Robertson 1890:733). Pelican shares the same methodological concerns about the "latitudinarian exception" in defining heresy because "it is misleading to use such terms as though there were some method of determining a priori who were the villains and who were the heroes". (Pelican 1971:69) The real problem is that mere incongruity in concepts does not prove heresy. Its nature and source are different: a heresy must be seen to be really contradictory to the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. Sergii Bulgakov shows that inclination to heresy and discontinuity with orthodoxy have, in fact, been universal - "The history of the Church bears witness in this regard that no hieratic position, however exalted, secures one against the danger of error." Bulgakov illustrates his point with vivid historical examples of heretic popes (Liberius and Honorius), as well as noting that there were "frequent differences of ideas between certain popes, implying certainly that one or the other was wrong". He also mentions Orthodox patriarchs (of Constantinople and Alexandria) bishops, priests and laity, "who were condemned as heretics. No one can claim personal infallibility in theological matters, and such infallibility attaches to no single office" (Bulgakov 1988:54-55).

Bulgakov holds the view that "non-Orthodox Christianity had lost or distorted the fullness of life in the Church to different degrees; however, he challenged the long standing practice of the Church to brand a person or a group as heretic in general on the ground of their heresy on a particular question. Bulgakov also argued that there are no heretics in general, only in particular, and human being cannot know the measure of the damage that their particular heresies inflict on their life in the Church" (cited in Nikolaev 2007:266). Florovsky's main premise regarding heresy is commensurate with Prestige's concept of "representation" (Prestige 1940), which says that "the creeds of the Church grew out of the teaching of the Church: the general effect of heresy was rather to force old creeds to be tightened up than to cause fresh creeds to be constructed" (Florovsky 1972:102-103). This theory results from the recognition of harmful personalism in scriptural interpretation, "The voice of the Bible could be plainly heard only if its texts were interpreted broadly and rationally, in accordance with the apostolic creed and the evidence of the historical practice of Christendom. It was the heretics that relied on isolated texts, and the Catholics who paid more attention on the



whole to scriptural principles" (Prestige 1940:43). The growing body of academic literature makes possible to categorize heresies as they originally emerged and developed down the centuries into the following groups:

### **3.5.1 Heresy as a Selected View**

The concept of heresy implies the idea of "an opinion chosen by human perception, contrary to Holy Scripture, publicly avowed and obstinately defended" (Peters 1980:4). Heretic rivalry and disputations, widely accepted in Greek and Roman cultures, reflected an individualistic "dialectic of inquiry" with a strong emphasis on independent polemic approach and "philosophical demonstration." In this regard, "the Greek term *hairesis*, which gave rise to our term "heresy," has strong associations with "choosing" or "choice." To choose is to express our freedom, to assert our capacity to create and control our own worlds" (McGrath 2009:19). Skarsaune suggests that, "in antiquity, the term *hairesis* was not a negative concept" (Skarsaune 1994:9), that it simply meant "a party or a school tradition, especially as applied to different schools of philosophy. Used like this, *hairesis* is a neutral or even a positive word, and Josephus applies it in this way to the different parties among the Jews". Skarsaune also assumes that it was:

true for the early Christian self-understanding, and in Paul, we observe how *hairesis* and *schisma* are put together as terms describing the serious sin of destroying the unity of the body of Christ. From this beginning, the term *hairesis* gradually developed into a *terminus technicus* for heresy, often used since the beginning of the second century. (Skarsaune 1994:9)

### **3.5.2 Heresy as an Invader or External Contaminant**

Traditional Christian accounts of the origins of heresy depict heresy as an invader or/and as the inevitable outcome of the contamination of the purity of the Christian faith by external influences (McGrath 2009:88). Biblical and patristic recourses present heretics as "thieves who break through and steal" (Matt. 6:19-20) or wolves who devour the flock of Christ (Acts 20:29). Heretics are the ones who climb over the wall into sheepfold (John 10:1), finishing their race in a complete shipwreck and involving others in the same fate (1 Tim 1:19) (Clement, *Strom.* vii, 17, 106 (iii, 75); Eusebius, *H.E.* i, 1 (ii, 6). However, this "external" account of the origins of heresy is now generally regarded as incorrect. In the vast majority of cases, heresy appears to originate from inside the church. The motive for the

development of heresy may come from outside the community of faith, but the development of heresy takes place primarily within the Church.

### **3.5.3 Heresy as an Opposition to Orthodoxy**

This aspect describes heresy as a serious sin of destroying the unity of the body of Christ. According to Origen of Alexandria, "Heretics all begin by believing, and afterward, depart from the road of faith and the truth of the church's teaching" (Or. *Cant.* 3 4 (GCS 33 179)). From this beginning, the term *hairesis* gradually developed into a *terminus technicus* for heresy, often used since the beginning of the second century (Rohde 1968:217-233; Simon 1979:101-116). Biblical authors refer to this opposition as the error (*plane*), false teachers (*pseudodidaskaloi*, 2 Pet. 2:1), or foreign teaching (*heterodidaskalein*, 1 Tim. 1:3). Rick argues that the concept of heresy

is grounded in the conviction that there exists one revealed truth and that other opinions are intentional distortions or denials of that truth. In the absence of such conviction, "heresy" becomes little more than a bigoted persecution. But the Christian belief that truth has been revealed means that heresy becomes, not merely another opinion, but false teaching which leads people away from God's revelation. (Rick 2001:551)

### **3.5.4 Heresy as Judaizing and Gnosticizing Tendencies within Christian Teaching**

A more fundamental conflict occurred between Hellenistic Jews and Hellenistic Jewish-Christians over the question of the continuity of Christianity with Judaism. Pelikan asserts "after A.D. 70 that conflict marked the relations between Christian and Jewish thought everywhere" (Pelikan 1971:13). Some biblical scholars concur observation that the early Christian adversaries were Judaizing Christians with a Gnostic leaning, or gnosticizing Christians with a Judaizing tendency (Kelly 1963:10-13; Marshall 1976:7). Based on Pauline epistles, Skarsaune (1994:10-11) lists authentic scraps of their doctrines as follows: occupying themselves with *myths and endless genealogies...* (1 Tim. 1:4); 'desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make assertions' (1 Tim. 1:7); 'they forbid marriage and enjoin abstinence from foods' (1 Tim. 4:3); 'godless and silly myths' (1 Tim. 4:7); 'ascetics?' (1 Tim. 4:8); 'Avoid the godless chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called gnosis' (1 Tim. 6:20); 'The resurrection has already taken place' (2 Tim. 2:18); 'There are many insubordinate men,

empty talkers, and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision' (Tit 1:10); 'Jewish myths ... commandments of men' (Tit 1:14); 'stupid controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels over the law' (Tit 3:9). If we try to synthesize these sayings, the following picture emerges: we have to do with Judaizing people, some of them circumcised, who claim to be expert interpreters of the law, mainly interested in genealogies and myths supposed to be contained therein.

### **3.5.5 Heresy as Later Deviation, "Offshoot" from Orthodoxy**

Tertullian makes this argument central in his 'prescription' of heresy. It is axiomatic that "what has been handed down from antiquity must, therefore, be considered true" (Turner 1954:4). According to the Church father Tertullian, "If it is a fact that that which is prior is truer, that that is prior which is from the beginning, that that which is apostolic is from the beginning, it will equally be established that what is sacrosanct in the Churches of the Apostles is that which was handed down from them" (Tertullian, *adv. Marc.* iv, 5 xlvii, 430). Analyzing the extent and the scope of the apostolic continuity, Turner concludes that "heresy was thus originally an offshoot from orthodoxy, and the leading heresiarchs are regarded as *catholiques manques*" (Turner 1954:4). St Irenaeus used the same trajectory of apology, arguing that "Before Valentin there were no Valentinians, nor Marcionites before Marcion, nor in a word did the rest of the evil-intentioned men whom we have mentioned above exist before the initiators and inventors of their perversity came into being" (Irenaeus, *adv. Haer.* i, 26, 1 (i, 220) iii, 4, 1 (ii, 17)).

### **3.5.6 Heresy as Factiousness**

Butler presents a provisional description of "heresy" as a serious "factiousness" that either led to or was a result of doctrine and behavior that were in opposition to the apostolic teaching presented in the New Testament (Butler 2015:117). He substantiates his point with examples from the book of Acts, where the author uses *haireisis* in a neutral way to refer to the sect of the Sadducees and Pharisees (Acts 5:17; 15:5; 26:5) and of the Christian, or Nazarenes (Acts 24:5; 14; 28:22). Elsewhere in the New Testament, *haireisis* and its derivative, *hairetikos*, are used to refer to schismatic impulses among some members of the earliest churches (1 Cor 11:19; Gal 5:20; Tit 3:10; 2 Pet 2:11). Pelikan shares the same view regarding the contentious origin of heresy, arguing that "In its earliest Christian use,

the term 'heresy' was not sharply distinguished from 'schism'; both referred to factiousness" (Pelikan 1971:69).

### **3.5.7 Heresy as a Transgression of Universal Conformity**

As Catholic theology developed, the concept of heresy was worked out more fully. McDonald argues that by the end of the second century, "when the Christian community was interacting with what some considered to be extreme diversity (i.e. heresy), there was a growing sense of need for uniformity in the Christian community, especially in the churches of the West, where the Romans themselves were calling for uniformity in social and religious matters" (McDonald 2007:508). A fifth-century cleric Vincent of Lérins famously declared that

In the Catholic Church we are bound to hold that which has been believed everywhere, always and by all [...] *'In ipsa item catholica ecclesia magnopere curandum est ut id teneamus, quod uique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est'*. (The Vatican 1870:213)

This view fits perfectly with the enduring campaign to expunge heresy. There was a default Christian position, and those who headed off down alternative devotional, ecclesiastical, or theological avenues, have been considered to be heretical. However, given the manifest diversity of Christian musing and practice, it becomes hard to discern what Vincent's talk of "everywhere, always, and by everyone" could possibly mean (Wright 2011:14).

### **3.5.8 Heresy as a Defeated Theological Concept**

As we discussed above, Bauer was convinced that "'Orthodoxy' is nothing more than a heresy that happened to win out. Everyone knows that history is written by the winners" (cited in McGrath 2009:9). This approach to heresy was developed by a German scholar Walter Bauer (1877-1960), who described the theological framework of early Christianity in terms of opposite occurrence, where "Orthodoxy" was a later development in contrast to heresy – the earliest and most authentic form of Christianity (Bauer 1967). In light of Bauer's theory, one may see why the truth in the Eastern Orthodox approach is one, and there should be no pluralism in its confession. This has to do with history being usually dictated by the victors. As the principal sources of information about the development of the Christian doctrine are the writings of orthodox theologians, most of what has been known

about these heresies, at least until the twentieth century, came from the works of those who combated them. The presupposition of those works was that "the primitive deposit of Christian truth had been given by Christ to the apostles and by them in turn to the succession of orthodox bishops and teachers, while the heretics were those who forsook this succession and departed from this deposit" (Pelikan 1971:68-69).

### **3.6 Historical Observations**

There have been various attempts to defuse the problem of orthodoxy and heresy in the Early Church. At first, primitive orthodoxy embraced the peculiar conception of the world and the ethics based on apostolic witness and gospel proclamation. The dining rooms of house-churches provided the physical setting that accommodated an *ekklesiā* in various locations throughout the Aegean region, possibly serving as stepping-stones for the establishment of house-church networks from Asia Minor to Rome (White 1990:106). Confessional orthodoxy established by or under the auspices of ecclesiastical authorities in modern sense was not possible, since "house-churches remained the norm until Christianity became legal in the early fourth century" (Ennabli 1997:158).

Tabbernee (2014:103) stresses that it was only when Christians stopped meeting and worshiping in homes (house-churches) and began adapting synagogues or constructing new basilicas, baptisteries, monasteries, and other specifically Christian buildings that they were able to leave monumental evidence of the details of their spiritual, liturgical, ecclesial, and communal lives to posterity. However, Eastern Orthodox theology developed a highly polemical account of "true Orthodox identity", claiming that from the time of the Great Councils, the West has been a heretical entity. Oliver, observes, for instance, that throughout the first four centuries, and to some degree afterwards, the continuity of apostolic teaching was mainly transferred via "Apostles' Creeds, which had many functions in the life of the Church. The creeds were associated with entrance into the fellowship as a confession of faith for those to be baptized. As well, a catechetical instruction was often based on the major tenets of the creeds. In time, a third use developed when the Creed became a "rule of faith," to give continuity to Christian teachings from place to place and to clearly separate the true faith from heretical deviations" (Oliver 2001:368).

In contrast to the modern application of heresy in Eastern Orthodoxy, the early Christian movement was interested in the genuine history of Jesus because they regarded it as religiously relevant (Bauckham 2006:277). Since the term "heresy" is more eclectic in the East and can refer to anything at variance with Church tradition, another problem with this and other questions relating to the heresy is that "there currently exists a variety of contradictory answers. Those who have a reasonable knowledge of the state of Orthodoxy today know that certain aspects of ecclesiology are hotly debated" (Barnes 1999:2). In the light of progressive transmission of God's revelation into a formalized product of invention and conjecture of a certain tradition, Eastern Orthodoxy established its own identity, which could hardly be identified or associated with the image of apostolic authority. One does not need a "consensus partum" (accord of the Fathers) to see a different historic reality less susceptible to support by the adherents of Orthodoxy in the Scriptures.

Bishop Drury affirms that the apostles left behind three things: their writings; the churches that they founded, instructed, and regulated; and the various orders of ministers for the ordering of these churches. There could be no more apostles in the original sense of that word. The real successor to the apostolate is the New Testament itself since it continues their ministry within the church of God. Their office was incommunicable. Three kinds of succession are possible: *ecclesiastical* (a church that has continued from the beginning), *doctrinal* (the same teaching that has continued throughout), and *Episcopal* (a line of bishops traced unbroken from early times). This does not necessarily mean that the episcopal office is the same as the apostolic. (cited in Higginson 2001:89)

It is essential in this regard to remember that even Luke in his honest and proper presentation of apostolic activity in his gospel and the book of Acts was not able to ignore personal, theological and practical conflicts that undoubtedly existed among the apostles. Indeed, the apostles demonstrated a lack of consensus on many occasions in the gospel, having sometimes divergent theological attitudes and serious differences of opinion on particular issues. The first counsel in Jerusalem in 49 A.D. showed how hard Jesus' disciples, being in authority, found it to get along with one another. Provisional reconstruction of the dialectic preeminence of orthodoxy over heresy in the early Church does not support a general trajectory of traditional "fixed and unyielding deposit of faith." It is significant that early Christian Orthodoxy manifested elements/features of its own confessional fluidity, conceptual shifts, and doctrinal evolution, on the one hand, and fixed

Christological (scriptural/doctrinal) core of beliefs, on the other hand. The predicate of continuity within proto-orthodox Christianity in the first two centuries applies not only to actual Orthodoxy but to heterodox heresies as well. Imitating the ecclesial tradition of *paradosis*, Gnostics considered themselves to be direct disciples of Jesus and co-heirs of apostolic teaching. Nevertheless, true Orthodoxy can be identified only in relation to the Scriptures. As Pelikan explains,

In the conflict between Gnostic Christians and other Christians, therefore, the Gnostics would declare that "the truth cannot be extracted from [the Scriptures] by those who are ignorant of tradition. For they allege that the truth was not delivered by means of written documents, but viva voce, wherefore also Paul declared, 'But we speak wisdom among those that are perfect, but not the wisdom of this world. The "perfect" were, of course, the Gnostic spirituals, the elect. (Pelikan 1971:92-93)

In this time, the Christian doctrine of *creation ex nihilo* directly contradicted numerous gnostic ideas of the divine emanations. Many Church Fathers passed through a challenging period of doubts and intellectual struggle, searching for a proper model of rational beliefs. Irenaeus, for instance, was highly critical of Gnosticism, since it tended "to associate evil and sin with the physical body and physical world" (Thiselton 2015:274). Some Christian scholars (including Ambrose, Augustine, Athanasius) also opposed the Gnostic idea of determinism, because according to Gnostic beliefs,

gnosis was delivered from the few among the disciples to whom the risen Saviour had disclosed it during his sojourn on earth after the resurrection. This reliance on an arcane tradition did not prevent the Gnostics from dealing with the New Testament, as is evident from the interpretations of the Gospel of John by both Valentinus and Heracleon, but it did permit them to argue that the New Testament could not be properly understood except on the basis of the tradition, which supplied the key for the spiritual exegesis of the New Testament writings. Thus Basilides claimed access to the secret teachings of Peter, and Valentinus to those of Paul.... Within the New Testament, they saw varying levels of spiritual perception, reflecting different degrees of Initiation into the sacred mysteries. (Pelikan 1971:92-93)

Among numerous evaluations of Eastern Orthodoxy, a dangerous similarity which can be seen in both apologies of secret (unwritten) traditions (Gnostic and Orthodox). In their respective arguments both movements claim an apostolic origin for their traditions, which have been transmitted to the elected or consecrated members in a secret way. This egalitarian Orthodox model of heresy reflects the very real error of departure from the truth of oral kerygma of Church tradition as well as the direct opposition (contradiction) to basic

Christian truth claims in the Scriptures and the inherent Church dogmas. The apologetic concern is wholly explicit in Orthodox approach: the *primary* concern of Byzantine Christianity was not to defend the gospel, but, rather, its unique ecclesial identity and supporting Tradition, which was exclusive, conflicting and partially oral in form. A victory of Hellenistic Christianity in dogmatic disputes, supported by governmental institutions, finally condemned numerous mutually competitive theological tendencies and liturgical practices of primitive church as the deviation (*schism*) from ecclesial unity (*Eucharistic communion*) and truth (*unified standard of sound doctrine*). In reality, diversity was and, therefore, should be allowed within the unity of faith. The entire way of Orthodox thinking, in terms of strict ecclesiastical hierarchy, law, and internal intrigues, resulting from this approach, is completely foreign to primitive Christianity. Orthodox bishop Hilarion (Alfeyev) admitted that "such supporters of 'protective Orthodoxy' like, as a rule, to refer to the 'teachings of the holy fathers.' Yet in reality they do not know patristic doctrine: they make use of isolated patristic that totality" (Alfeyev 2001:1). A tentative model of true apostolic Christianity to which later ages could appeal is outlined by Von Campenhausen, who argues that, "in spite of everything that held the primitive church and its 'apostles' together was not the unity of an organized Church but the unity of their witness to Christ and of their vocation" (Von Campenhausen 1969:29).

On many historical occasions, Orthodox pronouncements present early Christian beliefs as ancient, clear, unified, coherent and apostolic truth, which finally was revealed in all small details of "living tradition" within the Orthodox Church. This kind of religious orthodoxy has been equated with claims to absolute authority, which had to be resisted and subverted in the name of freedom (McGrath 2009:16). In his early book *The Mediator*, Bruner asserts that, "Christendom itself has always known otherwise" (Bruner 1934:158). As Bultmann explains, "Christian faith springs only out of the witness to Christ of the preached message and the written word of the Scriptures". The historical and methodological inadequacy of traditional approach is that, "in the beginning, 'faith' is the term which distinguishes the Christian Congregation from the Jews and the heathen, not 'orthodoxy' (right doctrine)" (Bultmann 1955:135). Therefore, a possible general agreement among modern scholars regarding the issue of heresy and orthodoxy can be resolved within different confessional approaches to theology. However, any progress in this area will be closely related to the question of authority.



### **3.7 Theological Observations**

The theological critique and the broad historical overview provide a descriptive framework for the mono-conventional scheme in Eastern Orthodox theology of tradition, as well as three sets of considerations regarding the key question of orthodoxy and heresy.

#### **3.7.1 The Universal Quest for Orthodoxy and the Conflict of Hierarchy**

The emergence of heresy within primitive Christianity was both a historical and theological trauma for the "Orthodox" mind. The struggle to define the ultimate truth and pass it on to the next generations has always a common concern both for theologians and laity. Plead for neutrality have not worked, and numerous theological receipts of "true orthodoxy" have not been clearly formulated and accepted. The universal quest for some common denominators of heresy and orthodoxy in the first four centuries raised a more significant and ever-recurring question: should oral tradition, all kinds of councils' decisions, ecclesial creeds, church fathers' pronouncements or any other extra-biblical interpretations ever be allowed to stand alongside the Holy Scripture as equal sources of authority? If "Orthodoxy" is a voice of immutable eternity in a human realm, then who can speak on behalf of God, human tradition or divine word?

While current Eastern Orthodox theology is inspired and governed by the authority of tradition, "an Evangelical theology is one which is evoked, governed and judged by the Gospel" (Webster 2001:191). It means that in both personal and transcendental encounter with the triune God, a man will never stand over God and his Word judging whether it is true or not. The humble precondition of our salvation presumes that a man always stands under God and his authoritative words either as a convicted sinner or as a justified believer. The contemporary Church, as the Body of Christ, is merely a secondary and derivative embodiment – the human response to the covenant of grace. The written Word, not a tradition, seeks, in the power of the Spirit, to be embodied in the life of the people of God. This living Word must be continually re-contextualized in the lives, words, and actions of every human being. Despite the fact that Christian denominations are very far from even elementary, basic agreement, the question of authority cannot be avoided, for the possibility of achieving ecumenical agreement on the question of the authority of the Bible, Church and Tradition is found through an agreement on answering these questions.

### **3.7.2 The Implication of the Problem of Heresy and Orthodoxy**

The problem of Heresy and Orthodoxy clearly illustrates how dangerous human teachings and doctrines can be in the Church if they are placed above the Word of God and do not conform to it. In terms of the research subject, the descriptive analysis of heresies and orthodoxy is of paramount significance. The above scholarly examination of early heresies shows that Orthodoxy, as well as heresy, have reflected fluidity, change, and development, therefore, it is historically inaccurate to present one particular ecclesial tradition as a product of complete victory of primitive Christian orthodoxy. Early Christian apologists were able to recognize and successfully confront the heresies only in relation to heretical attacks on basic fundamental principles or Christological misrepresentations of Christian faith. None of the features of heresies described above have demonstrated direct relevance for the contemporary accusations of the Orthodox Church regarding the diversity of Protestant (Evangelical) Christians. Biblical Protestantism firmly supports basic theological and Christological affirmations, adhering to the apostolic and patristic tradition of unity in diversity (1 Cor. 11:19) as an indispensable element in the process of spiritual growth, mutual service and perfection of the saints.

No matter the form Orthodoxy was expressed in during the early period of Church History, the dominant theme was a personal Christological confession of risen Jesus Christ as a foundation for salvation and ecclesiastical membership. Early Christianity was pre-competitive, inclusive community of faith and the Scriptures (Jewish Old Testament, Gospels, and apostolic epistles) were read publicly to affirm the congregation in reality of Christ's life, death and resurrection, transmitted in the form of the primitive kerygma. Home-based services in the early Church bore more similarities to modern Evangelical small-group ministry than to the glorious Orthodox liturgies of a later Byzantine period, accepted in their magnificent outward expressiveness from pagan temples and their worshipers. In order to subvert the eternal authority of Scriptural revelation and set forth the Byzantine form of Christianity, it was necessary for Orthodox ecclesiastical authoritarianism to undermine the primary authenticity of the Scriptures. Thus, the Orthodox theology adopted the Catholic concept of ecclesial primacy, according to which a mother-church gives birth to the Scriptures.

### **3.7.3 The Revision of Historical Path and Correction of Theological Mistakes**

The revision of historical path and correction of theological mistakes is often a costly and time-consuming business. Yet, it is necessary. If there is consensus in the modern theological paradigm on defining Christianity as a religion of revelation, then true heresy is a deviant false teaching that leads believers from the revelatory core of the Scriptures - representing certain basic themes of the Christian faith in such a way, where they are recognized by the Church to be dangerously inadequate or even destructive. At this point, on the discussion it must be admitted that the whole issue of Orthodoxy and Heresy is extremely complex and delicate because suspicion of heresy can easily be transferred from Evangelicals to Eastern Orthodoxy itself. The paradigm of Eastern Orthodox holism involves significant explanatory difficulty in constructing a concept of primitive "Orthodoxy" in terms of "direct continuity" with the apostolic "deposit of faith." Missing links in such a concept can speak louder than in Darwin's Theory of Evolution. Although the Orthodox Church has attempted to solve the problem of authority by introducing an auxiliary interpretive authority of Tradition, its later formulation of the problem re-oriented the debate all too exclusively in a direction which no longer completely corresponds with the way in which it is presented by the New Testament itself.

The Christological reality of the New Testament reveals that the truth of the gospel is simpler than historical and theological ambiguities. Jesus and his word both preceded the Church and the New Testament. The attempts to portray one particular church tradition in terms of direct continuity with whole apostolic Christianity is neither theologically persuasive nor historically correct. Any claim of apostolic tradition should be historically verified and attested to in some way by Scripture. Dogmatic Orthodox statements have been made on many occasions in the course of church history however such formulations are always subject to human limitations and theological re-interpretation. In this regard, even conceptual decisions of ecclesial councils should not be absolutized. A more appropriate theological synthesis would construct ecclesial tradition not as a "source of authority," but as a "witness to Christ." Orthodox Tradition does not originate nor engender the faith, but springs from it. This noetic dimension can be highlighted more clearly by Tillich's declaration about the character of the Church's unity – "It is the divided Church which is the united Church" (Tillich 1968:170).

## CHAPTER 4

### THE INITIAL PLAUSIBILITY OF INCIPIENT HERESY IN THE CONTEXT OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY

#### 4.1 Introduction: Truth in the Early Church

In the deconstruction of traditional concepts of Orthodoxy and Heresy in the Early Church, this examination now brings into focus some key internal qualities of the Classical View of Orthodox Tradition that integrates main factors of formative influences of apostolic and patristic eras with the ecclesiastical discourse on authority and power. Analyses of the modern responses to the Classical Theory of Orthodoxy and Heresy typically revolve around three sets of concepts (inquiries): (1) the concept of truth in the Early Church; (2) diversity and primacy of Orthodoxy in primitive Christianity; and (3) continuity and discontinuity issues within Eastern Orthodoxy (*Orthodox Homeostasis*).

The study of Jewish Christianity and early church has blossomed in recent decades, providing some new insights (Birger 2007; Brakke 2010; Heine 2007; Karamanolis 2014; Markschie 2003; Muhlenberg 2001; Mullen 2004; Royalty 2013; Tabbernee 2009) into the process of formation of "Orthodox Consensus" as a common heritage that encompasses ancient Christian influences. Muhlenberg (2001:526) presents three basic facts regarding the earliest orthodox forms (sources) of primitive Christianity: (1) Christians were conscious of a claim to truth, (2) belonging to the fellowship was dependent on agreement with the message, and (3) the person of Jesus was the basis of the common proclamation. The absolute claim to truth rested on direct divine revelation, as one may see, for example, in Paul (Galatians 1-2). Seeking evidence beyond empirical data, the truth in that age was less dogmatic and doctrinal, but more imminent and personal. Orthodox theologian Meyendorff (2004:86) emphasizes that "the early church did not know – and the Orthodox do not know today – any automatic, formal, or authoritarian way of discerning truth from falsehood".

The Apostolic Church (in contrast to later Greek Orthodox Church) did not depend upon philosophical tools or imperial sources to legitimize and preserve the content of Christian revelation. Tertullian declared that Christianity is better than any human philosophy (*De*

*Pallio*. 6.4). In the very beginning of his introduction to *Apologeticum* (*Ap.*1.1), Tertullian encourages the *romani imperii antistites*, the governors of the Roman Empire "face to face to examine, the Christian issue, to learn what it is in truth... then let the truth be allowed to reach your ears at least by the hidden path of silent literature." However, the point of conflict was immediately initiated with first theological and philosophical attempts to present and formulate its own "orthodox version" of Christianity. Origen taught in this connection that there were many divergent views among Christians as there were among pagan philosophers (*C. Cels.* V.61).

At this stage, Christianity "was far from being a unified movement sharing a single set of doctrine, and that early Christians who set out to build Christian doctrines disagreed considerably" (Karamanolis 2014:12-13). Negrut (1998:15) affirms in this regard that "the Eastern Church, borrowing primarily from Greek philosophy, has been concerned primarily with those realities which are beyond history (the apophatic approach), whilst the West, borrowing more from the Jewish tradition, is more conscious of the positive aspect of revelation, of all that it adds to the knowledge which man can acquire by natural reason (the cataphatic approach)". This phenomenon points to the extreme complexity of the Orthodoxy and Heresy question, even if one's study concentrates only upon the primitive ecclesial tradition within early Christianity. In contrast with the predominant philosophical approach, where the search of truth is a due epistemological presupposition, "Christianity asserted that its teachings were absolute truth; it claimed to be nothing less than a revelation from the Creator of the world" (Cole 2013:7).

#### **4.2. Diversity and Primacy of Orthodoxy in Primitive Christianity**

An entire school of exegesis, that of form criticism (*Formgeschichte*) began as a theological inquiry about diversity, primacy, and homogeneity in primitive Christianity. The main purpose of scholars was to decide who could exercise authority over Christian belief and practice and determine what forms of Christianity deserved to be marginalized (Bauer (1934) 1971; Turner 1954; Bultmann 1955; Congar 1964; Cullmann 1966; Blanchfield 1988; Ehrman 1993; Bingham 2006; McGrath 2009). Players and positions shift and morph over time, but one constant remains: "the anti-authority thrust of postmodernism and particularly the view of documentary authority as a means of oppression (thus the rejection of authorial

intent and the advocacy of deconstructionism) has spawned a widespread acceptance of various conspiracy theories" (Decker 2009:30). The formal shape of this paradigm can be traced back through the following basic inquiry: how diverse was early Christianity, and did Heresy, in fact, precede Orthodoxy? While the various types of "correct" perspectives on the Christian heritage have been the subject of scholarly examination, regenerating a traditional discourse, we explore the larger paradigmatic question of diversity raised recently by the Bauer-Ehrman proposal.

A drastic and most famous objection to the classical understanding of the relationship of orthodoxy and heresy has been made by Walter Bauer in the fourth decade of the twentieth century when he published his paradigm-shaping book *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (1971). Walter Bauer, born in Königsberg, East Prussia, in 1877, was a German theologian, lexicographer, and scholar of Early Church history. He was raised in Marburg, where his father served as professor, and studied theology at the universities of Marburg, Strasburg, and Berlin. After a lengthy and impressive career at Breslau and Göttingen, he died in 1960. Although Bauer is best known for his magisterial *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, perhaps his most significant scholarly contribution came with his work *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (Köstenberger & Kruger 2010:24).

According to Bauer, the reception of "Jewish Christianity of the *Kerygmata*" in the first two centuries was neither theologically unilateral nor geographically consistent. The apostolic churches were diverse from the start, and there was no single Orthodoxy (Bauer 1971:1-43). Bauer refused to define Christian Orthodoxy as "right beliefs" and heresy as "wilful unbelief," claiming that Orthodoxy does not stand in relation to heresy as primary to secondary. In other words, Orthodoxy was the heresy, which succeeded. His critical discretion concerning the historical data of Syrian Edessa presented Orthodoxy as a late deviation, which was preceded by Marcionism. Observing the development of orthodoxy in Egypt, he noticed that heterodox Christianity existed there in the form of rival groups, was "decidedly unorthodox" and heretical in origin. Gnosticism was the earliest form of faith in that region and "even into the third century, no separation between orthodoxy and heresy was accomplished" (Bauer 1971:59). After Edessa and Egypt, Bauer (1971:82) examined other traditional accounts of the origins of Christianity in Asia Minor and Rome arriving at

the same conclusion that "there simply was nothing to be gained for 'ecclesiastically' oriented Christianity in that area at that time". Bauer's study in the relations between Orthodoxy and Heresy in the Early Church presented a completely new picture of the historical reconstruction of the issue. Nevertheless, his monograph, written in 1934, remained largely unknown to the English-speaking scholarship until its translation in 1971.

Ehrman, a scholar in New Testament textual criticism, has gone far beyond Bauer's implications, vigorously promoting his research as "the most significant book on early Christianity written in modern times" (Ehrman 1993:7). While the main trend of Bauer's concept has largely discredited the orthodoxy in the developmental details, Ehrman claims (1993:13-15) with an inquisitorial zeal that traditional meaning and labels of "orthodoxy" and "heresy" were completely inappropriate for describing early Christian movements. Ehrman's providential view of history suggested the paradigm of multiple Christianities, since "during its first two and a half centuries, Christianity comprised a number of competing theologies, or better, a number of competing Christian groups advocating a variety of theologies. There was as yet no established "Orthodoxy," that is, no basic theological system acknowledged by the majority of church leaders and laity. Different local churches supported different understandings of the religion, while different understandings of the religion were present even within the same local church" (Ehrman 1993:4).

#### **4.2.1 The Contemporary Debate to Recast the Origin of Heresy and Orthodoxy: Positive and Negative Responses to Bauer-Ehrman Proposal**

It was always a great difficulty for classical Orthodoxy to reconcile the diverse and non-exclusive expressions of Christianity in its multifaceted forms with the establishment of later Orthodoxy. Despite the fact that Bauer's historical reconstruction of early orthodoxy and heresy differed radically from his predecessors, other scholars employed many ideas of his focal point of thinking to draw their pictures of early Christianity. Bauer's thesis became fundamental on the diversity of the first Christian groups, and his great achievement attests to the fact that "most scholars recognize that there was no single church in the first three centuries" (Rebillard 2010:15). Kelly's explanation (1968:4) assumes that "it is not that the early Church was indifferent to the distinction between orthodoxy and heresy. Rather it is that, while from the beginning the broad outline of revealed truth was respected as a

*sacrosanct inheritance* from the apostles, its theological explication was to a large extent left unfettered. Only gradually, and even then, in regard to comparatively few doctrines which became subjects of debate, did the tendency to insist upon precise definition and rigid uniformity assert itself". Kelly (1968:3) also argues, for example, that "being still at the formative stage, the theology of the early centuries exhibits the extremes of immaturity and sophistication".

To some extent, modern scholarship is also sceptical about the primacy of orthodoxy in the dualism of static (scriptural) and dynamic (traditional and doctrinal developments) in the Classical Theory. The classical thought-pattern of the Orthodox primacy is the first and foremost form of ecclesial reality. However, a theological assumption that Orthodoxy originated in pure form is highly questionable: there is no reason why it "should not have existed from the beginning in modified or mixed forms" (Bauckham 2006:246). Christians of the early church "were apparently well attuned to the intention of Jesus for preaching and service but felt the freedom of the children of God in structure and method. The *exousia* of Jesus was not handed down in a method or form, but in a new style of living, new relationships" (Blanchfield 1988:9). Turner was convinced that inadequacy of traditional view was in the assumption that Orthodoxy represents "a fixed and unyielding deposit of faith." He suggested the following:

A modern investigator finds it difficult to accept the static conception of orthodoxy which the classical view presupposes. Its arguments either ignore the presence within the Orthodoxy of factors which it regards as peculiar to heresy or else by a historical anachronism read back into the earlier period a degree of definition only later attained, and then only within relatively narrow limits. (Turner 1954:8–9)

The relevance of Bauer's work in finding correct default setting of early Orthodoxy in Bingham's perspective (2006:52) is that "Early Christianity *becomes* Orthodox; it was not so from the beginning". Bingham formulated two theses: first, he supported Turner's claim that Orthodoxy demonstrated aspects of fluidity; therefore, heresy cannot be defined essentially as a deviation from an unchanging norm. Orthodoxy itself would need to answer this charge. Second, Bingham argues that the classical position is also challenged by orthodoxy's development. Shorter, simpler affirmations gave way to fuller statements; theologians revered in one age were replaced by the theological rock stars of another; doctrinal emphases normative at one time and place were assessed as intolerably



imbalanced by another. Therefore, what appeared to Turner as such obvious diversity and development in early Christian thought brought him to the following perspective. The patristic theological journey to decipher the meaning of the One and the Many in relation to the Christian God (the problems of Trinity and Christology) indicates shifts in the composition of orthodoxy. Orthodoxy in the fourth and fifth centuries differed from that in the second. Even in the same century measurements of Orthodoxy for different doctrines varied in terms of degrees of completeness and debate (Bingham 2006:48).

Two of Bultmann's doctoral students - Helmut Koester, professor of ecclesiastical history at Harvard University, and James M. Robinson, professor of religion at Claremont University, in their book *Trajectories through Early Christianity* (1971) struck new grounds in the analysis of diversity in primitive Orthodoxy. Promoting appropriation of Bauer's thesis about diversity in the Early Christianity, Koester and Robinson argued that "obsolete" categories within New Testament scholarship, such as "canonical" or "non-canonical," "orthodox" or "heretical," were inadequate. They viewed those categories as too rigid to accommodate the early church's prevailing diversity. As an alternative, Koester and Robinson proposed a new term "trajectory" and showed that it is not possible to treat all primitive orthodoxies in one and the same way. Köstenberger and Kruger (2010:29) further suggest that Koester and Robinson, rather than conceiving of early church history in terms of Heresy and Orthodoxy, preferred to speak of early trajectories that eventually led to the formation of the notions of orthodoxy and heresy, notions that were not yet present during the early stages of the history of the church. Their arguments, of course, assume that earliest Christianity did not espouse orthodox beliefs from which later heresies diverged. In this belief, these authors took the debate to another level with arguing that earliest Christianity was characterized by diversity and that the phenomenon of orthodoxy emerged only later.

Harnack's theological insights gradually moved him to the conviction that orthodox dogma did not precede heresy, being "an ecclesiastical doctrine which presupposes revelation as its authority and therefore claims to be strictly binding" (Harnack 2005:14). From his point of view, the position of primacy ought "to be assigned to the Gnostics in the history of dogma, which has hitherto been always misunderstood, is obvious. They were, in short, the Theologians of the first century. They were the first to transform Christianity into a system of doctrines (dogmas). They were the first to work up tradition systematically. They undertook

to present Christianity as the absolute religion, and therefore placed it in definite opposition to the other religions, even to Judaism" (Harnack 2005:228). Harnack clarified his point on primacy and developmental progression of orthodox dogmas in contrast between "first edition" of orthodoxy and final reproduction of theological dogmas:

Dogmas arise, develop themselves and are made serviceable to new aims; this in all cases takes place through Theology. But Theology is dependent on innumerable factors, above all on the spirit of the time; for it lies in the nature of theology that it desires to make its object intelligible. Dogmas are the product of theology, not inversely; of a theology of course which, as a rule, was in correspondence with the faith of the time. (Harnack 2005:9-10)

Much of Harnack's analysis is rich in hermeneutical and critical approaches. His critical view of history assumes that "in consequence of this dogma bears the mark of all the factors on which the theology was dependent" (Harnack 2005:10). A second argument also endorsed by Harnack has to do with the moment in which the product of theology became dogma. For Harnack, with the possible exception, according to the conception of the Church "dogma can be nothing else than the revealed faith itself" and as such "dogma is regarded not as the exponent, but as the basis of theology" (Harnack 2005:10). Harnack (2005:12) also warned convincingly about the danger of treating "*in abstractio* of the history of dogma" and argued that the widely accepted formula "the impulse of dogma to unfold itself" must be given up as "unscientific". Upon closer examination, he arrived at a conclusion, that "the simple fundamental proposition that that only is Christian which can be established authoritatively by the Gospel, has never yet received justice in the history of dogma" (Harnack 2005:13).

The history of the Church offers many models of ecclesial dogmatic authority. The actual problem, however, is that Founder of the Church Jesus Christ left his disciples no absolute directives concerning how authority was to be exercised. It explains, to some extent, why recent studies have significantly reoriented and reshaped the modern notion of Orthodox primacy. McGrath in his book *Heresy. A History of Defending the Truth* (2009) presents a cogent summary and discursive analyses of the historical development of Orthodoxy and heresy. He started with unfavorable remarks towards traditional "antiquity" (primacy) test, arguing that although many early Christian writers, such as Tertullian, held that the antiquity of a theological view was a reliable guide to its orthodoxy, this approach was simply not

correct. "Mistakes were made, right from the beginning, that later generations had to correct" (McGrath 2009:38). His discourse reflects a due criticism of widely accepted within Christianity concept of the "Received View" on the origins of heresy and orthodoxy.

In brief, McGrath's position can be summarized as follows: by the middle of the third century, a narrative of the origins of heresy and orthodoxy had become established within the church, having main features: (1) The church founded by the apostles was "unsullied and undefiled," holding firm to the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth and the traditions of the apostles. (2) Orthodoxy took temporal precedence over heresy. This argument is developed with particular vigor by Tertullian, who insisted that the *primum* is the *verum*. The older a teaching, the more authentic it is. Heresy is thus regarded as an innovation. (3) Heresy is thus to be seen as a deliberate deviation from an already existing orthodoxy. Orthodoxy came first; the decision to deliberately reject it came later. (4) Heresy represents the fulfillment of New Testament prophecies of defection and deviation within the Church and can be seen as a providential means by which the faith of believers can be tested and confirmed. (5) Heresy arises from a love of novelty or jealousy and envy on the part of heretics. Tertullian regularly portrayed heretics such as Valentinus as frustrated and ambitious and ascribed their views to resentment at their failure to achieve the recognition of high ecclesiastical office. (6) Taken as a whole, heresy is internally inconsistent, lacking the coherency of orthodoxy. (7) Individual heresies are geographically and chronologically restricted, whereas orthodoxy is found throughout the world. (8) Heresy results from the "dilution of orthodoxy with the pagan philosophy" (McGrath 2009:79-80). The history of dogmatic developments, with its richness of models, includes intellectual struggles, heretic deformities and all kinds of authority abuses. McGrath's insights offer a much-needed corrective approach to this problem. He realistically characterizes a "providential" character of heretic deviations in the origins of orthodoxy as well as an authentic description of major heretic attributes.

Near the end of the twentieth century, Bauer's thesis experienced a substantial deficiency in the light of the new historical criticism. Harrington, for example, argued that "Bauer's reconstruction of how orthodoxy triumphed remains questionable" (Harrington 1980:297–98). Surveying diversity trend within early orthodoxy, Trebilco investigated Bauer's use of the Ignatian's evidence regarding Asia Minor and incorporated his conclusion in three main

points: (1) The evidence shows that the earliest form of Christianity in western Asia Minor was orthodox and that the heresies that Ignatius opposed were later, derivative forms, especially in regard to Docetism. (2) Bauer's inference (based on Ignatius and John's *not* writing a letter to them) that Colossae and Hierapolis were heretical churches is ill-founded; several other explanations are much more probable than Bauer's argument from silence. (3) Bauer's contention that disagreement with the bishop was evidence of theological differences (i.e. heresy) is overstated; many of the differences that Ignatius discusses were organizational and structural (Trebilco 2006:17–44). Trebilco argued that there was a "consonant trend" of truth and a "strong sense of doctrinal self-consciousness" on the part of canonical authors,

Thus, the roots of later 'orthodoxy' are to be found here. 'Orthodoxy' is not to be seen as a later victory by those in power, or something determined by politics. It goes back to and is an organic development from the much earlier period. (Trebilco 2006:43)

It was important for Trebilco to demonstrate how the *kerygma* (preaching) of the New Testament becomes the *regula fidei* (the rule of faith) of the Early Church. Didactic and ethical interests motivated another scholar Richardson to explain this self-unfolding nature of orthodoxy in relation to the internal needs of the Church, which led to the preservation of early orthodoxy "in accepted writings and in authentic confessions" (Richardson 1970:23). He established that "the creed developed as a baptismal formula" leading to the acceptance of "the most important is the Roman symbol which underwent various revisions until the seventh century and came finally to be known as "The Apostles' Creed" (Richardson 1970:22). Discussing primitive forms of Christian liturgy reflected in Irenaeus and Hippolytus writings at the end of the second century, Richardson came to a conclusion that "by the turn of the first century, the Eucharist was no longer a supper meal. The ceremony of the bread and wine had been attached to a service of lections and prayer, derived from the synagogue" (Richardson 1970:23). Richardson meditates on the account of "the first description" (1970:23) of Lord's Supper, found in Justin's Apology (I, *Chs.* 65; 67):

The service takes place at dawn in a private house, and its order is as follows: lections, sermon, intercessory prayers, kiss of peace, the offering of the bread and wine, consecration prayer, communion. By the end of the century, we have a text of the consecration prayer in Hippolytus, though that learned Roman is careful to indicate that he is giving a pattern, not insisting on the exact words to be followed. (Richardson 1970:23)

Richardson's conclusion is that ecclesial authority emerges to answer the problems and questions of the infant Church. He argues that "the dominant interest of the second century Church was the ordering of its life and teaching" (Richardson 1970:26). According to Richardson's reconstruction, the purpose of the first liturgical traditions and the episcopate, the canon, and the creed developments was "to preserve the apostolic witness against Gnostic perversions and Montanist extravagancies. Finally, to ensure the perpetuity of the faith, the Church built up a closely-knit organization which was as uncompromising toward heresy and schism as it was toward the demands of the State" (Richardson 1970:26). One of the more recent contributions to the discussion of diversity and primacy of Orthodox Tradition was made by Köstenberger and Kruger (2010), who claimed that Orthodoxy most likely preceded heresy or the second-century data. Although the late first and early second century gave birth to a variety of heretical movements, the set of (Christological) core beliefs are known as Orthodoxy was considerably earlier, more widespread, and more prevalent than Ehrman and other proponents of the Bauer-Ehrman thesis suggest. What is more, the proponents of second-century Orthodoxy were not innovators, but mere conduits of the Orthodox theology espoused already in the New Testament period (Köstenberger and Kruger 2010:66). This conclusion was further supported by Ferguson (2013:6), who argued that if Orthodoxy is defined in institutional terms and fixed statements of belief, then the contention of the late achievement of orthodoxy may be sustained. In this sense, "Orthodoxy" and standards of what constituted "Orthodoxy were present before positions that came to be regarded as heretical or schismatic, even if the movements advocating these teachings drew on materials earlier than Christianity. There were an inherited message and norms of conduct that permitted other teachings to be identified as deviant, and that could be systematized in the norms" (Ferguson 2013:6). It is relevant to observe here that both approaches convey the idea of fixed Christological or doctrinal Orthodoxy, what is a merely indispensable condition for the establishment of scriptural Orthodoxy.

#### **4.2.2 Conclusion**

The classical notion of Orthodoxy pre-eminence and diversity is valid in a measure. Neither the Baur-Ehrman's concept of uncontrolled diversity of early Orthodoxy (multiple Christianities), nor the totally rigid traditional approach of Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox Churches fully explains an account of the origin of primitive Orthodoxy in the Church. Baur-Ehrman followers managed to prove a higher level of diversity in the

development and establishment of the Orthodox teaching but experienced a serious problem in presenting a harmonized picture of proto-orthodox Christian community. Apart from what both groups could reconstruct the balance of stability/continuity and informality/flexibility in their most advancements was lost. Baur-Ehrman typology of diversity has misled followers claiming that there were various versions (layers) of Orthodoxy, which were not related to the unity of apostolic kerygma and gospels as indispensable beliefs. On the other hand, Eastern Orthodox approach overemphasized stability of early Orthodoxy up to the complete merger of oral tradition with late community tradition.

It seems very probable historically that orthodoxy did not have any static point of origin in time and space, since "orthodoxy is not the presupposition of the early church but the result of a process of growth and development" (MacRae 1980:127). The historical data strongly suggests that Eastern Orthodoxy does not represent a complete model of a unilinear development because the philosophical-theological hope for true orthodoxy is always extra-terrestrial, "humanity and nature are diverse because we cannot find in this world a concentration of strength within one single point. Instead, perfection is scattered throughout the universe" (Mack 2010:82-83). There exists, indeed, a fundamental disagreement regarding the superiority of Christianity to philosophy, but in many cases, it is congruent with it, and therefore truth and error "remain intertwined within the multiplicity of locative religions, texts, stories, and competing philosophies" (Lyman 2003:44-45). Variety was certainly present from the beginning (as the New Testament itself shows, in what it opposes – if not in other ways) and continued after objective standards of orthodoxy were formulated. On the other hand, "those church leaders who opposed the movements discussed above did not see themselves as innovators but as defenders of teachings that had been handed down to them from the apostles and their associates. There were standards of belief and common practices contained in the earliest apostolic teaching" (Ferguson 2013:213-214).

Providing a middle way, the present research does not argue about the existence of a primitive apostolic or/and scriptural unity (classic Christian consensus), which could evolve to a later heterodox expression. Evans substantially proved that early Orthodoxy had to be embraced "translocally and across various circles of believers" since early manuscripts demonstrate that "Christians of this early period were already developing a sense of

particularity, a distinctive corporate identity as Christians, and were developing and deploying expressions of this identity in their production of copies of their texts, particularly their most cherished ones, those that they read in churches as Scripture" (Evans 2011:395). It would be significant to emphasize in this regard that the Early Church did not transmit "orthodoxy" or "dogmas," but revelation, unity, love, fellowship, and teaching. Thomas Oden suggested that unity (not Orthodoxy) is a keyword that may concede the present-day relevance of any ancient idea of Orthodoxy in relation to the contemporary interpreter. This unity of the classic Christian consensus was textually expressed by the ecumenical councils and defined by the three creeds most widely affirmed in the Christian world: (1) the Apostles' Creed, which expanded the baptismal formula; (2) the Nicene Creed, which defined the triune teaching; and (3) the "Athanasian" or Quinquaginta Creed, which more precisely set forth the sonship of Christ. These consensual affirmations did not arise out of speculation or philosophical debates. Rather, they emerged out of a baptizing, worshiping community that stood accountable to apostolic teaching while being repeatedly challenged by alternative false teachings. Though not a perfectly received consensus, these coherently triune and mutually confirming confessions allowed the church to proceed for the next millennium on the basis of ecumenically established definitions considered definitive for all Christian teaching of all times (Oden 2009:394-395). Consequently, basic thesis conclusion of the examined controversy over orthodoxy and heresy are in one accord with James Dunn's proclamation that "the scriptural text embody and crystallize a perception (I am happy to say a God-given perception) of God and of God's dealing with humankind which was expressed through the words of these texts" (Dunn 2009:182).

The doctrinal opposition of the Early Church Orthodoxy to heretic concepts rested on the conviction that the Bible revelation was complete, and no innovation could be added to the apostolic deposit of faith. Therefore, it would be logical for the next stage of the research to introduce a specific case study to demonstrate a reciprocal relationship between the Church Fathers' theology and the formation of orthodox teaching in the post-Nicene Church, between the Scripture and the patristic ecclesial tradition. The great spiritual inheritance of modern Protestant Orthodoxy should not be constructed apart from the exegesis, methods, and tools of the patristic scholarship, for there is no hyperbole to admit that the Protestant identity of the twenty-first century is still inspired and shaped by the Orthodox legacy of the patristic church.

### 4.3 The Hermeneutical Debate: A Brief Case Study of St. Basil's Treatise *De Spiritu Sancto (On the Holy Spirit)* in the Analysis of George Florovsky

#### 4.3.1 Introduction

In the patristic age, after the recognition of the canon, the notion of theological orthodoxy required further clarification. Despite the interpretive patristic elaborations, the issue of extra-canonical apostolic teaching remained a debated topic during the patristic age. Due to the lack of consensus on the relative authority of the church, tradition, and the rule of faith, different interpretations developed concerning the role of scriptural and patristic authority. In the historical perspective, the rapid rise of Christological controversies and the spread of ascetic ideals in the first, fourth centuries brought new challenges to the Church and to society as a whole. St. Basil's Treatise "*De Spiritu Sancto*" (*On the Holy Spirit*) on "Unwritten Tradition" established a new paradigm of Eastern Orthodox identity in an antinomous discourse (articulation) on the authority of oral tradition, an integral part of which re-envisages how ecclesial tradition was transmitted in an orally structured society and how the New Testament authority of the canon functioned. A historian Heiko Oberman emphasizes the significance of St. Basil's Treatise for correct understanding of Orthodox tradition:

We find here for the first time explicitly the idea that the Christian owes equal respect and obedience to written and unwritten ecclesiastical traditions, whether contained in canonical writings or in a secret oral tradition handed down by the Apostles through their successors. (Oberman 1967:369)

While neither oral paradigm, nor the genealogy of apostolic orality was original to St. Basil, his account made accessible the pronouncements he made outside the domain of "textbook" theology, boldly assuming that some aspects of the Christian faith and practice are to be found not in Scripture, but also in the tradition of the Church. A point-by-point summation of St. Basil's Treatise offered by Florovsky in his book *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox view* (1972:85-89), brought new theological insights for some oral ecclesial regulations that "was not in the Scripture. It was only attested by tradition" (Florovsky 1972:85) and reprised the historical tropes on St. Basil's pages, eliciting solvency for the authority of "unwritten tradition" of the Church. Florovsky's paradigm (1972:47) pivots on a double-sided nature of revelation, projecting West-East *diastasis* on



the central Scripture/Tradition dispute in the following way: "It is quite false to limit the "sources of teaching" to Scripture and tradition, and to separate tradition from Scripture as only an oral testimony or teaching of the Apostles. In the first place, both Scripture and tradition were given only within the Church. Only in the Church have they been received in the fullness of their sacred value and meaning. In them is contained the truth of Divine Revelation, a truth which lives in the Church". When reading conjointly, Florovsky's analyses (1972:85), most notably on the genealogical dichotomy of scriptural and unwritten sources of revelation, postulates "the full development of this argument from the liturgical tradition".

#### **4.3.2 Authority of Unwritten / Oral Tradition in Contemporary Orthodoxy**

The consensus point of contemporary Orthodox scholarship presents Jesus Tradition as a predominantly oral tradition and conceptualizes the transmission process in oral terms (Alfeyev 1999; Andreopoulos A. 2011; Bogdashevsky 2004; Bratsiotis 1951; Cavarnos 1992; Gillquist 1992; Hopko 1982; Kuraev 1995; Lossky 1944 and 2004; Meyendorff 1978; Nassif 2004 and 2010; Osipov 2011). From the Orthodox perspective, biblical texts must be interpreted with the help of historical-grammatical exegesis and the rules of hermeneutics within the context of the church, i.e., in light of truth which has been passed down from generation to generation from the Apostles. The basic assumption here is that not everything our Lord and the Apostles did and said is contained in the written canon (cf. John 21:25). Cavarnos' treatment of the phenomenon of "unwritten tradition" bears similarity to the opening disquisitions of classic Orthodox treatises. "The term "Tradition" is used by the Fathers and other ecclesiastical writers in a *broader* sense to indicate the *written* Divine word, namely the Old Testament and the New Testament, and also the *unwritten* Divine word of the Apostolic preaching, which is not written in Holy Scripture, but was preserved in the Church and was written in the Proceedings of the Synods and the books of the God-bearing Fathers. In a *narrower* sense, the term "Tradition" indicates *only the unwritten* Divine word of the Apostolic preaching" (Cavarnos 1992:9-10). In 2 Thessalonians 2:15 Saint Paul admonished the believers to preserve both written and oral traditions. Both of these were understood to be a two-fold revelation given by Christ and his apostles to the Church (Stamoolis 2004:237).

Bulgakov states that there is also "a tendency within Orthodox theology to romanticize the orality of tradition at the expense of literal paradigm" (Bulgakov 1988:30). Bulgakov points to these oral developments as "monuments" and/or "gifts of traditions" fixed by the Church "as *lex credendi* or *lex orandi*", which, nevertheless "has not the same clearness and remains a problem for theological knowledge and science" (Bulgakov 1988:30). In order to avoid a denial of catholicity and a destruction of Catholic consciousness, Bulgakov (1988:30) unfolds "the monuments of Church tradition" in wide-ranging engagement and conversation with pivotal Eastern approach, including into them "ecclesial literature in the wide acceptance of the word: the works of the Apostolic Fathers, the Fathers of the Church, the theologians. Afterward come liturgical texts, architecture, iconography, ecclesiastical art; finally, usage and oral tradition. All this tradition, while produced by the same unique Spirit, who lives in the Church, is at the same time impregnated with historic relativity and human narrowness".

The rejection of one source theory of divine revelation facilitated the formation of closed Orthodox identity in which orality is a principle norm of tradition (Cavarnos 1992; Kuraev 1995). Orthodox orality can be identified as a discourse wholly other to the West: transferred into the sphere of the relation between Scripture and oral tradition Orthodox approach of the twofold economy attempts to overcome the problem of the 'two sources' of revelation by replacing it with the 'two modes' of transmission: oral preaching of the apostles and of their successors, and writings such as the Scriptures and all other written expressions of the revealed truth of a lesser degree of authority than the Scriptures. In technical terms, unwritten (oral) tradition represents in Eastern Orthodoxy phenomena of the second orality, that is, a written text known only through oral performance of the text. Dunn argues that the idea that

the idea that we can get back to an objective historical reality, which we can wholly separate and disentangle from the disciples' memories and then use as a check and control over the way the tradition was developed during the oral and earliest written transmission, is simply unrealistic. For narratives about Jesus never began with Jesus; at best they began with eyewitnesses. From the first, we are confronted not so much with Jesus but with how he was perceived. And the same is actually true of the sayings tradition: at best what we have are the teachings of Jesus as they impacted on the individuals who stored them in their memories and began the process of oral transmission. (Kuraev 1995:115)

What Byrskog reminded us in his historiographic research (2000:49) is that all kinds of events were given a better preference by ancient historians if the historians themselves were direct participants or could question the eyewitnesses in person. The later might sometimes be stretched to include those who had questioned the eyewitnesses and could adequately recount the event and bring their trustworthy reports based on the living memory of the participants. According to Lossky "this approach affirms the primacy of Tradition over Scripture since the oral transmission of the apostolic teachings preceded the writing of the New Testament books. Further, the adherents of this view affirmed that 'the Church could dispense with the Scriptures, but she could not exist without Tradition'" (Lossky 185:144; Negrut 1994:40-41). Pelikan adds to this point that "a reason to believe that while treatises against heresy and defences of the faith against Jewish and pagan thought were written down in order to be circulated, among the faithful and perhaps among the gainsayers, much of the positive instruction of the people was confined to oral presentation" (Pelikan 1971:12). In this sense, Yannaras explains the polemic nature of authority associated with the corpus of oral tradition, "the issue of authority ascribed to oral tradition becomes a major encounter of Eastern Orthodoxy with the Protestant West during the last two centuries, occurring almost exclusively in the realm of Russian Orthodox theology and traditional Orthodox theology and spirituality, based on a personal relation with the world and a Eucharistic-liturgical utilization of the world" (Yannaras 1971:137-138).

#### **4.3.3 Emergence of Unwritten Tradition in Post-Apostolic Era in the Interpretation of George Florovsky on St. Basil's Treatise *De Spiritu Sancto***

In response to the accusation of liturgical innovations, St. Basil in his letter started with an argument that the Scriptures should not be interpreted apart from the apostolic (patristic) tradition of his time, and in this approach, tradition is liturgical and authoritative. His opponents demanded a scriptural proof, and St. Basil's answer was linked in depth with pneumatological and liturgical retrospectivity, pointing out that "the glory with the Holy Spirit is unattested and non-scriptural, and the like" (*On the Holy Spirit* 27.68). This formulation of St. Basil considerably expanded a shift in *authoritative contextuality* of unwritten tradition: liturgical tradition, as well as the *regula fidei*, was no longer recognized as the interpretative context of the Scriptures, but as independent deposit of apostolic origin with corresponding authority:

The objection is that there is no written authority for doxology in the form "with the Spirit, " but this is valid only if no other unwritten traditions can be found. However, if many of our mysteries have been handed down from unwritten sources, then let us receive this one with all the rest. It is in the apostolic spirit to follow unwritten traditions, as St. Paul says: "I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you (Basil of Caesarea 2011:29.71).

The evidence is not decisive either way: since these mysteries refer to the sacramental and liturgical life of the Church and are necessary for understanding the truth of Scripture, Lossky considers that Basil points to 'a new knowledge, a 'gnosis of God' that one receives as grace' through the fact of sacramental initiation. If that is so, then the horizontal line of the 'traditions' received by the apostles from the mouth of the Lord and transmitted and their successors crosses with the vertical, with Tradition as the communication of the Holy Spirit which opens to the members of the Church the apophatic way of the infinite perspective of truth. Only when Scripture and Tradition are distinguished at this level when knowledge of truth goes beyond sensible and intelligible realities, does the Church possess the pleroma of revelation (Lossky 185:145-148; Negrut 1994:41). Florovsky stepped into the discussion on the authority of unwritten tradition, providing an analogous account of what is constitutive of Eastern Orthodoxy. He claimed that St. Basil intended to employ the criteria which have already been in common use and stood in close agreement with the ancient Orthodox notion of tradition, "Liturgical arguments were used by Tertullian and St. Cyprian. St. Athanasius and the Cappadocians used the same argument" (Florovsky 1972:85).

Some fathers claimed their very words were not of human origin but from the Spirit. Ignatius of Antioch (ca 114/5 C.E.) stated that he received his teaching from the spirit and not human lips. This claim gave to Ignatius' words a prophetic authority. The redactor of the Odes of Solomon (ca. 100 C.E.) asserted the same authority for the Odes "As the [wind] moves through the harp and the strings speak, so the Spirit of the Lord speaks through my members." This claim to the Spirit's authority was not easily forgotten. Later writers were inspired by the Spirit. Ephrem of Syria (d.373 C.E.) was called the "lyre o the Holy Spirit, " and Gidas (d. 570 C.E.) considered the fathers "the mouth and organ of the Holy Spirit." It did not take much development to claim that the Holy Spirit inspires the church's councils... Authority was located in the voice of the Spirit. The Spirit's prophetic voice was united to the Apostolic witness and a succession of teachers that handed on the apostles' teaching. This

led to the unification of the apostolic witness in scripture with the succession of apostolic teachers as the Spirit's continuity in the church" (Hascup 1992:16).

The Early Church experienced a significant struggle with correct identification of two-fold authority model (personalized charisma versus socialized ecclesial tradition). In terms of the authority for ancient Christians, "the human authors of New Testament were important to the extent that they guaranteed an apostolic tradition that could be traced back to Jesus' earliest followers" (Ehrman 2011:268). We may suggest here that this did not entail a separation into two diverse witnesses, but rather, "recognize the continuity between the first eye-witness and the later witness" (Hascup 1993:183).

However, the development of authority among ancient churches was not uniform: St. Basil's Treatise appeared in the midst of challenges raised by Gnostics (Valentinians), Marcion and Montanism. Orthodox heresiologists assume that everyone in that time shared the modern perception of Orthodox unity. This understanding has very little basis in fact. George Florovsky reminds that "the treatise of St. Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto*, was an occasional tract, written in the fire and heat of a desperate struggle, and addressed to a particular historic situation (Florovsky 1972:85). In his contest with the later Arians, concerning the Holy Spirit, St. Basil built his major argument on the analysis of doxologies, as they were used in the Churches" (Florovsky 1972:85). While the initial desire of St. Basil was to have "unwritten tradition" as one of the possible ecclesial authorities, it is the doctrine of "living tradition" in "Eastern Orthodoxy that holds that hinge as the pin, being supreme authority over Bible's authority, and standing over councils and even the church. Many Orthodox sought to explicate and defend the concept of "living tradition" as the first and the last word in theology and praxis (Meyendorff 1978; Kuraev 1995; Bratsiotis 1951).

Florovsky's assessment of new authority under the guidance of tradition was fair and realistic, "...his (St. Basil's) opponents would not admit any authority but that of the Scripture" (Florovsky 1972:85). Before going into the secondary meaning, Florovsky agrees that Scripture itself, without external ecclesial verification, was the only grounding authority for Christians at that time. In this regard, Florovsky's motivation to present "unwritten tradition" of St. Basil as a medium way to encompass both the witness of the apostles and the church suggested itself from the context of St. Basil's polemic in which he was

concerned “with the principles and methods of theological investigation. In his treatise St. Basil was arguing a particular point, - indeed, the crucial point in the sound Trinitarian doctrine, - *homotimia* of the Holy Ghost. His main reference was to a liturgical witness: the doxology of a definite type ("with the Spirit") which, as he could demonstrate, has been widely used in the Churches. The phrase, of course, was not in the Scripture. It was only attested by tradition" (Florovsky 1972:85).

Alston argues that, no one and nothing could determine what correct interpretation of God’s Word is, and what is not. It is by virtue of Scripture’s own claim to be God’s word that it is to be the highest authority (Alston 1993:15-39). The rise of the canon gave the Church an objective rule to judge what claimed the authority of the Spirit. However, with St. Basil, a shift took place in the understanding of the role of the tradition within the church "It is in this situation that St. Basil endeavored to prove the legitimacy of an appeal to Tradition. He wanted to show that the "*ομοτιμία*" "of the Spirit, that is, his Divinity, was always believed in the Church and was a part of the Baptismal profession of faith" (Florovsky 1972:85). In fact, St. Basil theology embodied the tensions within the church’s teaching on authority:

His phrasing, however, was rather peculiar. "Of the dogmata and kerygmata, which are kept in the Church, we have some from the written teaching (εκ της εζγγραφου διδασκαλίας), and some we derive from the Apostolic paradosis, which had been handed down εν μυστηρίω. And both have the same strength — την αυτην ισχυν — in the matters of piety (de Spir. S., 66). (Florovsky 1972:85).

Florovsky with equal confidence reminds us here, that there are many theological concepts, which are, in fact, of patristic origin. The terminological definitions, like "kerygmata," "dogmata" or "paradosis" introduced here by St. Basil, were later justified and approved even by the Reformers. John Calvin, for example, defended the patristic position that non-scriptural terms had to be used in order to define a scriptural understanding of God (Calvin 1960: I.XIII.3). As his "*Reply to Cardinal Sadoletto*" (1539) shows, "Calvin was convinced that the Reformation was in line with the doctrines of the early church. The true church that the apostles instituted is commensurate with the ancient form of the Church, exhibited by the writings of Chrysostom and Basil, among the Greek writers, and Cyprian, Ambrose, and Augustine and is "embodied in our religion" (Williams 2005:75).

it is also crucial to see here that Florovsky actually decommissioned Orthodox vision of ecclesial tradition as a second authority, by saying that

At first glance, one may get the impression that St. Basil introduces here a double authority and double tradition. In fact, he was very far from doing so. His use of terms is peculiar. Kerygmata were for him what in the later idiom was usually denoted as "dogmas" or doctrines – formal and authoritative teaching and ruling in the matters of faith, – the open or public teaching. (Florovsky 1972:85)

It is relevant to observe that according to Florovsky interpretation St. Basil "was very far from" introducing "here a double authority." It tends to merge together, however, it was for St. Basil "formal and authoritative teaching and ruling in the matters of faith," that is a quasi-regulative source of theological interpretation. Von Balthasar (2006:194) makes explicitly important presuppositions in this regard, "If she (Church) recognizes tradition as a source of the faith alongside Scripture, it is far from her intention to evade the authority of Scripture by appealing to traditions unknown, perhaps even formed by herself".

On the other hand, dogmata were for him the total complex of "unwritten habits" or, in fact, the whole structure of liturgical and sacramental life. It must be kept in mind that the concept, and the term itself, "dogma," was not yet fixed by that was not yet a term with a strict and exact connotation. (Florovsky 1972:85)

Finally, Florovsky reminds that one can apprehend a particular vision of ecclesial tradition only within the particularities of time and space. For St. Basil dogmata were "the total complex of "unwritten habits" or, in fact, the whole structure of liturgical and sacramental life." In reality, no aspect of early or modern ecclesial traditions can encapsulate all manifestations of complex and living Christianity. With regard to methodology of the patristic differentiation between fundamental (apostolic tradition or rule of faith) and generally accepted expressions of the Christian faith (as more debatable and controversial), "was not fixed" and was not given "a strict and exact connotation" not only in Early Church but in modern Eastern Orthodoxy as well. Together with the focus on St. Basil's argumentation regarding "unwritten habits" we may assume that not all of what he would have called tradition carried the same weight of authority. Florovsky correctly detects that from the epistemological perspective of scriptural (proximal) authority, "unwritten" does not refer to a secret oral tradition without any written basis; rather, it means a subsidiary practice or auxiliary regulations not stipulated in Scripture:

It would be a flagrant mistranslation if we render it as "in secret." The only accurate rendering is: "by way of mysteries," that the form of rites and (liturgical) usages, or "habits." In fact, it is precisely what St. Basil says himself: τα πλείστα των μυστικων αγραφως ημιν εμπολιτευεται. [Most of the mysteries are communicated to us by an unwritten way]. The term τα μυστικά refers here, obviously, to the rites of Baptism and Eucharist, which are, for St. Basil, of "Apostolic" origin. He quotes at this point St. Paul's own reference to "traditions," which the faithful have received (ειτε δια λογου, ειτε δι επιστολης 2 Thess. 2:15; 1 Cor. 11:2). (Florovsky 1972:86)

Florovsky suggests that it is not antithetical for St. Basil to pose the central axis of faithful self-awareness that functioned within the unfolding of mysterious sacramental activities ("habits") and liturgical expression of living communities ("rites"). St. Basil's theology of tradition synthesizes here "secrets" and "mysteries" with "Apostolic" origin. Florovsky (1972:87) explains further that this "silent" and "mystical" tradition, "which has not been made public, is not an esoteric doctrine, reserved for some particular elite. The "elite" was the Church". This high value of historical tradition to which St. Basil appeals was, according to Florovsky (1972:87) - "the liturgical practice of the Church". In relation to the "unwritten tradition", Florovsky explicitly states that,

St. Basil is referring here to what is now denoted as "*disciplina arcani*" [the discipline of secrecy]. In the fourth century this "discipline" was in wide use, was formally imposed and advocated in the Church. It was related to the institution of the Catechumenate and had primarily an educational and didactic purpose. On the other hand, as St. Basil says himself, certain "traditions" had to be kept "unwritten" in order to prevent profanation at the hands of the infidel. (Florovsky 1972:87)

In the fourth century this "discipline" was in wide use, was formally imposed and advocated in the Church. It was related to the institution of the Catechumenate and had primarily an educational and didactic purpose" (Florovsky 1972:87). For the proto-orthodox Church of St. Basil, God's covenant was expressed not only in words and signs but also in law and liturgy. Following St. Basil's line of argumentation, Florovsky (1972:87) gives two more reasons for "secret" practices of the church: "They are effective means of witness and communication" and "certain "traditions" that had to be kept "unwritten" in order to prevent profanation at the hands of the infidel".

At this point, an attendant set of hermeneutic problems comes into play in the wake of Florovsky's interpretation, namely the seeming inability of Eastern Orthodoxy in a post-



apostolic era to think without recourse to a strictly binary Scripture and Tradition identity. The main deficiency of such approach is exposed through a superficial and sweepingly generalized validation of "unwritten traditions" discovered by St. Basil as *existing within* the realm of scriptural authority and thus, collated into the structure of *disciplina arcani* (the discipline of secrecy). The actual meaningfulness of the unwritten paradigm of tradition is ascribed by Florovsky (1972:87) in the line of the following authorization, "They are not mentioned in the Scripture. But they are of great authority and significance". This exposition of theological and hermeneutical shift unfolds along two divergent trajectories, which represent a dangerous departure from bibleo-centric Christian identity, since one may be tempted to see and percept an "unwritten tradition" as an infallible pronouncement of Christ himself.

Pelikan (1991:260-61) objected to this interpretation of unwritten tradition authority, claiming that if it had been true in the first century, then "the apostolic writings [would have] needed an oral tradition to validate their historical trustworthiness..." However, the history of Christian doctrines developed during the patristic time in a different way. Pelikan (1991:262) reminds us "Protestant scholars did seek to argue that in the first five centuries of church history the oral had been subordinated to the written and that only gradually had the two been placed on the same level." Pelikan submits here a simple observation, which may have a striking bearing on the issue:

It did seem remarkable that the apologists of the first three centuries in their defences of the Christian message against pagan and Jews had totally ignored the living tradition in their theory and criticism of revelation, which they sometimes seemed to reduce to the rational notions of God, creation, and immortality. A growing interest in the historical significance of Gnosticism for the emergence of orthodox Catholic doctrine led to the judgment that since Catholics and Gnostics alike had appealed to the authority of Scripture, the authority of tradition as a 'principle standing above Scripture' became a way for Catholic orthodoxy to defeat Gnostic heresy. (Pelikan 1991:262)

It may be interpreted as a radical departure from the theology of "living tradition". Lossky (1985:142-143), who initiated a manifold set of theological innovations, also opposed the binary character of authority in Orthodox Tradition, arguing that the different components of Tradition such as the acts of the councils (ecumenical and local), the writings of the Fathers, canonical prescriptions, the liturgy, iconography and devotional practices were

considered to have unequal revelatory value. In the opinion of Blaising, the adequate understanding of the Bible immediately identifies that "Orthodox blur the New Testament and the early patristic distinction between apostolic and episcopal authority. Whereas the First Council of Nicaea dealt with its controversy solely upon biblical authority, the second council spoke solely on the basis of episcopal and popular tradition, a tradition that is found neither in the New Testament nor in the earliest days of the Church" (Blaising 2012:58). Moreover, Blaising critically emphasizes that

It was a practice that developed within the Church. Not only did the council authorize this practice solely upon its own tradition, but it went on to declare Tradition itself as a Holy Spirit – given, sufficient basis for any doctrine and practice and anathematized anyone who rejects any written or unwritten tradition of the Church. By that act and with that express teaching, the Second Council of Nicaea formalized a departure from the tradition of sole biblical authority in doctrinal matters that was evidenced by its earlier namesake. Contrary to apostolic teaching and early episcopal practice, it legislated for the Church a new conception of Tradition, one that is, in principle, immune from biblical correction. (Blaising 2012:60)

In line with Blaising's conclusions, the contemporary perspective of Protestant historical theology presumes that a church tradition "must always have reference to Scripture", being "either approved or chastened by the Word of God" (Allison 2011:23).

#### **4.3.4. Authority of Unwritten / Oral Tradition in Relation versus the Fixed Scriptural Canon**

Eastern Orthodoxy has been accustomed to working with models of oral tradition as it is passed down through the generations in traditional communities of faith. The main concern of this study is to analyze extra-canonical authority of unwritten (oral) tradition to decide whether this ecclesial tradition was passed down with the same precision as the written materials of the Scriptures. Florovsky in his final notes on of St. Basil's Treatise "*De Spiritu Sancto*" introduces and defends the same Orthodox pattern of corporate / collective memory in service of the divine plan: there must be an authority outside of Scripture itself (like "*disciplina arcani*" in tradition-forming community), but these practices had to be submitted to the authority of God's own words. Therefore, Scripture is to be reasserted as the basis of authority for life and doctrine *via* ecclesial interpretation:

The Church had the authority to interpret the Scripture since she was the only authentic depository of the Apostolic kerygma. This kerygma was unfailingly kept alive in the Church, as she was endowed with the Spirit. The Church was still teaching *viva voce*, commending and furthering the Word of God. And *viva vox Evangelii* [the living voice of the Gospel] was indeed not just a recitation of the words of the Scripture. It was a proclamation of the Word of God, as it was heard and preserved in the Church, by the ever-abiding power of the quickening Spirit. (Florovsky 1972:89-90)

However, Florovsky's interpretation needs to be corrected on a number of points to explain how the old in tradition endures, how the old tradition becomes new, how the new interpretation of tradition becomes old, and how the old occasionally ceases to be valued within a particular tradition. His analyses of the troubled relationship between traditional continuity and traditional ecclesial development have brought into the focus new limitations of "unwritten authority." Bauckham (2006:2-3), for example, heavily criticized "the naive historical positivism" that the traditional approach promotes arguing that "like any other part of history, the Jesus who lived in first-century Palestine is knowable only through the evidence that has survived. We could, therefore, use the phrase "the historical Jesus" to mean, not all that Jesus was, but Jesus insofar as his historical reality is accessible to us".

Bauckham (2006:4) also suggests that "from the perspective of Christian faith and theology, Eastern Orthodox oral tradition can ever substitute for the Gospels themselves as a way of access to the reality of Jesus, the man who lived in first-century Palestine". As Negrut explains "for the Eastern tradition theology is only a means towards an end that is union with God or theosis" (Negrut 1998:12). Consequently, the emphasis in Eastern Orthodoxy lies not on developing a positive theological system, but on the mystical aspect of this union, for the whole purpose of theological epistemology and ecclesial practice is to help the faithful to attain to deification. Negrut (1998:12) concludes that Bible is not used by the Orthodox "as a system of belief or as a *summa theologiae*, but as the authentic record of the divine revelation which leads to deification".

In contrast to Florovsky' approach, Bauckham disproves in his historical reconstruction Florovsky's idea about the Church as "teaching *viva voce*, commending and furthering the Word of God." Bauckham (2006:5) recovered the unique sense of the gospels, which he understood first of all as a personal, individualistic testimony, which "are the entirely appropriate means of access to the historical reality of Jesus". His main counter-thesis is

that "the period between the "historical" Jesus and the Gospels was actually spanned, not by anonymous community transmission, but by the continuing presence and testimony of the eyewitnesses, who remained the authoritative sources of their traditions until their deaths..." (Bauckham 2006:8). Bauckham's careful presentation based on eyewitness accounts provokes an alive discussion, shaking the foundations of traditional orality:

What is most important for our purposes is that, when Papias speaks of the living and surviving voice, he is not speaking metaphorically of the 'voice' of oral tradition, as many scholars have supposed. He speaks quite literally of the voice of an informant - someone who has personal memories of the words and deeds of Jesus and who is still alive. In fact, even if the suggestion that he alludes specifically to historiographic practice is rejected, this must be his meaning. As we have seen, the saying about the superiority of the 'living voice' to books refers not to oral tradition as superior to books, but to direct experience of an instructor, informant, or orator as superior to written sources... (Bauckham 2006:27)

For Bauckham, this passage of Papias explains why "the value of orally transmitted traditions would soon decline considerably once there were no longer any living eyewitnesses" (Bauckham 2006:30). A key implication of Papias's words was entitled to the fact, that

he does not regard the Gospel traditions as having by this date long lost a living connection with the eyewitnesses who originated them. Whether these eyewitnesses were still living would not matter if the oral tradition were essentially independent of them. Being a third Christian generation, Papias correctly assumed that a new voice of oral tradition ought to be in the submission to the primacy of still living sources. Now that these are few, second-hand reports of what eyewitnesses now dead, used to say are valuable, but Papias's whole statement implies that the value of oral tradition decreases with distance from the personal testimony of the eyewitnesses themselves. (Bauckham 2006:28-29)

Bauckham points out that Papias lived in a period "in which oral history was becoming no longer possible. The two living eyewitnesses to whom he had access were very old. All the more famous disciples of Jesus were dead. Thus, the traditions that came to Papias by way of the chain of transmission represented in the first table have become oral tradition, in the sense that they have been transmitted beyond the lifetime of the original informants" (Bauckham 2006:32). Luke had the same concern when he promised to narrate what had been "delivered to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word" (Luke 1.1-2; cf. Mark 1.1) This critical appraisal of orality was an integral element

of the Reformation in tracing the broad contours of the development of theological orthodoxy within the Primitive Church. In this sense, as the Church moved in history away from its original historical context it became increasingly easier for human words to come into conflict with the original apostolic teaching.

#### **4.3.5 Oral and Written Default Settings**

The phenomena of divergent default settings in both Florovssky's concept of collective / communal memory as well as in Bauckham's emphasis on personal testimony of Jesus' eyewitnesses demonstrates *a priori* persuasiveness, that there were some oral or written preferences among early Christians, but Orthodox scholars who read and interpret formative church history with an inappropriate model of oral tradition in mind tend to miss the whole point. Evaluating the degree of creativity on the part of the early communities, Birger Gerhardson refuses to accept that "the Israel of New Testament times can be characterized as an oral society, but a society where the Torah was known almost entirely by being heard and taught..." (Gerhardson 2005:14,17).

Sanders argued that "we investigate written tradition because that is all that is available to us... Even if it should be the case that oral tradition was not so rigid as some seem to think, that does not of itself mean that oral tradition was a great deal different from written tradition..." (Sanders 1969:8). He was convinced that the laws of the development of the Christian tradition did not derive from observing the development of other folk tradition, but by analyzing the needs and activities of the Christian communities (Sanders 1969:14). The prevailing assumption of Sanders's characteristic of orality consists of five main points: (1) Belief in the living Lord presumably fostered more creativity than one finds in the Rabbinic material; (2) The oral period was of very short duration when compared to that Testament, the Rabbinic tradition; (3) The Christian material was transmitted in one language. The multi-lingual character of the early tradition provided a source of variation; (4) The Christian tradition was doubtless transmitted by people not trained in passing on oral tradition in the way described by Gerhardsson; (5) Despite certain similarities with folk literature, the Christian tradition is not really of that genre, at least in the way that fairy tales are (Sanders 1969:27-28). Ong (1988) and Kelber (1983; 1994:139-67) drew attention to the distinction between oral and written, between oral performance and literary transmission observed in the Jesus tradition. They overplayed the contrast of "heavily patterned speech forms,

abounding in alliteration, paronomasia, appositional equivalence, proverbial and aphoristic diction, contrasts and antitheses, synonymous, antithetical, synthetic, and tautologic parallelism and the like', miracle stories 'typecast in a fashion that lends itself to habitual, not verbatim, memorization" (Kelber 1983:50-51).

In the absence of firm evidence, Dunn shared his sceptical observation regarding the very idea of valid reconstruction of orality, "the idea that we can get back to an objective historical reality, which we can wholly separate and disentangle from the disciples' memories and then use as a check and control over the way the tradition was developed during the oral and earliest written transmission, is simply unrealistic" (Dunn 2003:131). The Wansbrough's conclusion (1991:12) on the Symposium on *Jesus and the Oral Gospel Tradition* cuts both ways: "We have been unable to deduce or derive any marks which distinguish clearly between an oral and a written transmission process. Each can show a similar degree of fixity and variability".

#### **4.3.6 Transmission of Jesus Tradition**

Eastern Orthodoxy never really addressed the question of the transmission mode of Jesus Tradition, depending on an idealization of the oral genre. Tradition, described as the "living memory of the Church" by Fr. Bulgakov, is "the matrix in which the Scriptures are conceived and from which they are brought forth" (Breck 2001:9). However, the advent of theological and historical reason in the modern era challenges these idiosyncrasies of Orthodox scholarship. Teeple in his article *The Oral Tradition That Never Existed (1970)* formulated a key conclusion that "according to the theory of an authentic oral tradition, the flow of tradition was from the earthly Jesus to his disciples to the apostles in the church. Actually, Teeple (1970:67) insists that "the flow was in the opposite direction: from the apostles in the church to the earthly Jesus":

The content of this early kerygma, which was not fixed in vocabulary, style, or detail, consisted of brief statements that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and Lord, that as the prophets had predicted in the Scriptures, he had died according to God's foreknowledge and plan, had been raised from the dead, had ascended to heaven, and would return. This oral tradition contains no words of Jesus and no events in his career before his death. Only one feature in this tradition could possibly go back to any statement of Jesus: the belief that he was the Christ, the Son of God. All the rest originates in the faith of the early church. (Teeple 1970:56)

Funk suggests in this regard that "the narrative gospels are made up of layered traditions, some oral, some written, piled on top of each other. At the bottom – is the earliest stratum" (Funk 1998:24). More plausible is the theological and historical reconstruction of Cullmann in his book *The Early Church* (1966). Investigating the oral traditioning process for subsequent church formation and the emergence of the Gospels, Cullmann insists on the fact that "the infant Church itself distinguished between apostolic tradition and ecclesiastical tradition, clearly subordinating the latter to the former, in other words, subordinating itself to the apostolic tradition" (Cullmann 1966:87).

Cullmann argues that if it can be shown that the Church itself recognized an essential difference between the tradition before and the tradition after the establishment of the canon, "the fact of the priority of the oral apostolic tradition over its fixation in writing will prove nothing about the tradition as such" (Cullmann 1966:87). Thus, the significance of these efforts to explain the theological convergence "between the Orthodox and Evangelical traditions that is being undertaken today comes from the fact that the written fixation of the witness of the Apostles is one of the essential facts of the incarnation" (Cullmann 1966:88). Cullmann considers this most evident in his emphasis on the subjects of the written fixation, since "what matters is not whether the apostolic tradition was oral or written, but that it was fixed by the apostles"(Cullmann 1966:87). He continues:

We are in complete agreement with Catholic theology in its insistence on the fact that *the Church itself* made the canon. We even find in this fact the supreme argument for our demonstration. The fixing of the Christian canon of scripture means that *the Church itself*, at a given time, traced a clear and definite line of demarcation between the period of the apostles and that of the Church, between the time of foundation and that of construction, between the apostolic community and the Church of the bishops, in other words, between apostolic tradition and ecclesiastical tradition. Otherwise, the formation of the canon would be meaningless. (Cullmann 1966:89)

Cullmann develops his exegesis further by insisting that oral tradition "is entirely legendary in character", what persuasively demonstrates along with the spread of numerous apocrypha that "the tradition, in the Church, no longer offered any guarantee of truth, even when it claimed a chain of succession" (Cullmann 1966:89-90). What has been missing in all this evaluation of the oral-formulaic concepts is a sufficiently existing *principle* of a canon:

By establishing the *principle* of a canon, the Church recognized that *from that time* the tradition was no longer a criterion of truth. It drew a line under the apostolic tradition... To establish a canon is equivalent to saying this: henceforth our ecclesiastical tradition needs to be controlled; with the help of the Holy Spirit it will be controlled by the apostolic tradition fixed in writing; for we are getting to the point where we are too distant from the apostolic age to be able to guard the purity of the tradition without *a superior written norm*, and too distant to prevent slight legendary and other deformations creeping in, and thus being transmitted and amplified. (Cullmann 1966:90)

The shift in Eastern Orthodox perspective of tradition turned the principle of canon into a much-misunderstood concept. The primary influence in canon formation is given to the community of faith, "canonical Scriptures are created within the Church and by the Church as the normative expression of her "living Tradition" (Breck 2001:11). The apologetic concern is wholly explicit in oral transmission models, but "nowhere in early Christian literature do we find traditions attributed to the community as their source or transmitter, only as the recipient" (Bauckham 2006:297). Cullmann opposed this idea, claiming that, paradoxically, the teaching-office of the Church approached real infallibility through submission to the canon:

In creating a norm, the Church did not desire to be its own norm, since it had discovered that without a superior, written norm its teaching office could not keep pure the apostolic tradition... If the fixing of the canon had been carried out by the Church on the tacit assumption that its teaching-office, that is, the subsequent traditions, should be set alongside this canon with an equal normative authority, the reason for the creation of the canon would be unintelligible... It only has meaning if the Church henceforth exercises its teaching-office in submission to this supreme norm, and continually returns to it. (Cullmann 1966:92)

One of the premiere functions of the "written" distinction for Cullmann was apostolic perseverance of the tradition as prophylactically sealed from threats and involvement *ad extra*, to become like Gnostics in their practice of constant boasting of secret and unwritten apostolic tradition,

To fix a canon was to say: henceforth we give up regarding as a norm other traditions that are not fixed by the apostles in writing. Of course, there may be other authentic apostolic traditions, but we regard as an apostolic norm only what is written in these books, since it has been proved that by admitting as norms oral traditions not written by the apostles we, are losing the criterion for judging the validity of the claim to apostolicity made by the many traditions in circulation. (Cullmann 1966:90-91).



In his account of *Oral Tradition and Written Transmission*, Talmon (1991:121-58), agrees with Cullmann and Bauckham in their presumption that Gospels took their place within a still predominantly oral context, and therefore, had to operate in relation to orality, as written texts do in a predominantly oral society, "rather than as a complete alternative to it." The same premises are used by Hengel, who in conjunction with Bauckham was arguing that "individual figures kept standing out in the earliest community, despite its collective constitution. They – and not the anonymous collective – exercised a decisive influence on theological developments" (Hengel 1983:149). Therefore, tradition "has to be distinguished from individual memory, though it could be described as corporate memory giving identity to the group which thus remembers" (Dunn 2003:173). Protestant theology stood in opposition to the attempts of Orthodox theorists to dissolve the notion of individual memory in cultural, social, and collective memory. As a corollary to this, Florovsky has to soften the genealogical dichotomy of Scripture and Tradition, postulating that:

Thus, the "unwritten tradition," in rites and symbols, does not actually add anything to the content of the Scriptural faith. It only puts this faith in focus. St. Basil's appeal to "unwritten tradition" was actually an appeal to the faith of the Church, to her *sensus catholicus*, to the "φρόνημα ἐκκλησιαστικόν" [Ecclesiastical mind]. He had to break the deadlock created by the obstinate and narrow-minded pseudo-biblicism of his Arian opponents. And he pleaded that, apart from this "unwritten" rule of faith, it was impossible to grasp the true intention and teaching of the Scripture itself. St. Basil was strictly scriptural in his theology: Scripture was for him the supreme criterion of doctrine (epist.189.3). His exegesis was sober and reserved. (Florovsky 1972:88-89)

The resurgence of scholarly interest to the phenomenon of oral tradition provided new historical insights and mutually reinforced interpretive frameworks to understand the concept of theological orthodoxy in a better way. Florovsky assumes that it would be a mistake to suppose that 'oral tradition' adds anything to the content of the Scriptural faith because on a closer examination it depends on a whole number of theological and historical factors.

#### **4.3.7 Theological Observations**

Florovsky's attempt to re-conceptualize the active parameters of Orthodox Tradition as authority, including oral-mindset of unwritten liturgical tradition, could not escape from a presumption of orality, but recognized human limits and defined the degree to which a

judgment on the authority of the positive (scriptural) sources is necessary and valid, claiming that "the 'unwritten tradition', in rites and symbols, does not actually add anything to the content of the Scriptural faith" (Florovsky 1972:88-89). His insights and interpretations of Basil's letter expose a significant epistemological difficulty: the shift in authority from scriptural witness to unwritten tradition provided for Eastern Orthodox followers a new theological setting within liturgical modes of worship, as if it was established and transmitted by apostles themselves. Pleading "unwritten" rule of faith, Florovsky, nevertheless, refused to elevate the unwritten tradition to the level of independent authority, emphasizing that "St. Basil was strictly scriptural in his theology: Scripture was for him the supreme criterion of doctrine" (Florovsky 1972:89).

Florovsky (1972:89) foresaw a new qualified way for universal Christian truth in ecclesial treatment of Jesus Tradition – "*sensus catholicus*", "φρόνημα ἐκκλησιαστικόν" [Ecclesiastical mind], which can not be found exclusively in relation to an individual's "grasping" ability, because the Church, even in its fullness, can not be equated with the Kingdom, being only a sign of the Kingdom and a pointer to it. Regrettably then, once again, the potential significance of Florovsky's conclusions and recognition of the distinct character of "strictly scriptural" approach of St. Basil regarding Jesus Tradition was overlooked within Eastern Orthodoxy because of the emphasis on oral transmission and so was lost to sight.

A major concern of the present research was to discuss and evaluate the degree of stability (formality) and diversity (variance) in the authority of unwritten (oral) tradition within Eastern Orthodox and Protestant modes of theologizing. The relevance of Florovsky's elaborations adds a further dimension to the ongoing attempt to reconstruct the pattern of oral/written transmission in which New Testament Gospels and apostolic eyewitness incarnate and present the mission of Jesus to the world. Addressing the issue of great divergence between Protestants and the Eastern Orthodox in the field of authority of unwritten (oral) tradition, especially between Florovsky's concept of collective (communal) memory and Bauckham's elaborations on the individual testimony of Jesus' eyewitnesses, the question is raised in multiple discussions by different scholars (Cullmann 1966; Dunn 2003; Gerhardson 2005; Hengel 1983; Talmon 1991, Teeple 1970; Sanders 1969; etc.) whether the unique testimony of the apostles can be actualized by the written word. The plausible

answer has been, "Yes." It is scripture (personal account of eyewitnesses) which actualizes this testimony, as it is the sacramental existence of tradition (the liturgical dogma that has been kept "in silence") which actualizes the redemptive work of Christ.

For Cullmann (1966:94), it is of the greatest importance that the idea of giving to the *rule of faith* a normative authority occurred at the same time as that of giving a normative authority to the canon (about the middle of the second century). By misunderstanding the significance of certain declarations of the Fathers of the second century, Cullmann considers that Christians became too accustomed to contrasting *rule of faith* and canon, as if the former constituted a continuous tradition of the Church (alleged "living tradition"), alongside the writings of the apostles. In fact, the definitive fixing of the apostolic rule of faith corresponded exactly to the same need of codifying the apostolic tradition as did the canonization of the apostolic writings. According to Vanhoozer (2005:216-42), scripture serves as the script whereby fallen men may fulfill God's will to redeem his creation. Since salvation is at stake, getting redemption right cannot be approximated but must be accurate to the literal "t". God promised to bless any ecclesial gathering in *His name* (Matt 18:20), and not a particular liturgical tradition. Furthermore, there is no such thing as transcendent communication of "living" Tradition. "Writing is what we have instead of *His presence*" (Vanhoozer 1998:62).

#### **4.3.8 Methodological Observations**

The main body of Florovsky's discussion on St. Basil Treatise "De Spiritu Sancto" (*On the Holy Spirit*) stays with the binary model of Scripture-Tradition authority, and the focus is shifted more to the liturgical life of Christian communities, which articulated and shaped the tradition in terms of liturgical performances/oral retellings, rather than of scriptural strata (editions). Florovsky's critique and the concomitant drawing on the concept of an apostolic deposit of faith fundamentally distinguishes the discourses of East and West about unwritten tradition: he points out that in the early Church, "exegesis was at that time the main, and probably the only theological method, and the authority of the Scripture was sovereign and supreme" (Florovsky 1972:75). For the early Church, Scripture and Tradition were not two separate sources of authority, but a single source of truth and revelation and "the concept of an apostolic deposit of faith existed, but no specific term, including "Tradition", was universally used at this point to denote it" (Mathison 2001:22). Due to a

great significance of St. Basil's teaching on "unwritten tradition" accepted in the East as a sacred patristic legacy, Florovsky builds his argumentation upon "Eastern Orthodox belief in the authority of an alleged oral tradition traceable back to the apostles" (cited in Pelican 1991:253). Methodologically, Florovsky reorganized St. Basil's Treatise into a clear theological concept and proceeded according to the dictates of the Byzantine mystical tradition (*εν μυστηριω*), providing a highly instructive and productive example of hermeneutical search for correctness of auxiliary hypotheses in early theological debates on authority. Since each particular instance of human authority (including liturgical) is finite and imperfect by nature, Florovsky (1972:88-89) in his final notes was able to recognize the praxiological deficiency and methodological limitation of unwritten tradition, ascribing to this tradition a strictly interpretive function.

#### **4.3.9 Historical Observations**

Historically, Eastern Orthodoxy has treated Scripture as simply one of many sources of the great Tradition, arguing that revelation transmitted in an ecclesial deposit of faith is more than Scripture. In reality, inscripturation of God's revelation into the imperative of the divine word solidified and provided socio-cultural contours firstly, for the people of Israel – as God's people, and later in the times of New Testament for the Church of God organized under his word. Beckwith reminds, that Israelites, as the people of God, formed their lives around God's word; the Temple acts not only as the center of Israelite life and the footstool of God but also as "the shrine of the canon" (Beckwith 1985:80). And so, "The public reading of Old Testament books in worship seems to have been a result, not a cause, of their canonicity" (Beckwith 1985:64-65). Consequently, Scripture and Tradition are not equal media of divine revelation. Florovsky demonstrates in his historical re-description on St. Basil's Treatise that Scripture operates as a timeless reality of divine revelation, while the content of ecclesial tradition is always fixed to a particular moment in history. The Word of God will not cease, while tradition always has a provisional character. Thus, being a supreme revelatory media, the authority of Scripture is more than secondary authority. It stands as something divinely high with an established status. The impression that St. Basil introduces here, "a double authority and double Tradition" (cited in Florovsky 1972:85) clearly articulates that Tradition cannot be a self-attesting authority - only Scripture can be a proper ground for Christian theology and faith.

A revelation is bigger than canonized scriptures (the actualized revelation), but the Lord-Kyrios speaks directly through it, as we saw in spite of our human imperfection and the possibility of errors in interpretation. In addition to that, the Holy Spirit, not a liturgical tradition, was the key to authority in the real proto-orthodox community. The Kyrios is present in Scripture, and the Holy Spirit is present in the reader who has faith and reads this Scripture (Rev. 1:3). Calvin taught that persuasion does not come from a council, but God's people heard his voice in the Scriptures and recognized it as their canon – as opposed to a council conferring authority upon the texts:

The authority of Scripture derived not from men, but from the Spirit of God. Objection, that Scripture depends on the decision of the Church. Refutation, I. The truth of God would thus be subjected to the will of man. II. It is insulting to the Holy Spirit. III. It establishes a tyranny in the Church. IV. It forms a mass of errors. (Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.7.1).

In Wireman's view, all these factors are interrelated: it was the fact that God spoke, and his people heard his voice – as differentiated from other voices, implying the divine Scriptures and Gnostic writings. Therefore, due to misunderstandings of faith's authority, "Scripture had to be reasserted as the basis of authority for life and doctrine - in contradistinction from tradition and new revelations of the Spirit" (Wireman 2012:9). Eventually, all human practices are recognized as rule-governed behaviour, but uncertainty of God's Word as a supreme authority along with leaning against another authority is a direct disobedience to the Lord. It is here that the fundamental divergence appears in ecclesial history.

#### **4.4 A Critical Approach to the Authority of Great Christian Tradition in the Continuity and Discontinuity Modes**

Affirming the continuity with the Early Church, this sub-chapter reflects the complexity of scriptural, patristic and ecclesial authority in relation to the development of practical concept of tradition as an authority's agent. The formative influences of the Early Church, discussed in the previous chapter, reveal that the issue of religious authority has always been one of the most controversial topics in the Church since Pentecost. The operative assumption was that the Word of God (Scripture) and early ecclesial practices (Tradition) were both necessary for the formation of orthodox teaching and theology in the Church. A balanced historical perspective (Congar 1967:5) instructs that the *lex credendi* (rule of faith) was not

something received and transmitted in isolation from its exercise within the *lex orandi* (a practice of worship) or vice versa. The same twofold coexistence of Scripture and Tradition is advocated by Williams, who argues that

In the patristic mind, tradition and Scripture were comprehended in reciprocal terms. While Scripture had primacy of place for the fathers, they did not believe that Scripture could or should function in the lives of believers apart from the church's teaching and language of worship (i.e., tradition). Scripture was the authoritative anchor of tradition's content, and tradition stood as the primary interpreter of Scripture. In other words, the tradition was not a novel set of beliefs and practices added to Scripture, as if it were a separate and second revelatory source. (Williams 2005:93)

Von Campenhausen (1969:178) contributed to the same conclusion, arguing that Tradition in the Early Church was not separated from Scripture. While the original authority was located in the apostolic witness and in the voice of the Spirit, the apostolic oration and writings came to the Church through interpretive portals of the ecclesial and patristic authorities. In Allison's view, the development of the role of tradition as an authority in the Early Church centered around two controversies: the theological dispute regarding the Old Testament writings and the apologetic attempt to handle the problem of false teaching which claimed apostolic authority:

These written records and unwritten tradition were seen as two parts of a unified whole, and the early church appealed to both to express its doctrine and to fight heresy. (Allison 2011:40)

The development of New Testament canon in the first four centuries AD demonstrates that apostles authorized a proper theology of the primitive church. The qualitative uniqueness of that revelation was that "the Church itself recognized an essential difference between the tradition before and the tradition after the establishment of the canon" (Cullmann 1966:87). Initially, there was no real separation between scripture and tradition in the Early Church. The tradition of that period was related not only to the process of transmission of God's message but also was the very content of that message. It was also a time when the apostolic witness held the highest authority for the church. The main function of the primitive church and tradition at this stage was to preserve and transmit the apostolic

witness in full “integrity and totality,” both for “an authoritative interpretation of the Old Testament and for the message concerning Christ and his teaching” (Hascup 1992:20).

In response to the Gnostics’ claims to have a secret truth handed down to them from the apostles themselves, the Early Church developed a dual concept of authority based upon apostolic witness (canon) and apostolic succession (tradition). By the end of the second century, some fundamental changes were introduced to the Christian concept of authority. The concept of the ecclesial authority of the ministerial office was gradually linked not only with a community but also with a professional hierarchy of New Testament – the priesthood. The temptation to extend the apostolate beyond the apostle generation put forward bishops on historical stage as a new authority and “apostolic heirs” who received their teaching and, to some extent, their office. Irenaeus (130-202 AD) developed the relation between bishop’s role as protectors of faith and their authority as Kingdom’s keys-keepers and the succession of tradition, linking such authority to the teaching office of the Church and the apostolic tradition transmitted and preserved in the anointed succession of the faithful. Clement of Alexandria (150-215 AD), a respectful theologian and a head of the Catechetical school in Alexandria, also delineated authority in the succession of the apostolic message, while Origen (184-254 AD) found authority in the whole church and especially its teachers who worked together in accordance with the apostolic witness preserved in scripture (Campbell 2009:2-39; Pelican 1971:68-172).

Since the Early Church needed a way to assert its authority, Tertullian's formula "*primum*" is the "*verum*" was effectively employed to justify centralized ecclesial authority. In the light of new evidence regarding organizational structure, no definite patterns of authority (vertical or horizontal) can be found within a primitive church to delineate official rights and duties of the hierarchy. Various theological attempts to attribute to Peter a special primacy over the Twelve were unconvincing and lame. Initially, the apostolic unity was not a unity of an organized church, but the unity of their witness (vocation) to Christ. Thus, the transformation of the Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy into a power structure was not the confirmation of authority, but an indication of its perversion. The autocratic (authoritarian) model of authority is foreign to every line of the New Testament in which authority is mentioned. As Christianity began to separate from its Jewish heritage and visible ecclesiastical power structures gradually evolved, all kinds of questions and disputes

arose regarding religious authority. At this stage, “the development of authority among the ancient churches was not uniform” (Stagaman 1999:40). The Early Church realized its growing need in a further institutionalized organization, therefore, inherited power patterns “inevitably took social and political models from the surrounding world in which to incarnate their authority from God and Christ” (Boff 1985:40). Through the centuries, especially after Constantine, when centralized ecclesial authorities became tightly intertwined with the imperial power of the state, Christianity encountered and attempted to resolve the same theological issue: how to identify and approve existing models of authority in present ecclesiastical structures which directly claim their divine origin. Blanchfield argues in this regard that

for centuries, popes and kings struggled for supremacy, temporal and spiritual. The ecclesial authority of the Middle Ages, using the model of the feudal system, was far removed from the diakonia of Jesus. Both Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism cemented its power toward absolutization. (Blanchfield 1988:262)

The adoption of typological and allegorical exegesis facilitated the church acceptance of both Old and New Testaments as an authoritative foundation for new Christian faith. Based on the patristic elaboration and famous Augustine’s theological statement “Ego vero evangelio non crederem, nisi me catholicae ecclesiae commoveret auctoritas” (*C. ep. Manich 5,6.*) - “I would not have believed the Gospel, unless the authority of the Catholic Church had moved me”, both Catholic and Orthodox churches had attempted to work out in their respective dogmatic theologies a plausible synthesis of the authority of Scripture, Tradition, Spirit, and Church. A theological framework of such intense scope, creativity, and polemic saw the Church as the superior locus of authority founded upon the sacred hierarchy and magisterial power. According to this model of authority, the Church acted fundamentally through Middle Ages as *mater et magistra* (mother and teacher). Orthodox Patriarch Sophronius of Jerusalem correctly summarized this approach in his *Synodical Epistle*: “An apostolic and ancient tradition has prevailed in the holy churches throughout the world, so that those who are inducted into the hierarchy sincerely refer everything they think and believe to those who have held the hierarchy before them” (PG 87:3149-52).

The theological inability of the church hierarchy to draw a clear demarcation line between “an apostolic and ancient tradition” led to the absolutizing of visible institutions of the



Church in such a way that “it tends to substitute itself for Jesus Christ or to understand itself as his equal” (Boff 1985:84). In response to his theological opponents who opposed liturgical incorporation of many unwritten traditions, Basil the Great admitted the coexistent validity of unwritten traditions in the liturgical life of the church as derived from the source of the unwritten teaching of apostles. It invoked an unjustified elevation of the ecclesiastical notion of the unwritten authority of tradition in addition to the truth confessed by the fathers and formulated in the Orthodox creeds. Thus, the authority of Church Tradition was successfully introduced by the interpretative faculty of the Church to create new traditions in addition to the first witness-text data (apostolic deposit of faith), acting as a historical force directly linked by the Orthodox to the collective memory of the community. This interpretation facilitated a further confusion and even a theological crisis in the understanding of authority in the medieval Orthodox Church since such authority was taught and exercised with the same imprecision and even ambiguity it had had earlier.

As the Orthodox Church moved beyond the patristic age, it still wrestled with the question of the religious authority of tradition, but the councils became a primary channel for the authentic tradition. The problem with this approach is that in the Protestant mind, “the revelation of Scripture has ceased completely, and therefore, the Bible is absolutely unique as canon, whereas tradition is not inspired and has not ceased, making it (perhaps) authoritative but not canonical” (Williams 2005:57). In this regard, the next step of the research, related to the absence of tangible solution of the Orthodox tradition as authority, would be a more focused investigation of the canonical continuity and discontinuity between apostolic, patristic and ecclesial traditions, which directly or indirectly reflected in certain foundational and formative rules or normative expressions of Christian doctrinal teaching.

#### **4.4.1 The Concept of Orthodoxy Continuity (Orthodox Homeostasis)**

The concept of "*Orthodox Homeostasis*" assumes that there is a perfect correspondence between ancient Orthodox Tradition and its modern use in the society and ecclesial community that faithfully transmit this tradition. It is an umbrella concept that describes the profoundly unified "living tradition" in Eastern Orthodoxy that maintains a stable internal development and a steady spiritual environment. The operational model of Orthodoxy in the Classical View affirms the static point of origin for the respective dogmatic advancements. "According to its leading proponents, the Orthodox doctrine did not really have a history but

had been changeless from the beginning" (Pelikan 1977:3). The authority of Church Tradition (*ecclesiastical paradosis*) is based on the assertion that "Orthodoxy is the embodiment of the essential Christian Tradition in time and space. The Latin term *traditio* ("handing on") and its Greek counterpart *paradosis* both acquired technical meaning from the New Testament onwards (cf. 1Cor. 11:23)" (McGuckin 2011:599). Stylianopoulos, Professor of New Testament at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Theological Seminary, provides the following homeostatic perspective on the ecclesiastical continuity:

The Orthodox Church is the true church of God on earth and maintains the fullness of Christ's truth in continuity with the church of the apostles. This awesome claim does not necessarily mean that Orthodox Christians have achieved perfection: for we have many personal shortcomings. Nor does it necessarily mean that the other Christian churches do not serve God's purposes positively: for it is not up to us to judge others, but to live and proclaim the fullness of the truth. But it does mean that if a person carefully examines the history of Christianity, he or she will soon discover that the Orthodox Church alone is in complete sacramental, doctrinal, and canonical continuity with the ancient undivided church as it authoritatively expressed itself through the great Ecumenical Councils. (Stylianopoulos 2011:50)

The abovementioned statement presents an important theological narrative of Orthodox emphasis on the "fullness of Christ's truth" in continuity mode and, at the same time, an honest recognition of human vulnerability to "personal shortcomings" and errors, what may potentially cause a discontinuity. Buschart correctly points out that spiritual recourses that may contribute to the enrichment of the Church can be found in many Christian traditions, thus, "the humble recognition that all traditions of Christianity contain an admixture of truth and error, wisdom and weakness" (Buschart 2006:28). With this fundamental sense of "changelessness" and "wholeness" of Orthodox Tradition, that come into play from Orthodox exclusivist outset, the following question arises: What doctrinal beliefs or ecclesiastical practices in this tradition are erroneous and harmful? Therefore, in our three-fold examination of chief exponents of Stylianopoulos's continuity (sacramental, doctrinal, and canonical), we must indicate and separate the main outline of the legitimate apostolic continuity from occasional features of orthodox discontinuity, which emerged within dynamic historical situatedness of later ecclesial dispensation.

#### **4.4.2 Sacramental Continuity and Discontinuity of Orthodox Tradition:**

Sacramental Liturgy is the most important expression of Orthodox faith and Church identity. The older liturgies that have come down to Orthodox Tradition consist of later elaborations of primitive Christian Tradition found in the *Didache*, the "Clementine" liturgy, the Syrian liturgy, the St. James' liturgy of the Church of Jerusalem, the Nestorian and Persian liturgies, the Egyptian liturgy that goes by the name of St. Mark's, the Euchologion of Serapion, and the liturgy preserved in the Egyptian Church which probably goes back to Hippolytus – all these convey an impressive picture of variety. The coordination of liturgy took place only in conjunction with an extension and nationalization of the Byzantine Church. Finally, from the sixth century on, two standard types of liturgy were established under canon law (Benz 2009:25). Fairbairn (2002:39-40) identifies four basic variants of the Orthodox liturgy that are in current use: liturgy of St. Basil (primarily liturgy of the Eastern Church), liturgy of St. John Chrysostom (a shorter form of the liturgy of St. Basil), the liturgy of St. James and liturgy of the pre-sanctified gifts, attributed to St. Gregory of Dialogus – a sixth-century bishop of Rome. In sum, we briefly note a considerable diversity and developmental character of Orthodox liturgical tradition. In retrospect, Meyendorff suggests in *Byzantine Theology* that a turning point in the history of Christian liturgy occurred

When Justinian closed the last pagan temples and schools and Christianity became unquestionably the religion of the masses of the empire. The Christian liturgy originally conceived as the cult of small-persecuted communities now came to be celebrated in immense cathedrals — such as the magnificent "Great Church," Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, one of the glories of Justinian's reign – with thousands of worshippers in attendance. This completely new situation could not help but influence both the practice and the theology of the liturgy. (Meyendorff 1979:29)

Such concentration on the accumulated wisdom within the magnificently large worship services was acknowledged by Orthodox Christians as God's guidance of his people in accordance with his promise to the church of all ages:

The Eucharist, for example, could no longer really retain the external character of a community meal. The great mass of the people in attendance consisted of nominal Christians who could hardly meet the standard required of regular communicants. Starting with John Chrysostom, the clergy began to preach that preparation, fasting, and self-examination were the necessary prerequisites of communion and emphasized the mysterious, eschatological elements of the sacrament. (Meyendorff 1979:29)

The shift in liturgical practice regarding New Testament meal does not mean those new insights of the Communion, changes in liturgical style and reinforced forms of catechesis introduced at that time a new concept or doctrine of the Lord's Supper imposed by an institutional authority on a community. Based on a scholarly analysis of the rich Old Testament symbolism and Israel's ritual feastings, Zimmerli suggests that not only the sacred meal but also the whole material world (marriage and sexuality, land and possessions, even human conduct) has a special significance for Christian theology (Zimmerli 1979:29).

In his book *Mass and Lord's Supper*, a scholar in the field of history of the liturgy Lietzmann argues (1979:239-527) that in the beginning there were two distinct forms of the Christian Eucharist – the Jerusalem type (breaking of bread in a mood of eschatological joy) and the Pauline type (memorial celebration of Jesus' last meal and his death with the breaking of bread at the beginning of the meal and the drinking of cup at the end). Investigating the gospel in the liturgy Campbell reminds us that “Eastern Orthodox Church recite the Nicene Creed at every celebration of Eucharist (then Divine Liturgy) and their liturgies for daily prayer” (Campbell 2009:38) and in this way the development of Orthodox Eucharist incorporated “an explicit recollection of memory (anamnesis) of Christ's saving work” (Campbell 2009:42). All these controversies over the validity and interpretation of the Lord's Supper facilitated patristic innovations and further liturgical inventions:

The eighth and ninth centuries witnessed such additions as the iconostasis-screen between the sanctuary and the congregation and the use of the communion spoon, a means to avoid putting the sacramental elements into the hands of laymen. All these developments were aimed at protecting the mystery, but they resulted in separating the clergy from the faithful and in giving to the liturgy the aspect of a performance, rather than of a common action of the entire people of God. (Meyendorff 1979:29)

Related to this conclusion, there is another question whether we have expected too much of what can be defined as “immutability and continuity of tradition”. In this regard, Allison argues that “one of the benefits that historical theology offers the church today is helping it distinguish orthodoxy from heresy” (Allison 2011: 24). In accordance with this task, Meyendorff correctly assumes:

that Pseudo-Dionysius's ideas about God's grace descending upon the lower ranks of the hierarchy through the personal mediation of the hierarchs did much to shape new Byzantine liturgical forms, which he considered only as symbols revealing the mysteries to the eyes of the faithful. Appearances and disappearances of the celebrant, veiling and unveiling of the elements, opening and closing of the doors, and various gestures connected with the sacraments often originated in the rigid system of the hierarchical activity as described by Dionysius and found ready acceptance in a Church otherwise concerned with preserving the mysterious character of the cult from profanation by the masses now filling the temple. (Meyendorff 1979:29-30)

While the element of mystery is important, other concerns may be raised here (the nature of the Godhead in itself, the relation of the Godhead to creation, etc.). The holistic approach to the Pseudo-Dionysius's legacy is related to the basic epistemological conviction that this theologian in his contemplative attempt to explain the transcendent excellence of Deity and express the superlative correlation between the contingent and the mutable, in the opinion of modern critics, "over-reached the truth and reduced the Deity to an abstraction in which perfection and nothingness are identified" (Sparrow-Simpson 2004:195). Rolt added to the point that "the doctrine of unknowing is to be connected with our scriptural knowledge and with "our true selfhoods in the One Super-Essence outside of us, and yet each shall all the time a feeling in himself" (Rolt 2007:32). Even when the Deity cannot be fully comprehended by human intelligence, we should remember that many church fathers and theologians of the past (for instance, St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. Augustine and St. Hilary and others) boldly proclaimed their patristic conviction that the salvific activity of God could be apprehended by man.

Our theological and historical concerns for the legitimate meaning of Orthodox continuity and the lack of Evangelical consistency within its sacramental trend point to the fact that the cultural framework of Byzantine Tradition was increasingly limited to the Greek-speaking world. According to Meyendorff, the negative side of this national stratification was "the Hellenic character of Byzantine civilization", which "brought into theology the perennial problem of the relationship between the ancient Greek 'mind' and the Christian Gospel" (Meyendorff 1979:55). The questionable elements or even patterns of unified Byzantine liturgy are best exemplified by a modern Orthodox theologian, active priest and president of Russian Bible Society Borisov in his book *Pobelevshie Nivy (The Ripened Fields)*: "If you look closely at the role of Mother of God and the most venerated saints in the lives of most

believers, it is impossible not to see a certain analogy to the medieval Byzantine court" (Borisov 1994:77). Somehow, the community nature of the early church, so vividly described in Acts, has been eclipsed by the pomp and ceremony of the Empire. Morey suggests that a similar pattern of discontinuity existed not only in Byzantine Church but also in the liturgical life and developments of the Egyptian Orthodox Church. In his historical exposition *Is Eastern Orthodoxy Christian?* he asserts that:

Eastern Orthodoxy was in many ways the first "seeker church" because it looked to the pagan community to dictate ways of worship that would attract them. For example, the pagans liked the icon processions in their pagan temples. They also enjoyed venerating icons. So, these things were added to the worship of the Egyptian Church to make it more relevant and contemporary. (Morey 2008:19)

Clark identifies another reason by which Greek philosophy has a great infiltrative effect on the Eastern Church:

While Christianity and the Greek philosophies, as systems, have no elements in common, the Christians, as people often held pagan ideas. They had been converted from paganism and could not divest themselves of familiar modes of thought all at once. Therefore, when they came to expound and defend Christianity, they inconsistently made use of Platonism and Stoicism. (Clark 1985:195)

This liturgical recourse towards the Temple worship in the Eastern Orthodoxy Schmemmann attributed the prominence of Jewish typological interpretation on which Eastern Church had founded and instituted a fundamental principle of tradition:

The Temple at Jerusalem remained for Christians a place of prayer, instruction, and preaching. Even when the initial link with it was broken and Christian worship began to develop independently, that worship retained — and always will retain — the stamp of its Jewish origins. The fundamental principles of Orthodox worship were determined almost entirely by the Temple and the synagogue. (Schmemmann 1977:7)

In this process, the Orthodox bishops were considered to be original heirs, who received the apostolic teaching and who can therefore still testify to it today not only in those churches which are of apostolic foundation but also in all the others which developed from them and agree with them. Allison is convinced, that

they were the guarantee that what was believed and practiced by the churches was in accord with this apostolic rule of faith. These bishops were not a source of new revelation that stood alongside of written Scripture. They were, instead, faithful transmitters of the truth received from the apostles — and ultimately from God himself. (Allison 2011:57)

By contrast, the heretics have demonstrably no connection with the apostles, because they can never produce a series of bishops going back that far. Neither, therefore, can they possess the genuine tradition, and one should have nothing to do with them at any time — even when they try to appeal to Holy Scripture (Von Campenhausen 1969:174).

In reality, the idea of sacramental continuity of Orthodox Tradition emerged in close relation to later developments of liturgical homogeneity. At this point, the Meyendorff's assessment of Dionysian achievement is different from the conventional Protestant Historicism: he was convinced that Dionysian theology "has had practically no effect upon such central texts as the baptismal prayer and the Eucharistic Canons" as well as improper replacement of "Biblical texts of the liturgy with human poetic compositions" (Meyendorff 1979:30), but in Protestant perspective "the mainstream of progressive pagan penetration into the Orthodox liturgy was already established" (Frend 1984). The entire notion of the "apostolic succession" appeared as a result of an endless Orthodox appeal in their efforts to ground their teachings in the time-honoured truths conveyed by Jesus to his followers and through them to the Orthodox churches (Ehrman 1993:18-21). Initially, neither evangelists nor apostolic epistles "put forward any theory of succession as a fixed canonical and dogmatic principle" (Von Campenhausen 1969:155). Evangelist Luke depicted any kind installation to the Christian office "as instruments of the Spirit" mediating to those "who have been chosen their commission and authority." Von Campenhausen notes that controversy over the anachronistic question: "whether such ordinations were sacramental or non-sacramental in character, and on what canon law principles they were then based" simply manufactures "artificial and insoluble difficulties" because "Luke is not interested in the preservation of a succession in any formal sense" (Von Campenhausen 1969:154-155).

In contrast to the common Orthodox faith inherited by birth, the apostolic church knew that "faith is the faith of the entire Church and not only that of the hierarchy" (Boff 1985:15). Laurentin (1972:11) stresses in this regard that Jesus gave no canonical blueprint; he did

not set up a hierarchy of bishops or priests; he revealed love, an agape in himself, and handed on a living intention. The growing Christian congregation in the first century

needed a permanent pastoral office and possessed one from an early stage, to ensure that the teaching and example of the first "eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word" should be set forth undistorted before the eyes of later generations. This, however, does not depend on particular valid forms, nor on a link with particular people who happen to be lawfully consecrated. The connection is inward and spiritual, and the continuity concrete and historical, not merely sacramental or juristic. (Von Campenhausen 1969:155)

The decisive step in the promotion of Orthodox Tradition as a sacred authority of "*paradosis*" transmission was taken during the generation after that of the author of the Pastorals, about the middle of the second century (Stauffer 1952:21). In the *Letter to Flora* written by a Gnostic teacher Ptolomaeus, a new teaching on a secret of apostolic tradition (παράδοσις) is introduced that supplements the canonical collection of Jesus's words and that, by being handed on through a succession (διαδοχη) of teachers and instructors, has now come to "us", that is, to him or to his community (Klauser 1931:196). Schnackenburg argues that

In the struggle against false teaching, however, those who held office and were committed to the sound teaching of the apostolic tradition were bound to gain in significance. This led to a development in which from the second century onwards, the communities tended more and more to become separated into 'shepherds and flocks'... the communities of a more significant separation between 'shepherds and flocks' with an increasing stress on the monarchical episcopate (Schnackenburg 1972:19).

This concept of Orthodox Tradition was clarified and elevated by St. Irenaeus in the second century when Christian self-identity was being publicly challenged by numerous speculative streams of redefinition. It was he, who, in the *Adversus Haereses*, "popularized the model of tradition as a conservator force... that guarded the transmission of the salvation, through a regularly constituted order (*taxis*) from Jesus, to the Apostles, to the early episcopate, who maintained the apostolic succession of the kerygma" (McGuckin 2011:599). Clement of Rome developed this thinking even further claiming that God sent Christ, Christ sent the apostles, and the apostles appointed the first bishops and elders. There exists, therefore, in accordance with God's will, a beautifully constructed sequence and system of an unbroken



continuity in the institution of the office, and in this sense also a succession (*1 Clem. 42*). Thus, the Eastern Church actively utilized the bishop's authority to impose a unified religious identity and centralize national Byzantine ideology. According to Orthodox Canon, "the bishops of every nation, every *ethnos*, must acknowledge him who is first among them" (Nichols 1995:7). In the reconstruction of Orthodox canonist Bogolepov (1963), the Council of Antioch of 341 used the term *ethnos* for the first time as the main subdivision of the Roman civil diocese. By the tenth century, this subsequent notion of "nation" crept in the affairs of the Eastern Churches, infecting the attitudes of newly Christianised peoples like the Kievan Slavs, Bulgarians, and Serbs with the subsequent rise of Pan-slavyanism and nationalism.

Blaising suggests that the construction of Orthodox identity in such autonomous and discontinuous forms occurred because Eastern Orthodoxy extends "the locus of divine inspiration and authority beyond Scripture to the Church itself, specifically to the decisions of the ecumenical councils, but more generally and on a practical level to the entirety of Orthodox tradition. For all practical purposes, this means that church tradition is not correctible by Scripture. Rather Scripture is ruled by Tradition, which defines its message and application" (Blaising 2012:57). In virtue of the foregoing statement, Blaising respectfully suggests the following:

I think it would be a mistake to assume that a scripted liturgy in itself solves the problem. Has there never been an Orthodox service in which the liturgy seemed a rote performance or from which congregants left having repeated familiar, even memorized, lines without the truth touching their hearts in a deep way? I have seen this happen on occasion with the singing of profoundly theological and biblically rich hymns in an Evangelical service. If it can happen there, I rather think it could and probably does happen sometimes with the performance of liturgy in an Orthodox service. (Blaising 2012:57)

In Benz's view, these paradoxical issues impacted "uncontrollable impulse to create ever new and various forms of worship" (Benz 2009:25), exposing a vulnerable heritage of most sacramental developments within Eastern Orthodoxy and violating both parameters of classical historicism and sound continuity. Pelkmans (2009:1-16) makes an assumption that in post-Soviet space we are dealing with a process of "interrupted continuity" – between contemporary religious forms and their pre-socialist referents. Since the establishment of orthodoxy is a dynamic process involving multiple agents, Rock suggests that Orthodoxy "is

perhaps the most tradition-centered Christian denomination, a religion for which continuity and legitimacy are inextricably linked" (Rock 2014:276). He further argues, that

Within the Orthodox community tradition is similarly recognized as requiring arbiters, adjudicators, and guardians who decide what may be identified and preserved as traditional, and what may be identified and preserved as traditional, and what is inauthentic or contrary to tradition. In a religious context, then, both invention and tradition are dependent upon concepts of authenticity and authority: is the object or practice concerned genuine (i.e. is it what it purports to be?), and is it recognized as such (by whom we will return to later) by virtue of a connection with the authoritative past. (Rock 2014:278)

Analyzing a variety of past and present phenomena and movements within Eastern Orthodoxy, Tolstaya attempts to critically determine an unequivocal criterion for elements that indeed belong to Orthodox Tradition, claiming that "the notion of tradition as all-embracing constant, constantly changing, and multi-partitioned, is a paradox" or "a paradoxical set of paradoxical phenomena" (Tolstaya 2014:4). The problem of detected "all-embracing" liturgical discontinuity, however, clearly poses a threat to the established hierarchy and sacramental structure. As Martin Luther stated in this regard:

It is better to omit the sacrament than not to proclaim the Gospel; the church has decreed that the Mass is not to be celebrated without reading the gospel. God puts more weight on the gospel than on the mass, because without the gospel man does not live in the spirit; he does live, however, without the mass. For man will live in every word, that proceeds from the mouth of God (Matt. 4:4). (Luther 1883:1,604.35)

The liturgical sense of Orthodox development-in-continuity assigns the highest value of the gospel to an interpretive activity of ecclesial tradition, reducing tradition's historicity to the boundedness of time, particular ecclesial structure, and beliefs. A modern theological sensibility, in contrast, clearly identifies created finitude of vexing novelties in liturgical discontinuity of Orthodox Tradition, as a sin-laden threat to the truth. Thus, the theological implication of liturgical discontinuity in Orthodox tradition critically evokes the issue of authority. True authority of liturgical tradition can be found not in human innovations or righteous performance of religious ritual, but in relation to canon. The ultimate source of fathers' authority was Scripture itself, which in the form of the changeless canon must function as a judge in all matters, even over liturgical tradition or ecclesial dogma.

#### 4.4.3 Doctrinal Continuity and Discontinuity of Orthodox Tradition

All Christian denominations tend to think and believe that they stand in visible continuity with the Church of the Apostles. A similar consideration resides within the Eastern Orthodox Church:

Eastern Orthodox Christians affirm an unchanging continuity: the identity of the Church is unvarying. For the Orthodox, the Church is synonymous with changelessness; its identity is unvarying (though its existence is far from static). (Avis 2006:197)

Nevertheless, since the seventeenth century, most historical theologians have detected and interpreted theological models of Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy "as discontinuous with the previous centuries" (Hascup 1992:13). In contrast to the above-mentioned Orthodox belief, the Catholic Council Vatican II acknowledged that, because the Church always was and is a human institution, it is prone to fall away from its divine calling (Abbott 1966:350). In this way, Catholic *Lumen Gentium* reiterated famous Luther's statement "*simul iustus, simul peccator*" (at the same time holy and sinful), re-defining the problem of human sinful actions and divine spiritual renewal in a new light. The problem of continuity and discontinuity of the Orthodox Tradition in relation to its dogmatic claims and ecclesial authority is seen to be more complex. Pelikan stresses that the acceptance of Orthodox traditions "has often led to an anachronistic reading of the history of doctrine" (Pelikan 1971:8). As Fortsman explains concerning this issue: "Faith is founded not only on the true God, but also on the fact that the true God is truly communicated" (Fortsman 1962:15). In support of this statement, Avis argues that the Reformers "invoked the intellectual (in the form of the theological) against the institutional. They critiqued the dominant structure with theological arguments drawn from Scripture, the Fathers, and Romans and canon laws" (Avis 2006:4). The same divergence of interpretation concerning the continuity-discontinuity modes is emphasized by Hendrix:

Luther was not speaking about continuity between institutions as if the essentials of Christianity had been transferred across the Reformation divide from the Roman Church to Protestant churches... In spite of the papal tyranny that almost destroyed Christendom, the essentials of the faith had survived in order to serve the cause of a newly Christianized Europe. In his eyes, there was both continuity and discontinuity, not between churches in their modern confessional forms, but between a captive Christendom, in which the centrality of faith and love was being restored. (Hendrix 2004:45)

The same recognition of scriptural authority allowed the Reformers to judge numerous interpolations and novelties in corresponding traditions as extracanonical apostolic teaching and questionable relative authority (Avis 2006; Negrut 1994; Morey 2007). Confessional debates showed that any church identity can be recognized in her dogmas (doctrines). A closer examination, however, shows that even dogma can be altered in great confessions. Harnack states that "dogma everywhere has fallen into the background; in the Eastern Church it has given place to ritual, in the Roman Church to ecclesiastical instructions" (Harnack 2005:6).

The establishment of "Orthodoxy" is seen in the traditional approach as the achievement of the bishops and church fathers, active around AD 200, who were in communion with the church at Rome (Ferguson 2013:213). The diverse variety of primitive communities is a matter of great historical interest. Much remains uncertain, but it is still a questionable affirmation that Christian apologists and writers of first four centuries could understand orthodoxy in precisely the same way as the modern church. Tabbernee (2014:331) asserts in this regard, that the "Definition of Faith," agreed on by the Council of Chalcedon of 451, became the standard by which the Greek and Latin churches measured Orthodoxy.

However, Richardson explains how the authority of doctrinal Christianity formed a new Orthodox identity in the sense of accepting conventional structures and common social references. In his approach, "the expansion of Christianity in that period was rapid and far-flung. It penetrated Mesopotamia to Edessa and Arbela and reached as far west as the interior of Spain, and perhaps the southern coast of Britain" (Richardson 1970:19). While the Early Church was taking a firm root, conditions that facilitate the acceptance of a new church identity came into play:

The spread of the new faith naturally followed the great trade routes and was centered in the cities. Only gradually did it win the rural areas, where ancient traditions were more stubbornly defended. Primary among the marks of the period is the rise of the Catholic consciousness. By this phrase is meant the emergence of a distinctly ecclesial point of view, evident in the ordering of Christian life. The kerygma, or "preaching," of the New Testament becomes the *regula fidei* of the early Fathers. (Richardson 1970:20)

The next stage of "interrupted orthodoxy" occurred with regard to the discontinuity of dogmatic development of Byzantine Church in the post-Chalcedon era. Harnack stresses that the Greek Church "has no history of dogma after the seven great Councils, and it is incomparably more important to recognize this fact than to register the *theologoumena* which were later on introduced by individual bishops and scholars in the East, who were partly influenced by the West" (Harnack 2005:19). The rise of official episcopate strongly impacted the whole notion of New Testament authority in Byzantine Church. Wright observes that

from the apostles, the keys were passed on to a distinct priestly caste: the sole possessors of the church's *magisterium*, or teaching authority. This was the fully thought out version of Ignatius's old logic. The person who challenged this, who sought out other paths, or challenged the always precarious status quo was, said Cyprian, "a stranger, profane, an enemy," not unlike dust is shaken by the wind, blowing randomly about, making not an inch of progress toward heaven. Heretics and schismatics – terms that were quickly beginning to mean those who dissented from clerical authority – were, by one account, cut off, like branches from the vine, marked off for punishment like dead wood, for the fires of hell. (Wright 2011:49)

Although the human capacity to percept what is right contributed some competence to the teaching authority of Tradition, the commonality of dogmatic theology could invoke the respective thinking only by beginning with the Scriptures. However, in the Eastern Orthodox setting, rather than taking Scripture on its own terms, the Orthodox ecclesial community accepted the authority of Tradition, emphasizing that the Gospel should be received only in the context of the Church, which was nourished and structured by the unique vision of Orthodox Eucharistic ecclesiology.

#### **4.4.4 Modern Debate on Doctrinal Continuity and Discontinuity in Orthodox Eucharistic Ecclesiology**

Russian Orthodox theologian Nicolas Afanassieff (1893—1966) traced the emergence of Eucharistic ecclesiology in the liturgical experience of the Early Church in which the assembly of the local church comprised the fullness of the Church (Afanassieff 1973:57-110). Affirming the centrality of the Eucharist as a main sacrament of the Church, Afanassieff articulated in this regard his basic principle: "where there is a eucharistic assembly, there Christ abides, and there is the Church of God in Christ" (Afanassieff

1963:459). A deeper link between the Eucharist and the Church, which was effectively lost in the previous centuries, has been increasingly assumed today in many theological teachings and trends, including the ecclesiology of the Catholic Church. As Cardinal Ratzinger explains:

The Church is the celebration of the Eucharist; the Eucharist is the Church; they do not simply stand side by side; they are one and the same; it is from there that everything else radiates. (Ratzinger 1987:53)

A similar recapitulation of the Eucharistic ecclesiology as the criterion of apostolic continuity has been re-analyzed in Eastern Orthodoxy with further elevation of the authority of Tradition as the sole norm of biblical interpretation. In other words, it demonstrates that "Orthodox theologians are free to find new meaning in old dogma but are not free to question or critique them" (Negrut 2005:43). Orthodox theologian Konstantinidis affirms in this regard:

It is well known that from the Orthodox point of view the question of authority in the Church is not only considered as an absolutely critical point of dialogue, but it also stands out as a condition of entering into theological dialogue with them [Catholics and Protestants]. (Konstantinidis 1985:74)

A modern approach to the doctrinal continuity and discontinuity debate regarding Eucharistic ecclesiology can be found in the theological dispute of the Orthodox Co-Chairman of the International Commission of Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue and a founder member of the Joint Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church Dr. John Zizioulas in his famous work *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (1985) and a prominent Protestant scholar John Erickson in his contemporary survey on the development of Orthodox ecclesiology *The Church in Modern Orthodox Thought: towards a Baptismal Ecclesiology* (2011). Erickson offers a significant critique of Orthodox Eucharistic ecclesiology so often taken as "perennially normative" (Erickson 2011:137) in recent approaches of some Orthodox theologians like Nicholas Afanasiev and John Zizioulas. Erickson began his discourse with a historical observation, paying attention to the fact that the early Church did not form an independent subject for theological investigation and exposition:

Christians proclaimed the message of one God, creator of heaven and earth, over against the various dualistic religious movements of the times. They preached Christ and the work of reconciliation of human beings with God that he accomplished. They did not start by proclaiming the Church, much less by writing books about the Church. The Church is an object of belief, a part of our faith. Yet there exists – at least for the Orthodox – no dogma of the Church analogous to the Trinitarian and Christological dogmas of the ancient ecumenical councils. (Erickson 2011:137).

In more specific terms, Erickson considers Orthodox Eucharistic ecclesiology, as "a relatively new branch of the theological enterprise" (Erickson 2011:138), arguing that

Orthodox presentations of ecclesiology – just as in Catholic presentations – the sacramental perspective of earlier ages was effectively supplanted by a largely institutional understanding of the Church. Erikson claims that the weaknesses of this approach to ecclesiology became more and more obvious in the twentieth century. Too often life within an autocephalous church has been compromised in various ways, equally unfortunate has been the absence of effective structures for maintaining communion (or even communication) between autocephalous churches and the result has been mutual indifference, absence of common activity, and periodic confrontation over such matters as the erection of new autocephalous or autonomous entities. This was the case during the communist ascendancy in Russia and Eastern Europe. (Erickson 2011:140)

Meditating on Zizioulas's contribution into Orthodox ecclesiology, Erickson criticizes the unrelenting sense of inconsistency in Zizioulas's laments, that one can only hope that "one day the bishop will find his proper place which is the Eucharist, and the rupture in Eucharistic ecclesiology caused by the problem 'parish-diocese' will be healed" (Erickson 2011:143). Erickson notes that at first Zizioulas fashioned an ecclesiology that is as profound as it is original. Yet it is alarming to learn that the Church suffers from a disruption in its most vital structures so serious that for most of its historical existence (presumably since the third or fourth century) it has only been able to hope for the restoration of proper wholeness! (Erickson 2011:143). It is even more alarming to find for Erickson that the remedy which Zizioulas proposes for this veritable Fall is so simple: "creation of small Episcopal dioceses", which "would enable bishops really to know their flocks and be known by them" and thus "automatically improve the pastoral quality of the episcopacy" (Erickson 2011:144). Therefore, Erickson (2011:141) sincerely questions whether Zizioulas has reflected seriously enough on the many ways in which the ecclesiological context of the Church is 'placed' has changed over the centuries. In Erickson's view, the weakness lies not in Zizioulas's theological vision but with the anachronistic way in which an idealized

second-century church order has been taken as normative in every detail for all ages and situations. For Erickson, Zizioulas and other adherents of *koinonia-ecclesiology* rightly indicated the catholicity of the local church, which is conditioned by communion, and therefore adequate structures for communion are necessary. Erickson further argues that:

the body of Christ, the temple of the Holy Spirit, possessing all the *essential notae ecclesiae*. It is the basic unit on which all subsequent speculation must be based. Thus, the Church that dwells in Corinth has the same unity, the same fullness as the Church that dwells in Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome – or New York or London. This essential unity of the local churches implies the essential unity and equality of their bishops. Episcopal ordination, therefore, is not to be conceived of as the transfer of power from those who possess it to one who does not, but rather as the manifestation of the fact that the divine gift which they have received in the Church from God has now been given by God to *this* bishop in *this* church. (Erickson 2011:141)

The main emphasis of Erickson's critical evaluation is related to "a point which most exponents of Eucharistic ecclesiology ignore completely, but which [...] needs much fuller elaboration: the Church is a Eucharistic organism, but only because the Church is a baptismal organism" (Erickson 2011:146). In the process of re-examination of modern Orthodox ecclesiology, Erickson identifies a dangerous tendency in church practice to ignore the significance of baptism, as necessary, but insignificant preconditions for future Eucharistic fellowship. He argues, that in Orthodox setting "baptism is something that happens in infancy, of little continuing significance in life save that it prepares one sooner or later for the Eucharist" (Erickson 2011:146). In contrast to such attitude, Erickson reminds that early Christians knew that their community "could be nothing other than a community of faith" (Erickson 2011:146). Hence, for Erickson, the importance of the catechumenate is evident:

It was not a matter of acquiring certain vital information – like how to refute the filioque or explain the Palamite essence/energy distinction. It involved a complete reorientation to life, the exorcism of demons and renunciation of false gods, and above all the *traditio* and *redditio* – the receiving and giving back – of the Church's confession of faith. In this perspective, Florovsky was quite correct when he observed, that the Church is catholic in every one of its members. What must be added is this: these members become Catholic only through proper Christian initiation. (Erickson 2011:147)



Having examined Zizioulas's Eucharistic ecclesiology in considerable details, Erickson was able to discover many elements of theological inconsistency and historical discontinuity within this modern Orthodox teaching. Erickson's intention (2011:147-48) was to correct Orthodox Eucharistic ecclesiology with a systematic exploration of implications of biblical baptism. Erickson further suggests that claiming "solid historical foundations" and "truly creative re-appropriation of the Tradition", Eucharistic ecclesiology as form of a "return to the sources", idealized the second-century church order as normative in every detail for all ages and situations, ignoring or glossing over evidence and not conforming to that model or have otherwise fallen into anachronism (Erickson 2011:147-48). Thus, while "the Eucharist may indeed be the source and summit of ecclesial life, it is also a means of strengthening and renewing the baptismal gift in the midst of the continuing vicissitudes of this earthly life" (Erickson 2011:148).

By failing to see the Eucharist in the light of baptism, Eucharistic ecclesiology too easily lends itself to triumphalism. This tendency toward a realized eschatology then begins to creep from the Eucharist into other aspects of church life, so that the Church qua Church comes to be seen as perfect in every respect (Erickson 2011:148). The New Testament and the Fathers are, in general, much more balanced, because they speak of the Church in dynamic images suggesting the possibility of growth and development, not just in static images suggesting an already achieved perfection or too easily lending themselves to what has been called "ecclesiological and soteriological exclusivism" (Erickson 2011:149).

The Orthodox Church believes that the turn to faith is fundamentally an issue of turning to truth. Because one can come to faith only through the church, access to truth is necessarily ecclesial (Volf 1998:52). Nevertheless, the book of Revelation and apostolic rebuke of believers in the epistles decisively dichotomized "received orthodoxy" with "faith and actions working together" (James 2:22). Horton makes a strong point, arguing that mere repetition of doctrinal formulas of the past offers no guarantee that the "living tradition" of the Christian faith is being adequately or accurately transmitted:

New Testament epistles even more than the Old Testament prophets, reveal just how quickly churches planted by the apostles themselves could be weakened by error. 'I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another' (Gal 1:6 NKJV). Orthodoxy's appeal to a direct line to the apostles is surely no greater ground for confidence than that which the Galatian churches could have claimed. Yet they were wrong. It is on the basis of the apostle's own rebukes that we know they were wrong, and their lofty place in the history of the church could not save them from the apostle's anathema. (Horton 2004:142)

This conclusion does not close the door to further analysis and examination. However, the evangelical insight of Horton reflected the depth of unresolved continuity and discontinuity of problematic issues — organizational continuity, ceremonial uniformity, and theological infallibility which always should have a proper foundation — either a historical evidence or Scripture as the basis of authority for life and doctrine. The institutional Church failed the test of power. One can receive the gospel from the Apostles' hands, but if Eucharistic assembly and ecclesiology do not stay and live in the truth of the Gospel, then the canon of faith and doctrinal sufficiency are compromised.

#### **4.4.5 Canonical Continuity and Discontinuity of Orthodox Tradition**

In the previous chapters, the study briefly described sacramental and doctrinal trends within Orthodox teaching to present some problematic areas of continuity and discontinuity issues within Pan-orthodox tradition. Although the traditional corpus of canons is a main factor of identity for both Catholic and Orthodox Churches: "as the twentieth century began, each of the major churches of the divided Christendom was obliged, for reason of its own, to address anew the doctrine of the church, its place in the mind of Christ, its essential message, its nature and identity, its mark of continuity, its authority and structure" (Pelikan 1964:28). The goal of theological discussion on the Orthodox vision of canonical continuity is not to eliminate this factor in sound Orthodoxy, but to limit its role to a more plausible model of succession. Wagschal argues in this regard, that

The Orthodox canon law has never undergone a legal revolution akin to that experienced by Western Europe in the twelfth century, and consequently has never seen the emergence of a significant class of legal professionals, an extensive standing court system, a major academic infrastructure, or a complex rationalized jurisprudence... As a result, Eastern canonical literature, traditional and modern, is less plentiful than its western counterpart by several orders of magnitude. (Wagschal 2012:383)

A similar low-profile estimation of the Orthodox corpus of canons as "unwritten traditions" is offered by Erickson in comparative relationship to the Roman Catholic *Iuris Canonici*:

The Orthodox Church has no code of canon law analogous to the Roman Catholic Church's Corpus *Iuris Canonici*. The Orthodox canonical corpus is a collection, not particularly systematic and certainly not thorough, of ancient conciliar and patristic texts that most often were formulated in response to particular issues and circumstances. Those responsible for these texts were concerned above all with maintaining the sacramental life of the Church, with safeguarding our full access to God in Christ, as it were. Church structures and institutions were meant to safeguard this reality. They have not considered apart from this reality, much less as something over this reality and controlling it in some way. Thus, when we examine the canons, just as when we examine the texts of the liturgy, the Church Fathers, and comparable sources, we will not find a full and authoritative definition of the Church, or even an attempt to provide such a definition. (Erickson 2011:138)

This analysis contains an important presupposition regarding the authoritative status of the Orthodox collection of canons which Eastern Orthodoxy attributes to generally recognized truth without any clear sense of theological normativity. In Orthodox scheme of salvation, the ubiquitous emphasis on canonical continuity represented Eastern Orthodoxy as the only source where the authentic faith is to be found (Alfeyev 2001; Arseniev 1979; Cavarinos 1996; Kuraev 1995). Behr, dean and professor of patristics at St. Vladimir's Theological Seminary, describes Orthodox theology that had emanated from the New Testament, continued through the church fathers, was guarded by the Apologists, and solidified in the ecumenical church councils as a representation of a continuous uninterrupted stream (cited in Köstenberger and Kruger 2010:53).

Lossky elaborates on the idea of canonical thinking claiming that canonical thinking was the assumption that "the Canon are not, properly speaking, juridical statutes, but the applications of the dogmas of the Church" (Lossky 1944:175). Bulgakov was convinced that "the independence of different Churches is no obstacle to their canonical union" (Bulgakov 1988:92). The application of old canons or legislation a new one is entirely possible since the central ecclesial organization is formed not at all "*Jure Divino*" (as Catholic affirm concerning the papal primacy), but "*Jure Ecclesiastico*," and more definitely "*Modo Historico*." This organization may be changed "according to the needs of the time" since

"the canonical vestment of the Church is woven on the loom of history, although always in accordance with the Church's divine foundation" (Bulgakov 1988:92).

The point of departure for canonical discontinuity is related to the very origin of ancient biblical canon, since "In the East, the patristic handling of the biblical canon was quite flexible and diverse, hence its ongoing open-endedness in the Eastern Orthodoxy" (Pentiuc 2014:170). This open-endedness of Eastern Orthodoxy explains the reverence paid to any types of creedal statements, stemmed from the belief that they bore witness to and made explicit the faith once delivered to the saints. The shift of perspective on the transmission of apostolic testimony was initiated in the second century by Irenaeus and Tertullian. Both of them identified Scripture and ecclesial tradition as coordinate channels of the apostolic revelation. The original message of Christ was often described in early sources as a tradition, faithfully delivered by the apostle orally or in epistles, as *apostolorum traditio* or *apostolica traditio* (Kelly 1968:35-37). Therefore, the correct exegesis became the prerogative of the Church, in which the apostolic tradition or doctrines were the keys to the correct interpretation of Scripture.

#### **4.4.6 Canonical Continuity and Discontinuity in the Living Tradition of the Orthodox Church and Patristic Writings**

Through the centuries, the Church has been attempting to solve the problem of heresies and orthodoxy to establish the unique oneness of centralized ecclesial authority. The reaction against Catholic interpretation of Tradition divided Protestants and Papists on the subject of Scripture and Tradition authority, univocal in its content and significance. As Dunn explains:

at the heart of Reformation was an appeal to Scripture over against the traditions of medieval Church. The criticism was in essence that ecclesial tradition was too far from the doctrine and practice of the apostles, as definitively set down in the New Testament (Dunn 2013:364).

Both groups, Scripture-fundamentalists and Tradition-fundamentalists, developed their distinctive apologetic approaches and theologies to canonize either a single-composite form of Scriptural authority (Protestant's *Sola Scriptura* principle) or a dual, tantamount *Partim-Partim* formula (Catholic's Scripture-Tradition duumvirate) "on which the Church can draw,

no less than on Scripture, for the intelligence and communication of revealed truth” (Burghardt 1962:42-75). Eastern Orthodoxy presented a third way — a phenomenon of *Living Tradition* which “intended to be equally affirmative of the points of lasting values on both sides of the debate and equally critical of others” (Dunn 2013:365). Elaborating on liturgical revision in churches today, Pitt, Alexopoulos and McConnell argue that “it is important to note that the aims of the twentieth-century liturgical reforms were never to reproduce exactly the earliest known forms of Christian worship or to eliminate all later developments as a departure from the ideal” (Pitt, Alexopoulos, McConnell 2012:6).

The initial idea to hear the voice of God not so much in the text of the Scriptures, but in the interpreted text of the Tradition was widely appreciated in the post-Nicene Church of the East with a legitimate concern “that it should not be reduced to an intellectual exercise, to a matter of proper dialectical method regardless of truth uttered” (Williams 2005:175). However, in this process a proper harmony between Scripture and Tradition began to erode and disappear, creating a new understanding of authority:

Jesus spoke strongly to His followers concerning authority. It was not ever to be modeled after the authority of lordship in society. Authority was to be *service*. The Early Church communities, following Jesus, used the gifts of the entire community to minister and serve one another... After Constantine, ecclesial authority became tightly intertwined with the power of the state. For centuries, popes and kings struggled for supremacy, temporal and spiritual. The ecclesial authority of the Middle Ages, using the model of the feudal system, was far removed from the *Diakonia* of Jesus. (Blanchfield 1988:261-62)

Though problematizations of the ecclesial exegesis and its associated practices have been a matter of concern to the present, the dichotomized model of Scripture-Tradition interpretation has expounded to a further presupposition that God's Word was in some way insufficient in content and subject to the authority of the Church (which gave birth to the Scriptures). The acceptance of ecclesial creeds puts more emphasis on faithful transmission of the tradition (Christ bestowed, and the apostles/bishops proclaimed), claiming that anyone who deviated from it could not count as a Christian. Oliver argues the following:

For hundreds of years, Christians believed that the twelve apostles were the authors of the widely known creed that bear their name. According to an ancient theory, the twelve composed the creed with each apostle adding a clause to form the whole. Today practically all scholars understand this theory of apostolic composition to be legendary. Nevertheless, many continue to think of the creed as apostolic in nature because its basic teachings are agreeable to the theological formulations of the apostolic age. (Oliver 2001:366)

As the notion of tradition was expanded by the clergy, and both theological and canonical practices were reserved for the intellectual elite of the Church, human creeds and liturgical customs reached new heights of what seemed to be an unimpeachable authority. McDonald explains that the essential feature is that "tradition was accepted as an authority, even though it was also flexible or fluid in a given community often for a long time and often modified or adapted to meet the needs of the community" (McDonald 2007:144). Blanchfield reminds in his reconstruction that "the church communities of the New Testament period evolved in various directions. No single type of community was founded. Structures were developed according to the needs of the different communities. The limited contact also precluded an established uniformity" (Blanchfield 1988:8). Tilley, a Roman Catholic theologian, points out that certain beliefs and practices deemed "traditional" by the church hierarchy are not found in the previous ages of the church in their present form or have no precedent at all. "If that which is passed on as a tradition has to be passed on 'unchanged and uncorrupted' over long periods of time, then there are no concrete traditions that will pass the test" (Tilley 2000:27). Protestants' cautious approach to the extra-biblical canons is explainable by the fact that any group of believers may take a conservative stance that what they had inherited is immutable. For example, Origen in the second century warned us:

We are not ignorant that many of these secret writings have been composed by impious men, from among those who make their iniquity sound loudest, and that some of these fictions are used by the "Hypythiani", others, by the disciples of Basilides. We must then pay attention, in order to receive all the Apocrypha, which circulate under the names of saints, for some have been composed by the Jews, perhaps to destroy the truth of our Scriptures, and to establish a false doctrine... (cited in Ouspensky and Lossky 1982:18).

Contrary to the modern positive assessment of Tradition by the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, the patristic vision of Tradition and traditions issue had a sophisticated, nuanced

and a more realistic way of handling the complexity of the theological standard from which various forms of early Christian Tradition either developed and/or deviated. The positive transmission of the great Christian Tradition is emphasized by Köstenberger and Kruger:

What happened to the Rule of Faith after the Fathers passed it along? Its contents, that is, the core gospel message, made its way into the third-and-fourth-century creeds...To sum up, then, the church fathers' Rule of Faith served both as a theological continuation of New Testament orthodoxy and as a conduit to the orthodoxy of the creeds. (Köstenberger and Kruger 2010:78)

Therefore, the origin of the New Testament's theological standards was successfully passed on and perceived through an interpretative portal of patristic exegesis. However, the negative transmission of the human traditions occurred when "the institution of the Church was absolutized in such a way that it tended to substitute itself for Christ or to understand itself as his equal" (Boff 1985:84). In this case, the patristics assessment, in turn, not only solidified the historical and theological continuity of the early Christian orthodoxy but also guarded the message of the Gospel with strong warnings not to employ or convert human ideas (traditions) into the ecclesial praxis:

*Ignatius of Antioch, To the Philadelphians 8.2; 9.1.*

For me, my archives, they are Jesus Christ; my inviolable archives are His cross and His death and His resurrection, and the faith comes from him... He is the Door of the Father, by which Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the prophets, and the Apostles, and the Church enter. (cited in Clendenin 2004:132)

In this quotation of Ignatius of Antioch, we can observe how human archives (traditions) are clearly contraposed to new archives of Jesus Christ as the only Source of true life and Christian identity. It is obvious that the New Testament revelation for Ignatius of Antioch has a supreme binding power, while "mischief is always the result when rival authorities are set alongside the Scripture" (Armstrong 1995:145).

*John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew 51.1*

From this, it is clear that the priests were instituting many new practices, even though Moses with great fear and with dreadful words has commanded that one should neither add nor take away anything. For he says, "Do not add this word that I am commanding you today, and do not take away from it" (Deut. 4:2). But this did not at all stop them from instituting new practices. Why did they turn things upside down? Because they were afraid that someone takes away their power. (cited in Oden 2002:17)

This admonitory appeal of John Chrysostom to the Church warns against continuous additions and amendments to religious practices to prevent the fault of paganism as a syncretic expression of faith. In the light of the New Testament theology, the study attempts to promote a more balanced view of the problem of Scripture and Tradition controversy: John Chrysostom not only created a glorious liturgy for the Eastern Orthodox Church, his level of consciousness was able to foresee a danger for new practices to misread and/or to misinterpret the Scriptures or even to turn things completely upside down.

*Theodore of Mopsuestia, Fragments 79.10-15*

The scribes were entirely preoccupied with something else. The Lord instead was teaching them to take care of the needs of the body, so long as they were encouraged to cultivate virtue... What reply, then, does the Lord make to this? "Why do you transgress the commandments of God for the sake of your tradition?" Thus, he reframes the question into an even graver accusation. They had not only broken God's command but also misused it for mistaken ends. In this way, by your peculiar traditions, you yourselves are dishonoring the gifts of Almighty God. (cited in Oden 2002:18-19)

The trajectory of human innovations established by a continuous liturgical activity of scribes in Theodore's approach clearly adopted the wrong functional mentality in the community of believers and was leading to a greater divine rebuke regarding the unauthorized installation of human "peculiar traditions", what according to Theodore's emphatical reaction, was a "dishonor to God". Articulating potential difficulties with such a shift, Florovsky explains that "the permanence of Christian belief was the most conspicuous sign and token of its truth: no innovations" (Florovsky 1972:98).

*Chromatius of Aquileia, Tractate on Mathew 53:7*

Since the scribes and Pharisees had burst forth in great arrogance and transgressed the divine law, they planted their own precepts but not God's. They wanted these to be observed as divine law. So, not without good reason, did they too, with this planting of their own doctrine, deserve to be uprooted by the Lord. (cited in Oden 2002:23)

In line with previous patristic elaborations, Chromatius of Aquileia speaks here about an internal motivation of innovators, who "planted their own precepts but not God's". For Chromatius, their theological reflection and praxis was a "transgression" of "the divine law" and it deserved "to be uprooted by the Lord". Therefore, the patristic insight affirms a proper dialectic of the Scripture-Tradition relationship: if the Word of God is not a supreme



imperative in Christian theology, then traditions of men, based on a subjective experience, are left to determine for themselves in modern culture what is true and what God has said. The contemporary exposition of Florovsky concerning traditional "argument from antiquity" used in the above discussion gives a great weight to these patristic conclusions:

This "argument from antiquity," however, had to be used with certain caution. Occasional references to old times and casual quotations from old authors could be often ambiguous and even misleading. This was well understood already at the time of the great Baptismal controversy in the third century, and the question about the validity or authority of "ancient customs" had been formally raised at that time. (Florovsky 1972:98)

Florovsky correctly admits that the "antiquity" is not the necessary precondition for the truth. Moreover, since the argument "from tradition" was first used by the heretics (Gnostics), Florovsky suggests that "the appeal to 'antiquity' or 'traditions' had to be selective and discriminative. Certain alleged 'traditions' were simply wrong and false" (Florovsky 1972:99). The analytical collision of the discussed problem relates primarily to the Church experience. Boff argues, for example: "what the Church defends is not so much its divine authority but the historical form that this authority has assumed" (Boff 1985:41|). In case of Eastern Orthodoxy directly or indirectly Orthodox traditions "have been confronting a problem of ongoing adjustment: how to make sense of a pre-modern legal system in the context and categories of a very different, post-medieval legal culture" (Wagschal 2015:12-13). The comparison of such "modern adjustments" in relation to previous Orthodox beliefs can be illustrated in the following chart:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Orthodox theologian</b> <b>ANDREY KURAEV</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Protestantam o Pravoslaviyi (To Protestants about Orthodoxy), 2003.</i> Chapter 4. Can we baptize children or infants?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Church Father, Apologist</b> <b>TERTULLIAN</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>De Baptismo (On Baptism), Chapter XVIII</i> Of the persons to whom, and the time when baptism is to be administered.</p>
<p>1. Yes, the child does not know what the Church is and what principles it is built on. But the Church is not a philosophical club, not just a gathering of like-minded people... (Kuraev 2003:94).</p>	<p>1. But they whose office it is, know that baptism is not rashly to be administered (ANF 3, 677).</p>

<p>2. Are children excommunicated from by all Christians to be a door which introduces the person into the Church of Christ for the sole reason that the rules of Roman law do not see them as those with the signs of "competence"? (Kuraev 2003: 94).</p> <p>3. And this petition for the gift of clear conscience - is it premature for a baby? Of course, a baby can not promise anything, but isn't it able to ask? Is not all his being a mere asking? (Kuraev 2003:103).</p> <p>4. And in the New Testament texts, we see the description of the events, which involve the baptism of children together with adults. Lydia and her household were baptized (Acts 16:15); the jailer 'and all his household' (Acts. 16:31); Paul baptized Stephan's family, and it is quite possible that there were minors. According to Apostle Paul, there are 'children who believe' (and elders should be appointed only if they are people who have such children (see Titus 1:6)) (Kuraev 2003: 105-106).</p> <p>5. But there is a positive meaning in baptism, moreover over subjective. Baptism is not merely an external manifestation of the inner intention of a person ('the answer of a good conscience toward God'). A baptism is an event that changed the world in which a man lives (Kuraev 2003:96).</p> <p>6. Baptism is a door leading to the people of God, and it's not a legal 'acquisition of citizenship rights,' but joining to the Body of Christ, receiving the blessed cover, and gracious help (Kuraev 2003:96).</p>	<p>2. On the contrary, this precept is rather to be looked at carefully: 'Give not the holy thing to the dogs, nor cast your pearls before swine;' and, 'Lay not hands easily on any; share not other men's sins' (ANF 3, 677).</p> <p>3. God's approbation sends sure premonitory tokens (<i>prerogatives</i>) before it; every 'petition' [of man] may both deceive and be deceived (ANF 3, 678).</p> <p>4. And so, according to the circumstances and disposition, and even age, of each, the delay of baptism is preferable; principally, however, in the case of little children. For why is it necessary if (baptism itself) is not so necessary that the sponsors likewise should be thrust into danger? Who both themselves, because of mortality, may fail to fulfill their promises, and may be disappointed by the development of an evil disposition, in those for whom they stood? The Lord does indeed say, 'Forbid them not to come unto me' (Matt. 19, 14) (ANF 3, 678).</p> <p>5. If Philip so "easily" baptized the chamberlain, let us reflect that a manifest and conspicuous evidence that the Lord deemed him worthy had been interposed. The Spirit had enjoined Philip to proceed to that road: the eunuch himself, too, was not found idle, nor as one who was suddenly seized with an eager desire to be baptized; but, after going up to the temple for prayer's sake, being intently engaged on the divine Scripture (ANF 3, 678).</p> <p>6. Let them "come", then, while they are growing up; let them "come" while they are learning, while they are learning whither to come; let them become Christians when they have become able to know Christ. Why does the innocent period of life hasten to the "remission of sins?" (ANF 3, 678).</p>
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<p>7. It is true; you can't force a person. But why should we consider babies to be demons? What reasons do we have to believe that they are opposed to union with Christ? Do Protestants agree with the statement of Tertullian, that the human soul is Christian in its nature? (Kuraev 2003:94).</p>	<p>7. Let them know how to “ask” for salvation, that you may seem (at least) to have given “to him that asketh” (Luke. 6, 30) ... If any understand the weighty import of baptism, they will fear its reception more than its delay: sound faith is secure of salvation (ANF 3, 678).</p>
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The "regress" model (discontinuity inclinations) presented in the chart above clearly indicates what an early Church father Cyprian had affirmed: “Nor ought custom, which had crept in among some, to prevent the truth from prevailing and conquering; for custom without truth is the antiquity of error” (Cyprian 1868:283). Blessed Augustine taught in his work *On Baptism*, “The Lord says in the gospel, ‘I am the Truth.’ He does not say, ‘I am custom.’ Therefore, when the truth is made manifest, custom must give way to truth. Clearly, no one could doubt that custom should give way to truth where it is made manifest” (Augustine 2007 (1887): 439). Irenaeus of Lyons, whom the Catholic Church gave a special title of “a man of tradition (paradosis)” (Moffatt 1944:71) offers a very simple way to verify the Tradition which is very similar to the position of Evangelical Theology: “For if what they produce is the Gospel of Truth, and is different from those which the apostles handed down to us, those who care to can learn how it can be shown from the Scriptures themselves that [then] what is handed down from the apostles is not the Gospel of Truth” (Richardson 1970:384). Irenaeus did not speculate about the authority of Scripture, being a practical theologian and not a formal philosopher. He provided the framework of formal theology which reveres Scripture and vigorously asserts its authority for Christians, “For we learned the plan of our salvation from no others than from those through whom the gospel came to us. They first preached it abroad, and then later by the will of God handed it down to us in Writings, to be the foundations and pillar of our faith” (Richardson 1970:370).

Ancient canonical beliefs in the integrity and continuity of tradition is an important part of Orthodox identity. Nevertheless, the community-forming power of the divine and sacred canons retains a keen sense of ever-present novelties and quasi-legal innovations in Christian theology and praxis. Meyendorff points out an uneasy relation “between holy tradition itself and human traditions, which may well carry on precious truths but are not absolute in themselves, and which may furthermore easily become spiritual obstacles for

true theology, as were those human traditions that Jesus himself condemned (Mark 7:1-13)." (Meyendorff 2004:90) Therefore, the solid coherence with the teaching of Scripture as advocated by the Apostle Paul to Timothy, forms the only solid basis for knowing the will of God.

A modern Orthodox theologian, Professor of Moscow Theological Academy, Alexei Osipov recently admitted his concerns with the practice of infant baptism generally and specifically in the Eastern Orthodox Church. He supported observations of a Russian historicist Bolotov regarding late adult baptism in the early Church (Osipov 2011:178-179). Osipov argued in this regard that "boundaries of the Church [are] wider its canonical earthly limits" and, therefore, the reception of the gift of the grace of baptism and entry into the body of Christ (Col. 1,24) is possible in non-Orthodox denominations (Osipov 2011:154-155). Becoming increasingly dissatisfied with modern developments of Orthodox canonical law, Meyendorff correctly locates the problem between those who absolutize the letter of the canons and those who deny altogether the validity of the Orthodox canonical corpus as it stands today. He puts the issue of canonical discontinuity in the following perspective,

Meyendorff assumes, that If there is an area in which contemporary Orthodox can be in crisis, it is certainly canon law. "The crisis is obvious to ourselves and the world around us. Conservatives and liberals, pro-ecumenists and anti-ecumenists, defenders of the *status quo* and reformers, are all invoking canons; but, in fact, no one seems to ask the fundamental question. (Meyendorff 1978:99) Meyendorff further asserts that criterion for making a selection of "correct" canon to which we are all referring is unclear and defused:

Are they all *legally* binding? Why, then, have some of them fallen into oblivion, without ever having been formally invalidated? If they are not legally binding, why do we invoke some of them so often? [...] Is it not obvious that in our Orthodox Church, where there are so many divisions on practical issues and attitudes, each group finds canons seemingly justifying its own position, but forgets not only other texts but more importantly, the basic and consistent Tradition of the Church? (Meyendorff 1978:99)

For Meyendorff, the struggle over canonical discontinuity leads to a key inquiry – "to discover what this basic Tradition is" (Meyendorff 1978:99). He recognizes that while the ancient canons could remain as criteria of church polity, the decrees of medieval emperors have certainly lost their binding character. The Greek Church adopted "the so-called

*Pedalion* – a new compilation of canonical text, as its standard manual. The Church of Russia issued the so-called *Kniga Pravil*, a collection of ancient canons (Apostles, Councils, Fathers) together with commentaries by Aristenos, Zonaras, and Balsamon” (Meyendorff 1978:100-102). At these grounds, Meyendorff continues to provide a plausible setting for the absence of consistency in the canonical development of Eastern Orthodoxy that can be seen in the unfulfilled task of providing a standard codification of ancient canons, which would be obligatory for the entire universal Orthodox Church, since "at no time in its history has the Orthodox Church ever had a code of canon law comparable to the *Corpus juris canonici* of the Roman Church" and today "each autocephalous Orthodox Church follows its own state, which applies the principles found in the ancient canons to the concrete requirements of church life in specific parts of the world" (Meyendorff 1978:102).

#### **4.4.7 Conclusion: The Erosion of Orthodox Canonical Authority**

Having analyzed the threefold predicate of Stylianopoulos' *Homeostasis* (teaching on complete sacramental, doctrinal, and canonical continuity of Orthodox Tradition with the ancient undivided church), we may conclude that the normative definition of continuity in Eastern Orthodoxy is adapted to a particular faith tradition, that legitimizes all significant (historically and biblically valid) and insignificant (non-valid) distinctive elements of the Tradition toward Orthodox holism and triumphalism. This discrepancy and confusion produced an ongoing crisis in Orthodox canonical authority. Canonical elaborations crystallized the Orthodox Tradition, which faithfully kept its forms, but significantly lost its substance. The reflexive relationship between closed canon (sacred Scriptures) and open canon (Orthodox canonical corpus) demonstrates that it was continuity of revelation and not continuity of tradition that played a key role for primitive Christian consciousness and identity. The task of the canon was to reveal Christ and Orthodox Tradition along with ecclesial structures initially functioning as a means of that revealing. The reassessment of canonical controversies points to the fact that Orthodox extra-biblical canons pretend to be universal in their validity, beyond time and place, but at the same time, they put themselves under an accusation of an ahistorical and/or human creation. In addition to that, the Orthodox emphasis on oral tradition completely ignores the fact that a general New Testament trend was to move in the direction of the written tradition.

As it was noted earlier, the primitive Christian congregations were not shapeless communities in which spiritual goods were anonymously created. All the sources from early Christianity indicate that even in first stages, certain leaders and teachers occupied positions of authority in the congregations and that those men were in contact with one another. "The Twelve," with the Peter at their head, had the central authority which even Paul had to take into account. The typical features of Jesus authority have been preserved in the form of mysterious power (*exousia*) to proclaim his eternal reign (*meshalim*) manifested in the church after Easter (Gerhardsson 1979:79-80). We should also note that at precisely this point, the emergent Catholic Church displays a negative attitude to this gnostic concept of tradition, and only adopts it for her own use with a good deal of hesitation (Irenaeus, *Ad. Haer.* 3:1-3).

Von Campenhausen assumes that the Church mistrusted the ever-spreading flood of secret revelations and traditions, constantly bearing something new on its swirling waters, and attempts to confine herself to that which is primal, fixed, and laid down once for all, that which is not in any sense secret but is known to all and can indeed be handed on and maintained only as something known and incontestable. This may be the explanation why even as early as the Pastorals their author, in his polemic against Gnostic "myths", "genealogies", and "old wives' tales", avoids the concept of tradition (παραδοσις), and speaks instead of that "property which is entrusted" (παραθηκη), the deposit of the apostolic teaching (Von Campenhausen 1969:161).

Von Campenhausen points out that the critical scholarship provides ample evidence that the concept of teaching authority in the Church was tending far more in the direction of a "scriptural" principle than toward the justification of a free, oral, dynamically shaped tradition" (Von Campenhausen 1969:161). McDonald indicates a growing tendency on the part of the second-century church to transfer the recognized authority of the teaching of Jesus found in the Gospels to the documents themselves, including the Letters of Paul. This transfer of authority is seen most clearly in the writings of Justin, and after him with increasing frequency and clarity in the writings of Irenaeus, Theophilus of Antioch, and Athenagoras (McDonald 2007:1122). The development of Eastern Orthodoxy gradually drifted into close approximation to the later form of Byzantine Christianity. By the end of the

second century, some fundamental changes were introduced to the Christian concept of authority:

- 1) The concept of the *ecclesial authority* of the ministerial office gradually linked not only with a community but with a professional hierarchy of New Testament – the priesthood;
- 2) The temptation to extend the apostolate beyond the apostle generation put forward bishops on historical stage as a new authority and "apostolic heirs" who received their teaching and to some extent their office;
- 3) The Church needed a way to assert its authority and Tertullian's formula "*primum*" is the "*verum*" was effectively employed to justify centralized ecclesial authority;
- 4) In the light of new evidence and regarding organizational structure, no definite patterns of authority (vertical or horizontal) can be found within a primitive church to delineate official rights and duties of the hierarchy. Various theological attempts to attribute to Peter a special primacy over the Twelve were unconvincing and lame. Initially, apostolic unity was not a unity of an organized church, but the unity of their witness (vocation) to Christ;
- 5) In order to abrogate and set aside the "old orthodoxy" (the Law of Moses), God raised the authority of apostle Paul, since for the majority of Judaizers still counted that law as a holy thing. Jewish Orthodoxy (Old Testament Theonomy) had to be replaced with words "full of the Spirit and life" (Jn. 6:63) – New Testament Christonomy.

Reflecting on the authority debates, Dunn asserts that neither a "living tradition" of the church nor scriptural writings should be seen as coming into existence *de novo*, as a creation 'ex nihilo' (Dunn 2009:182-183). Despite modern Orthodox claims, "the church did not give these texts canonical authority for the first time, except in a formal sense. Rather, canonization was a recognition and acknowledgment of the canonical authority that these texts were already exercising; they had already been cherished as providing a definitively authoritative rule for faith and life" (Dunn 2009:184). Unfortunately, for the Church, a significant point of erosion happened when the traditional material was expanded and

elaborated or contracted and treated in summary fashion, giving *de facto* to the traditions and fathers overriding authority in matters of daily praxis. In this process "the living word of God was evidently being heard not so much in the text itself, but in the interpreted text" (Dunn 2009:186).

Being strongly attuned to the literary paradigm, Bultman's progression of "Jesus of history - Christ of faith - a particular ecclesial tradition" brought up an important assumption that each layer in the gospel is laid or builds upon another, reflecting the most striking combination of fixity (stability) and flexibility (diversity) of the same yet different (Bultman 1935:12-13). Orthodox theologian Afanas'ev came to a similar conclusion that "not only the Byzantine canonical tradition but all canon law, is a disastrous subversion of the Church's life" (cited in Nichols 1992:423). Afanas'ev eventually found himself unable to accept a compatibility of any kind between law and the community of charity and therefore, repudiated the distinction between divine, unchangeable elements in the canon law and human, changeable ones. They created for himself a virtually intolerable situation as for an ecclesiologist, concerned with the theological foundations of canon law, raising a question "as to whether the life of the Church, as a community of grace, can ever be appropriately expressed in the form of canons, rules, laws, since grace when expressed in Christian practice is agape, charity, of its nature unspecifiable in legal terms." (cited in Nichols 1992:418).

The retention of such impression effectively demolishes the whole edifice of the Orthodox history of tradition erected on the assumption of continuity. Theological difficulties regarding the authoritative role of Orthodox canon law in the Church can hardly ever be totally resolved since the authority of Orthodox Tradition was compromised by oral character of ecclesial *paradosis* (παράδοσις) that first appeared in history as a personal story to be treasured, but soon became variously depended in its formulations upon the pronouncements/emphasis of a particular teacher/tradition.



## CHAPTER 5

### THE ORIGIN OF AUTOCRATIC ORTHODOX TRADITION IN MUSCOVITE RUSSIA

#### 5.1 Introduction

The latest changes in the countries of Eastern Europe, including the re-emergence of Ukraine on the map of Europe since 1991 and the rise of authoritarian tendencies in Russia and Belarus in the wake of the 'Orange Revolution' of 2004, pose "important questions about the origins of the East Slavic nations and the essential similarities or differences between their cultures and religious traditions" (Plokhy 2006:ix). Russian national identity has been exposed to particularly strong challenges in the wake of the opening up of Eastern Europe in 1991 for pro-western liberalization. Post-Soviet Russia's national consciousness at present requires a new connection to the Russian past, but also a recognition of the legacies, both imperial and Soviet. As the only national institution that remained intact throughout the entirety of Russian history, the Russian Orthodox Church emerged after 1991 as a cultural force in Russian life and an important element in Russian national identity (McCoy Roslof 2004:1). Shubin reminds that "It is difficult to write solely a history of the Russian Orthodox Church, because the history of Russia as a state, people and culture is completely interwoven with their religion, and every event, person and location has a religious involvement or attachment to it" (Shubin 2004:1-2).

The problem of historical self-identification is a pressing issue in the political and cultural controversies even of those countries that have enjoyed a fairly smooth and continuous historical evolution. Franklin points out that the moment all pagan Eastern Slavic tribes had re-emerged in a new form, it was the day of their conversion to Christianity (Franklin 2002:158-65). Franklin reminds that, based on chronicler's testimony, at least some of the tribal names did survive well into the early twelfth century. Yet the Primary Chronicle drops them altogether from its narrative after 988, when the names derived from the regional urban centers to replace the old tribal names. Once converted, the Slovene, Severiane, Krivichi turned into the Novgorodians, Chernigovians, and Polotchans (Franklin 2002:158-71). It would be significant to note that for some chroniclers, Christian identity naturally overcame tribal divisions, making them superior and more advanced. Tolochko, for

instance, asserts that “ethnicity, as it was, is an attribute of heathenness and has been left in the pagan past and Christian Rus’ is presented as a single unified nation created by the conversion” (Tolochko 2008:180). Tolochko further assumes that this transformation was not an actual sign of the rapid integration processes but a later ideological counterfeit:

The concept of the ‘Old Rus’ nation’ was advanced, and in just one generation the ‘tribes’ were being assimilated into the single nation matching a single political unit. Rooted in nineteenth-century ideas of nation and state, this theory imagined a medieval polity similar to a modern state, capable of erasing local identities and loyalties and of producing a unified nation. (Tolochko 2008:180)

Another questionable story has to do with the legend of Apostle Andrew visiting Kiev’s hills to establish the Rus’ state. Brim (2002:227–260) suggests in this regard that at the earlier stage of the chronicles, both stories were strategically placed by some historians, like Soloviev and Kliuchevsky, at the opening of the Rus’ annals to emphasize consequent route ‘from the Varangians to the Greeks’ to create in the reader’s mind an ideological axis around which the territorial structure of the Kievan state have been formed.

When we turn to today’s Russia, the problem of historical self-identification demonstrates a very strong sense of their history, vividly encapsulated in the Russian expression *sviaz’ vremeni* i.e. the tie of ages (Chumakov 2003; Nesterov 1980). McDaniel points out that “although the Russian vision of modernity was widely believed to embody higher moral principles than those of the West, the attempt to modernize partly on the basis of the ‘Russian idea’ was the source of innumerable tensions and dilemmas in the society” (McDaniel 1996:23). Inherent contradictions of these efforts were critically observed by a Russian philosopher Florovsky, who taught that “the history of Russian culture is all made up of interruptions, of paroxysms, of denials or enthusiasms, of disappointments, betrayals, ruptures” (cited in McDaniel 1996:23). In addition to historical analyses, the theological task of objective and systematic interpretation of the general attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church and its hierarchy, relating to issues of national identity (including appeals to national symbols and sentiments of pride and greatness) is to examine national mythology, collective memory, political values, and the ‘Russian idea’.

In order to understand the predominance of a particular organizational form of authority (autocephaly) amongst the Eastern Orthodox churches, geo-political and a socio-historical

context of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority should be established in connection with modern reassertion of local, religious, or ethno-national identities of Eastern Slavs (Smith 1981; Clark 2000; Agadjanian and Roudometof 2005).

The primary purpose of this chapter is to explore the formation of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority in Kievan Rus and Muscovite state as well as to examine the origin of the idea of autocratic sovereignty, and the forms in which it emerged as a central principle of authority of the Grand Princes of Moscow in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The interest to the origin and emergence of autocratic ideology in Muscovite Russia was demonstrated also by the following scholarly works: Charbonneau 1967, Dvornik 1962, Hrushevsky M 1999, Gudziak 1992, Kluchevsky 1960, Kucharzewski 1948, Vernadsky 1958 and others. It would be significant to admit that a comprehensive and continuous analysis of complex and varied factors instrumental in the origin and emergence of the idea of autocracy in Muscovite Russia is not the purpose of this study. The research will concentrate on the main trend of the autocratic principles of Byzantine/Moscow political philosophy reflected in Orthodox Tradition and advocated by the Russian Church. It is worth noting here that the principal ground of the research is not the comparison of Kiev and Moscow or Ukraine and Russia, but a chronological process of Orthodox Tradition formation. Here is, for example, how Laruelle summed up this point of contradiction:

In their writings on historiography, the Eurasianists attack the classic Kiev-Moscow-Saint Petersburg triad in Russian history, which they consider Eurocentric. Rehabilitating the East entails formulating a new theoretical grid: Eurasian history is divided into five dialectical stages (from opposition to domination and then to symbiosis) by "rhythms" resulting from the meeting of two principles: forest and steppe. Eurasian history is, on this account, composed of two elements, the Russian and the Turanian: "Slavdom' s cohabitation with Turandom is the central fact of Russian history." Ancient Russian history is, on this reading, a depiction of the dominance of the nomads and their acculturation of the early Slavs. Kievan Rus' and the Saint Petersburg period are denounced as expressions of a European rather than a Eurasian Russianness. Eurasianist historiography thus focuses on the Mongol period and on fourteenth- through sixteenth-century Muscovy. (Laruelle 2008:41)

A similar historical reflection suggested by Plokhy assumes that Soviet historiography failed to recognize the artificial character of the main national paradigms, which "have survived

both Soviet repression and the emigration of bearers of national historiographic traditions to the West” (Plokhy 2006:ix). The problems with the current understanding in post-Soviet historiography arose “since the fall of the USSR” when “those paradigms reappeared in the East Slavic lands and even blossomed on the ruins of Soviet historiography” (Plokhy 2006:ix). To make the problems even more complex, some modern scholars and/or ideologists apply different methodological approaches, techniques, and terminology, developed within their separate disciplines, to describe ethnic and political developments in early medieval Europe (Garipzanov, Geary and Urbańczyk 2008:3-4). Therefore, while analyzing early medieval historiography on the formation of ethnic identities, one must be aware of dealing with a complicated ideological phenomenon, in which geopolitical, cultural and territorial units are reconstructed not only on the basis of archaeological methods but primarily via the much later medieval discourse of the imperial chroniclers.

## **5.2 The formation of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority in Kievan Rus and Muscovite state**

Many autocratic ideas were used later in Orthodox Christianity as an excluding factor since as early as the fifteenth century and the very definition of the “frontier” refers to the area that separated Orthodox people from the non-Orthodox (Kollmann 1997:36). Moscow began its life in 1147 as a border village on the frontiers between Slavic Christendom and the world of Islam (Tatars and Mongols), being a provincial outpost of Vladimir-Suzdal principedom. The history of Moscow successfully continued with the Mongol conquest of Northern and South-Western Kievan Rus', during a period known in Russian historiography as the "Tatar Yoke". Initially, Moscow was very typical *ulus* of Golden Horde, which appointed rulers had a distinctive *beklyarбек* title, approved and attested by Khan's patent of authority - *yarlyk* (Halperin 1987; Boyle 1977; Vernadsky 1953). Nevertheless, according to Soviet and Russian historiographies, "Russians have dismissed and downplayed the two-hundred-year Mongol conquest of their country" (Maximick 2009:14). The structure and functioning of the Muscovite state under Mongol-Tatar Yoke are also discussed in the works of Atwood 2004, Waugh 2009, Yenikejev 2009, Yenikejev and Kitabchi 2012.

The ethno-national discourse of autocratic legitimacy shows that Tatars and Mongols played an important role in the evolution and development of Russia from a political, social

and economic perspective. In about 1330, the Moscow princes became tax collectors for the khans and took advantage of administrative mechanisms that would later help them consolidate increasingly independent political power (Waugh 2009:177). Modern Tatar's researchers (Yenikeyev and Kitabchi 2012:83-88) insist that *Moscow ulus* became a strong and quite an independent state not "in spite of the dominance of the Horde", as it explained by official Russian historians. On the contrary, Moskovia gained this rich and strong power exclusively due to the help and support of the Tatar Horde which was conquered by Romanov's government only in the XVII-XVIII centuries:

As we have seen, the historians of Romanovs hid from us the fact of existence of the country Tataria, in which ruled the Great Horde - the political organization, founded by Tatars in XII century. Also [it] was hidden from us, how and when ceased to exist the Great Horde and its country - Great Tataria. (Yenikeyev and Kitabchi 2012:82)

Unlike Kievan Rus', where the right to exercise princely power was reserved for those of the blood of Rurik, Muscovite princes exercised authority by the virtue of the Khan's *yarlyk*, which, in fact, was the only dispenser of legitimacy in the Russian lands. Every time a Moscow prince visited *Sarai-Berke* (the capital of Golden Horde, on the Volga River), he saw an enormous amount of power concentrated in the hands of one man - the Khan. When a Muscovite Tsar Ivan IV finally destroyed *Sarai-Berke* after conquering the *Astrakhan Khanate* in 1556, this style of authority, *absolutnoye samoderjaviye* (*absolute monarchy*), became immanent for all Russian princes till present times - Golden Horde moved into Moscow Kremlin, turning the Muscovite Tsar into a despot,

The autocracy and despotism, that are characteristic of the grand-principality of Moscow after the fifteenth century, are only in part an inheritance from the Mongols. In this area, the influence of Byzantium is, at least, as great as that of the Golden Horde. (Neander 1954:267)

Thus, in the historical perspective, "Moscow was from that time an heir not only of Byzantium, but also of the Golden Horde. The Russians absorbed many traits of Mongol culture. Language, decorative arts, strategy, customs are, in general, the domains in which this action was exercised" (Denissoff 1950:229). After the destruction of Mongol suzerainty, the Grand Princes of Moscow began to think of themselves as autocrats commissioned by God. The same God who universally established authority over people and who imparted to the ruler a divine mandate also raised him to the throne without human intervention. Such a

belief, vigorously preached by the Russian Church, was essential to the transformation of the Grand Prince from the senior patrimonial prince to the autocratic sovereign of all Russia (Charbonneau 1967: iv). It is true that the religious tolerance of the Mongols was marked “not so much by high-mindedness as by indifference” (Morgan 1986:41). However, it would be wrong to assume that during the time indicated in the research, both Mongols and Tatars practiced shamanism, but not Islam. In his book *Great Empires of the Past: Empire of the Mongols*, Burgan suggests that “by the 12th century, the tribes of Mongolia included the Tatars, the Mongols, the Kereyids, the Naimans, and the Merkits” (Burgan 2004:8). Throughout the ancient world, at this time religion played an important role and “the Islamic influence spread into Central Asia, where Turkic tribes lived” (Burgan 2004:9). Lentz and Lowry admit that Islamic culture “became hegemonic at the increasingly cultured Mongol successor courts, which oversaw the construction of mosques and madrasas, the production of literary manuscripts and miniature paintings, and the patronage of scientists, astronomers, poets, and historians” (Lentz and Lowry 1989:24). In his mutual book with Nicolle *Armies of the Volga Bulgars & Khanate of Kazan 9th–16th Centuries*, assistant professor from the History Department of Penza University in Penza (Russia) Shpakovsky argues that Islam was introduced quite earlier to a multi-confessional mosaic of pagan worshippers in Khazar and Western Turkic Khaganates. During the 7th and the 8th centuries, the Khazars fought a series of wars against the Umayyad Caliphate and its Abbasid successor:

They remained under Khazar domination until the Khazar Khanate was defeated by Kievan Russia in 965. Apart from the payment of tribute to the Khazar Khanate, the subordination of the Bulgars was not particularly harsh; they were largely left to conduct their affairs independently, as were most other subordinate peoples of the loosely organized but very extensive Khazar Khanate. This was the situation described in AD 922 by an Arab ambassador and Muslim missionary from Baghdad, Ahmad Ibn Fadlan Ibn al-Abbas Ibn Rashid Ibn Hammad (better known to an indebted posterity simply as Ibn-Fadlan), who visited the Volga Bulgars. His primary mission was to convert them to Islam, and to supervise the construction of their first mosque. However, he also kept some sort of journal, and after his return to the Abbasid capital, he wrote about his journey to the lands of the Iltäbär (vassal ruler) Almish, Yiltawar of the Volga Bulgars. (Shpakovsky and Nicolle 2013:7)

It should be pointed out that “this initial conversion was somewhat superficial as far as the majority of his people were concerned, but nevertheless they and their descendants remain Muslim to this day” (Shpakovsky and Nicolle 2013:7). David Wasserstein (2007:373–386)

also believes that the Qağan was forced to accept terms involving conversion to Islam, and to subject himself to the Caliphate. A well-entrenched Islamic identity of Volga Bulgars and Tatars is advocated by Yenikeyev and Kitabchi in *Forgotten Heritage of Tatars*:

It is well known that the most part of Tatars professes Islam, and the less part of them profess Christianity. Anti-Tatar historians conceal from us that moment when Tatars started to profess those religions. They conceal it to show Tatars like 'pagans-nomads'. Because you know that professing even one of the world's religions is an innateness of the nation with high cultural level. (Yenikeyev and Kitabchi 2012:42)

According to Yenikeyev and Kitabchi, the ancestors of the Tatars adopted Islam much earlier than the tenth century AD: "This myth is based on the notes, written by Ahmed Ibn Fadlan. But what he really says is that on the way to Bulgar he met a lot of Turks, which believed in single God and 'made mention of Allah'. And when Fadlan arrived in Bulgar town, he prayed with locals in a Cathedral mosque. Islam was already professed in Bulgar khanate before Ibn Fadlan's arriving. All of this suggests that Islam had already been professed in Bulgar khanate and in other areas of the Volga region and Ural long before Ibn Fadlan's arriving" (Yenikeyev and Kitabchi 2012:42). In addition to that, Tatars-Muslims honor Chingiz Khan as their great ancestor, and co-religionist.

Therefore, the Tatar scientists, when they told Celebi on the adoption of Islam by Tatars, linked this fact with the personality of Chingiz-Khan. Such method was commonly used in eastern publicism of those times. So, the Tatar scientists expressed their deep respect to Chingiz-Khan. Thus, in fact, they not sinned against the truth and authentically reflected two important facts. The first is that the Tatars are Muslims since ancient times and they converted to Islam during the lifetime of the prophet Muhammad. The second fact is that Chingiz Khan also professed early Islam. (Yenikeyev and Kitabchi 2012:43)

A recent study of Balabanlilar also reveals "the absolute consolidation of power under Chingis Khan and his immediate successors" as "the cultural and scholarly achievements attained under Mongol patronage, particularly that of the Ilkhanid Mongol successor state incorporating much of the Islamic world..." She also defines "the emergence of powerful Muslim empires" in terms of "the most critical developments in the early modern world", which "was to replace the fragmented tribal alliances and minor sultanates which had remained in the void left by Mongol failure and collapse in the central Islamic lands. These great empires: the Ottomans and Safavids, the Uzbeks and Mughals, shared Central Asian

Turkic political traditions” (Balabanlilar 2016:28). According to Malik, “this conversion of the Mongols to Islam led to the blending of the Mongol and Tatar cultures and eventually the Mongols became totally assimilated. Consequently, Mongol history became the Tatar patrimony” (Malik 2000:169).

The full range of the historical data about the issue can best be summarized by Florence Hodous, who assumes that “while the Mongols were originally shamanist, they were tolerant of various faiths” and soon “Christianity, Judaism and Buddhism gained increased prominence, and occasionally, political influence” (Hodous 2016:106). One important condition for mass conversion from the Mongolian folk religion (shamanism) was a settled urban state, where churches, synagogues or mosques provided a focus for religion, as opposed to a free Mongol lifestyle in the open steppes (Golden 2007). Historically, by XII century AD, the Tatar motherland extended from Astrakhan on the Caspian Sea along the River Volga to Kazan and included the traditional Bashkorts lands, which were contiguous to Kazakhstan and stretched onward in the direction of the Muscovite state.

Since the purpose of any historical inquiry is to revise or even fully overturn our naïve views of the past, the most plausible conclusion of the disputed issue is that the qualifying majority of Mongols and Tatars by XII century AD professed Islam, while an insignificant numbers of people among Volga Bulgars, Tatars and Mongols might have confessed and practiced Christianity (primarily slaves from Slavic lands and their converts) or Judaism (due to Jewish migration from both the Islamic world and Byzantium during periods of persecution between 650 and 850 AD). Therefore, within the mainstream of the modern historical reconstruction, it seems to have become an accepted legitimate hypothesis to refer to Mongols and Tatars of the XII century AD as Islam followers with a profoundly diverse religious background, in which the shamanistic heritage did not have attributes of predominant or organized religion (De Weese 1994; Golden 2007). Halperin points out that in the sixteenth century, following the disintegration of Mongol power, Moscow heredity grand princes became autocratic rulers, stripping the other princely families of their autonomy and limited sovereign rights (Halperin 1987:87). An important methodological aspect of the research necessarily involves an investigation of those elements of Muscovite autocratic authority which facilitated its establishment in the very early development of ideas of autocratic sovereignty. Contrary to the centralized monarchies of Western Europe,



the Muscovite autocratic regime was not preceded by an era of feudalism, but by the princely federation of Kievan Russia, in which family right was considered the basis of sovereignty. Yaroslav the Wise, the Grand Prince of Rus', postulated this idea of the legitimacy of his claims to the Kievan throne in his testament (1054), entrusting power to all his sons as a family group:

My sons, I am about to quit this world. Love one another, since ye are brothers of one father and mother. If ye abide in amity with one another, God will dwell among you and will subject your enemies to you. But if ye dwell in envy and dissension, quarreling with one another, then ye will perish yourselves and bring to ruin the land of your ancestors, which they won at the price of great effort. Wherefore remain rather at peace, brother heeding brother. The throne of Kiev I bequeath to my eldest son, your brother Izyaslav. Heed him as ye have heeded me, that he may take my place among you. To Svyatoslav I give Chernigov, to Vsevolod - Pereyaslavl I, to Igor - the city of Vladimir, and to Vyacheslav - Smolensk. (cited in Cross and Sherbowitz-Wetzor 1953:142)

Following this concept, a land was held as a family heritage, incorporating the idea of the prince as a territorial ruler bound by permanent ties to the territory which he governed. The supreme authority resided in the princely family collectively, and the authority of each prince over his territory was of a temporary nature, for he would eventually move to another district in accordance with the rota system (Kluchevsky 1960:94-103). The "land of Rus" was regarded as a common patrimony of the entire family of Rurik, and every member of the family was entitled to a share in its rule. It was therefore essential to reconcile two fundamental principles: maintaining the unity of the lands and sharing a common patrimony among all members of the princely family (Dvornik 1962:363). Vernadsky (1953:17-45) claims that this was clearly an encroachment of the patrimonial idea upon the idea of the State, especially since the princely family as a whole had to be provided for out of the state revenues, each member claiming his share.

These observations, combined with analysis of Kluchevsky, indicate that the personal nature of sovereignty made impossible a clear separation of ruler and office. Kievan Russia was therefore not a homogeneous political State or even a political federation in the strict sense of the term, but an aggregation of territories united only through their princes. There existed a unity of territory and population based on the fact of kinship rather than a unity of the state (Kluchevsky 1960:124). Kievan Russia, in this regard, was essentially a princely Federation, a family enterprise. No centralized state existed, for the early Varangian princes

had no idea of such an organized political entity. The Varangians did not settle in the country, but in the towns, forming a federation of 100 cities and of tribes upon which tribute was imposed. The Grand Prince and his family ruled the land along the lines of a patrimony, the junior princes ruling in the name of the Grand Prince. The relationships between the princes were based on personal and family ties rather than political and institutional ones. All princes were bound by the blood-tie; there was no clear notion of political authority and political relationships as opposed to family authority and kin-relationship (Charbonneau 1967:3-4).

The value and provision of monastic and ecclesiastical patrimony in the form of real estate under this new feudal system was taken by the Orthodox Church as a great advantage. As Shubin explains in his *History of Russian Christianity* (2004:65), the serfs were tied to the land and whoever owned the land owned the serfs. This pertained to villages, likewise. Whoever owned the village also owned the residents of the village, unless they were already freedmen, such as artisans, merchants, clergy, soldiers, civil servants, businessmen, and others. Since Russia used to be abundant in lands, the local feudal prince would often grant a parcel of land to the bishop, local parish or monastery for their subsistence. The serfs residing on the property then became possessions of the church or monastery, along with the land; and the church or monastery would become a landowner and landlord. As the time progressed, religious and pious citizens would grant title to various properties to the church or monastery as a gift or legacy. Beginning with Yaroslav, the Orthodox prelate began to acquire real estate from feudal princes and as gifts from landlords, and he viewed the real estate and serfs that were part of the patrimony as his personal property as long as he held his episcopacy or cathedra,

In this manner, the real estate holdings of the Orthodoxy increased tremendously over the centuries. Eventually, the Church became not only financially secure, but also extremely wealthy — the wealthiest institution in all of Russia, next to the state itself; and this extreme wealth was accompanied by arrogance and corruption in the circle of the prelates of Russia. (Shubin 2004:65)

Some scholars (Tihomirov 1959:199-211; Ostrogorsky 1969:303-5) may argue that kinship was not the only source of legitimacy. Conceived in this way as a social-historical phenomenon, Russian autocracy had evolved over time, starting with the Christianization of Kievan Rus' when the Orthodox Church began to preach the idea of the sanctity of princely power. According to the autocratic Orthodox concept, God protected the Christian prince

and granted to him the authority which was recognized by the universal Emperor of all Christians. Therefore, obedience to the legitimate sovereign was the duty of the subject. Divine-right ideas, however, did not become a part of the practical ideology of the Kievan princes. When the prince was enthroned, he received the blessing of the Church, but there was no anointing or the religious coronation ceremony; the Church blessed the "right" ruler, but itself did not confer the right to rule. The princes were patrons and protectors of the Church, enacting statutes, defining lay and ecclesiastical rights and jurisdictions, but not generally interfering with the life of the Church.

In the same way, this ideology attempted to utilize religious factors for their own goals, since the involvement of the Church in politics was confined largely to keeping the peace amongst feuding princes and inspiring collective actions against pagans, especially the invading horsemen of the steppes. The processes that took place among the Eastern Slavs were indeed intricately connected to the main autocratic principles of Byzantine political philosophy, advocated by the Orthodox Church. Thus, this dualism was, to a large extent, a by-product of a new pan-Slavism reality in which family authority and seniority remained the true foundation of authority and legitimacy, while clerical political ideas were reserved for ceremonies or feast-days.

The society of Kievan Rus' would thus appear most inimical to the growth of autocracy. The public administration was centered about the prince's court, for its nucleus was the prince's household administration supported by his "*druzhina*" (Vernadsky 1948:174). Noble and rich citizens, "*boyars*", and direct towns' counsels, the "*veche*", were a significant political force too, since their "*veche*" system limited the power of the prince by supporting or opposing a candidate based on the city's interest, and on certain occasions even demanded the abdication of a prince already in power. Overall, the autocratic notions of Kievan culture and society did not abrogate the principle of seniority recognizing the special rights of each princely branched, since the princes agreed that each of Yaroslav's grandsons should be left in possession of the principality which had been awarded to the grandson's father by Yaroslav the Wise. Soon a new principle of peaceful prince's co-existence was introduced and established by the *Lyubech Rada* (1097) where, according to the Chronicle, the various princes agreed to end their feuds enmity:

Why do we ruin the land of Rus' by our continued strife against one another... Let us rather hereafter be united in spirit and watch over the land of Rus', and let each of us guard his own domain. (Cross and Sherbowitz-Wetzor 1953:187)

The agreement introduced in the rota system of *Liubech Rada* was aimed at preventing a prince from establishing himself in his lands and forming permanent relations with the local populace, thus creating a solid base for his authority which was becoming a personal rather than a family right (Pasuto 1968:73-77, 299-317). Plokhy finds no reason to doubt that in the post-Liubech Rus world, the concept of the Rus Land and the idea of its defence against the incursions of the steppe nomads (of whom the Polovtsians were strongest at that time) became an important ideological construct. Plokhy asserts that,

the Congress established a new political order whereby the Kyivan prince emerged as the supreme arbiter but not the authoritative ruler of the realm. Instead, real power was concentrated in the hands of the heirs of Yaroslav's three eldest sons, the princes of Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Pereiaslav. Those huge principalities were designated as patrimonies or unconditional possessions of the princes who held power there at that time, while the rest of the Rurikid clan found itself in conditional possession of lands that could be taken away from them by the three senior princes. (Plokhy 2006:35-36)

Martin argues that ruling from Pereiaslavl, Monomakh placed his sons in charge of the Rostov region. By 1108, its prince was Yurii Dolgorukii. This youthful prince, just married to the daughter of a Polovtsy Khan, established himself at Suzdal. With his father's support, he founded the town of Vladimir on the bank of the Kliazma River (1108) which with another fortified outpost located downstream on the Kliazma provided an effective defense against the Bulgars who had attacked the region the year before; the forts also gave Prince Yurii authority over a major segment of the river systems traversing the Rostov-Suzdal lands. However, Prince Andrei Bogoliubsky of Suzdal (Moscow region) revolted against the entire rota system. In 1169, Andrei led his army out of northeast Russia and mercilessly sacked Kiev. He subsequently proclaimed himself Grand Prince without occupying the throne of Kiev which he relegated to minor princes whom he treated as servitors (Martin 2007:43).

Predictably, the tenure of Prince Andrei was precarious. Suzdal thus acquired the character of private property while the nature of the princes' authority acquired individual significance since the senior prince remained voluntarily in a junior principality. Andrei sought to introduce the principles of autocracy into Russian political life by attempting to curb the

powers of the *veche* and treating his boyars as servitors rather than councillors. As potential rivals for power, his kinsmen were driven out or treated as servitors in an attempt to replace the old ties of kinship with the compulsory subordination of the junior princes to the suzerainty of the senior prince. Such an autocratic policy was too alien for his contemporaries, and Andrei was assassinated in 1174 (Florinsky 1953:51-53).

Starting from 1132, Kievan Russia experienced "a vicious and treacherous cycle of struggles between the two primary royal lineages: the Monomakhs and the Olegovichs" (Shubin 2004:60). This went on until the demise of Kievan Russia at the hands of the Mongols. Metropolitans, beginning with Mikhail in 1130, were installed and removed at the whim of the heir of whichever family was in power, and they were utilized as the princes' puppets. The struggle was a total loss, with neither family gaining secure and lasting control of Kievan Russia; it weakened the state and left it more vulnerable to the Mongols. The chronology indicates forty attempts at the throne going on for over 110 years, beginning in 1130, with some individuals ascending and descending the throne three times (Shubin 2004:60). It is important to recognize that the process of the conversion of family lands into a private property had begun prior to the Mongol conquest but continued and became stabilized under the Mongol rule. Thus, a family right became gradually overshadowed by a patrimonial right. Nevertheless, as it has been explored in the thesis, the gradual tendency of the princes to regard their lands as an inheritable private property was essential in laying the foundations of autocracy.

The evidence of the pre-muscovite period briefly discussed above indicates that during the time of Kievan Rus', Eastern Orthodoxy acted as a unifier. In 988, during the consolidation of his power over the Eastern Slavs, Prince Vladimir of Kiev adopted Orthodox Christianity from Byzantium and forcibly baptized his people. Over the next generation, Vladimir and his successors continued to extend their domain and to create an apparatus to govern it. After that, the Riurikid princes continued to share the lands of Kievan Rus and the responsibilities for administering and defending them. Throughout the medieval period, Orthodox priests accompanied government representatives and soldiers as Vladimir's heirs progressively took over more of the eastern Slavic lands. Overall, the spiritual guidance, the promise of salvation, and the social norms and cultural forms of the Church provided a common identity for the diverse tribes comprising Kievan Rus' society (Martin 1997:4-8).

In the XIV-XVI centuries, Moscow was becoming stronger, uniting all Russian principalities around it with the Tatar help. Yenikeyev argues that "from that time on, Moscovites became invincible enemies of the West Europeans-Catholics. And Tatars always fought on the side of those 'Moscovites' Russians', as it was in the XIII century. Tatars were always the crucial strength in those wars. Catholics and after them other Western Europeans called those Tatars 'Moscow's Tatars', and their country was called 'Tartaria Moscovite'" (Yenikeyev 2012:56). Yenikeyev also indicates that Tatar's troops operated against the West in the wars between Russians and the Crusaders: "Those troops were headed by the Tatar khans and princes, and all of them belonged to the Great Tataria, to the country, which was concealed from us by the historians of the Romanovs and the Bolsheviks. Nevertheless, a lot of information about this country came down to us" (Yenikeyev 2012:56-58). In his analysis *Russia and the Mongol Yoke*, Hartog confirms the aforementioned observation,

Moscow's Triumph cannot be explained without the reference to Mongol support. The means used by the Russian prince to win their master over to their wishes were in all cases the same: bribery, betrayal, and slander. That the princes of Moscow scored better in this field than their rivals was not, however, the overriding factor. It is obvious that they saw a chance to convince the Khan that support for Moscow was in his own interests. (Hartog 1996:85)

In that way, the formation of a young Russian nation transformed its unarticulated cultural identity into a backward ethnic community. At this point, according to Vernadsky, the "inner Russian political life was never stifled but only curbed and deformed by Mongol rule" (Vernadsky 1953:344). Maximick also believes that "the true impact of the Mongols and Tatars on Russian history and society was therefore diminished, hidden or denied in contemporary accounts that ultimately damaged both Russian popular sentiment and collective memory" (Maximick 2009:19). The Mongol conquest disrupted traditional for Kievan Rus' idea of legitimacy residing in the princely family as a whole, while a new model of authority exercised by Khan's yarlyk became the main pattern for authority as *per se* in the "Third Rome" ideology. Muscovite princes, acting within this model of yarlyk authority, expanded their territory and increased their own power, forcing the other patrimonial Slavic princes into a position of dependence. The formative influence of a new "canonical" understanding of Church tradition not only sanctified the autocratic sovereignty of the Grand Prince of Moscow, but also appropriated and utilized this new autocratic principle in the Orthodox Church. Orthodox dominance objectified itself in history as a new binding reality

and a cornerstone fact of Orthodox autocratic existence. In Shubin's interpretation, Kievan Rus' entered a vicious and treacherous cycle of struggles between the two primary royal lineages: the Monomakhs and the Olegovichs in 1132 as a result of this sudden change in attitude:

Vladimir the Great, knowing well the autocratic despotism of the Greeks, from his merchants traveling through the Balkans and from his friends the Bulgarian kings, originally had no intention of submitting his Russian Church to the Greek Patriarch. Instead, he looked to the prelates of the autocephalous Bulgarian Church for assistance in this matter and support; the Bulgarians were quite independent of the Greeks and had their own patriarch at in the city of Akhrid. It was to the Bulgarians that Vladimir turned when he needed priest missionaries to baptize his people, to instruct them and to conduct church services. The initial clergy of Russian Orthodox were members of Bulgarian Orthodoxy: Anastas, bishop of Kiev, and Jehoiakim, bishop of Novgorod, both were Bulgarians from Kherson and could speak Slavonic as well as Greek. They were intended to represent the autonomy of a national Russian Church. Under Vladimir, the Bulgarian patriarch was the head of the cathedra of Kiev and Anastas was his vicar; the first two metropolitans supplied by Constantinople resided at Kievan Pereyaslav, distant from them interpretation. (Shubin 2004:59)

A similar dichotomy was recognized by a Russian theologian Solovyev not so much as a logical *non sequitur* mistake, but as a reference to spiritual dignity and divine origin of the Orthodox Church:

This is not simply an accident of history; it is an instance of the logic of events, which inevitably robs any merely national Church of its independence and dignity and brings it under the yoke of the temporal power, a yoke which may be more or less oppressive but is always ignominious. In every country which has been brought to accept a national Church, the secular government, be it autocratic or constitutional, enjoys absolute authority; the ecclesiastical institution only figures as a special Ministry dependent on the general State administration. In such a case, it is the national State which is the real complete entity, existing by itself and for itself; the Church is only a section, or rather a certain aspect, of this social organism of the body politic, only existing for itself in the abstract. Such enslavement of the Church is incompatible with its spiritual dignity, its divine origin and its universal mission. (Solovyev 1948:72)

In his account on *The Russian and their Church*, Zernov claims that “after many efforts and disappointments the Russians at last created a strong centralised authority, such as the defence of the country required. It was achieved under the leadership of the Grand Princes of Moscow, who became at the end of fifteenth century the Tsars of all Russia” (Zernov 1978:45). Zernov explains further that the answer to the question regarding a powerful

uprising and expansion of Moscow in history can be found in the belief that “Moscow was a successor to Constantinople, and that Moscow Tsars were legitimate heirs of the Byzantine Emperors” (Zernov 1978:47). Zernov argues that their rise to power “was a gradual process” and “the rulers of Moscow, Basil I (1389-1425), Basil II (1425-62), Ivan III (1462-1505), and Basil III (1505-33), moved step by step with great caution. They all had much in common: their cast of mind, their policy, and their gifts limitations conformed to the same pattern. None of them was an outstanding person, but each of them was instinctively a ruler” (Zernov 1978:45).

### **5.3 Autocratic Amalgamation of the Great Russian Princes (1452-1613)**

It was argued in the mid-fourteenth century that some attributes of Russian state disappeared during the period of the patrimonial regime, and certainly, its distinguishing feature, the fusion of proprietorship and sovereignty, would seem to have eclipsed the idea of the State. As per formal requirements, the territory of the principality of Moscow was not a territory of State, but a personal *otchina*. The prince's right of a rule could be devised or alienated in the Will equally with the lands of the “*otchina*”. The juridical basis of succession was a personal testament of the ruler, and this right was based on the idea of a persona, the heritable property of the prince; authority was conceived of as property. The personal domains of the Muscovite prince were the chief foundation of his administration and economic power. This situation was really an incursion of the patrimonial idea upon the idea of the State, for Vladimir, and not Moscow providing the legal seat of the suzerain power. Thus, the prince's landed rights became blended with his authority (Kluchevsky 1960:281-288).

A considerable geopolitical change in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries impacted existing borders in Eastern Europe. Plokhy asserts that:

while the Mongols took over the eastern and northern parts of the former Kyivan realm, the rest of the region, with the notable exception of Galicia, eventually found itself within the boundaries of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. That process reached its pinnacle during the rule of Grand Dukes Gediminas (1316–1341) and Algirdas (1345–1377) whose power extended to most of the present-day Belarus, Ukraine, and even some parts of Russia. By the mid-fifteenth century, the ratio of Lithuanian ethnic territories to those settled by Eastern Slavs in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was 1:12. (Plokhy 2006:85)



Nevertheless, the Muscovite princes, despite their possession of the senior suzerain principality, did not have a monopoly of political power in northeast Russia. The reasons for the growth of Muscovite autocracy may be found in the astute policies pursued by the Grand Princes, who began to impose their authority on the other patrimonial princes while enjoying the support of the Khan. Intentionally or not, the Khan helped to build up the autocratic powers of the Muscovite princes. He awarded to Moscow the rights to the senior grand-princely throne; he helped Moscow to overthrow its most dangerous rival, Tver (1327), and ultimately allowed Moscow to dominate over the other grand duchies (Riazan, 1371; Tver, 1373) of his realm; he strengthened the financial position of Moscow by the inflow of tribute collected on his behalf and by wearing down the resistance and resources of the people, he prepared the ground for the autocratic rule of the Grand Prince of Moscow.

When his brother Yuri died childless in 1477, Ivan promptly seized his patrimony, in violation of an old custom by which each of the surviving brothers could claim a share in the dead brother's lands. In 1481, Andrei Junior of Vologda died childlessly, and Ivan seized his patrimony for himself. Such autocratic actions were presented by the other brothers, Andrei Senior and Boris, who both revolted against Ivan in 1480 because neither had received a share of the new Novgorodian lands to which they were entitled by custom. When Andrei Senior refused to participate in a campaign against the Horde in 1491, Ivan accused both of his brothers of treason. He pardoned Boris but cast Andrei into prison and confiscated his patrimony. Boris died in 1494, leaving his patrimony to his sons Ivan and Fedor, who both died childless in 1504 and 1513 respectively (Charbonneau 1967:20-21).

The figure of Ivan III is a perfect example to explore how Russian autocracy has evolved over time as a social-historical phenomenon. During a period of about seventy years, from the 1450s to 1522, the princely house of Moscow expanded and consolidated to bring the other princely households in the Great Russian area within its domain. History textbooks tell us that this was the work of Ivan III, Grand Prince of Vladimir and Moscow often referred to as "Ivan the Great." What they do not tell us is that the amalgamation of the Russian princes constituted a profound social revolution (Yaney 1992:5-6). As a matter of fact, this title signified a new approach in the autocratic vision of the Muscovite state. Shortly after the liberation from Mongol occupation in 1480, Ivan III became the first of Moscow princes

to officially adopt an autocratic title by referring to himself as Tsar (from the Roman *Caesar*). His donning of the title celebrated two events: taking up the legacy of Byzantium and liberating Russia from Mongol occupation. In his correspondence, Ivan III called himself as follows, "By the mercy of God, Tsar of all Russia." His son Vasili III continued the tradition and referred to himself in correspondence as, "By the mercy of God, Tsar and grand prince" (Shubin 2004:60). Vernadsky (1958:167) argues that Ivan was not content with establishing his title of Sovereign of all Russia and having it recognized by the Habsburgs. He began to occasionally use the titles and "Samoderzhets" (*Autocrat*). Those entities were used sparingly, in a tentative and exploratory manner, and were confined to internal documents and dealings with lesser authorities. Their origin may be found in Byzantium, where the Emperor was known as Basileus Autokrator. The Russians rendered "*Basileus*" as "*Tsar*" and "*Autokrator*" as "*Samoderzhets*," the last term being a literal translation of the title into Slavonic.

Ivan III approached this title with care and circumspection, for it had been formerly applied exclusively to the universal Christian Emperor by the Russian monk-chroniclers. The title "tsar" derived from "Caesar," reached the Slavs by way of the Goths and had originally designated all princes (Mladenovic 1931:156). Ivan III and Vasili III as the founders of a new Muscovite state rapidly transformed the old princely system of government adjusting Orthodox society and Church nomenclature to the new conditions. During their autocratic reforms, a new bureaucracy was formed, governors assigned to individual territories, the elites of the newly acquired lands incorporated into a class of princely servitors, a system of service-tenure estates (*pomest'e*) was created and, the last but not the least, the army, which had relied on the support of the appanage princes, was reformed to reduce the ruler's dependence on the princely and boyar elite. It was also during the tenure of Ivan and Vasili that a new type of ideology was developed and employed in the interests of the dynasty and the autocratic state it had created. The major goal of the new ideology, presented in numerous historical and literary works of the period, was to legitimize the power of the Muscovite rulers both internally and externally. The marriage of Ivan III and Sophia Paleologina, the niece of the last Byzantine emperor, which was orchestrated by the papacy, and the recognition of Vasili III as tsar by Emperor Maximilian in 1514 were important elements of the new ideological program. The search for a new legitimacy was fulfilled in 1547 when Ivan IV was officially installed on the Muscovite throne with the title of

tsar. With the growth of the second South Slavic influence in the mid-fifteenth century, the title "tsar" began to assume a distinctly Orthodox connotation such as it already possessed in the Balkans (Andreyev 1959:14; Mladenovic 1931:157).

The Russian political order from that moment underwent a major transformation. Under Ivan III, whose reign lasted from 1462 until 1505, Moscow's household definitively submitted to the autocratic rule of its headman while bringing the princes and boiars of Vladimir land into its organization. A time-honored though constantly squabbling federation of princes was massed into one single household and service to the prince of Moscow became the principal mark of social status throughout the ancient territory of the Vladimir *grandprincipedom*. A term signifying *servant (dvorianin)* was about to become the Russian equivalent of *an aristocrat* (Yaney 1992:6). The affirmation of the exclusive rights of the Grand Prince of Moscow was emphasized within the construction of a centralized autocratic State with the necessary involvement of two imperative stages: increasing the Grand Prince's authority at the expense of the other Muscovite patrimonial princes, i.e., his brothers, and expanding the territory of Moscow by conquering or annexing the other autonomous Russian principalities. The most serious opposition came from the Grand Prince's brothers. When their father Vasili II had defeated Yuri of Galich and his supporters, he was left in supreme control of Moscow, but when he drew up his testament, he created new patrimonies by dividing his lands among his five sons and a wife. Vasili's Testament contained time-honored formulae which stipulated that the junior princes should "honor and obey your oldest brother Ivan, in place of me, your father..." while Ivan was to "hold his brother Yuri and his younger brothers in brotherliness, and without injustice" (Howes 1967:184).

Those were some minimal requirements for patrimonial princes. Nevertheless, Ivan III was determined to rule as an autocrat and not as "primus inter pares". He was not prepared to see his brothers grow more powerful as Moscow grew in the territory, and resolved to reduce their lands and authority, leaving them politically impotent. By the end of Ivan's reign, only half of the Principality of Ryazan and the city of Pskov remained separate states outside of Moscow. Ivan had been careful to eliminate all independent authority outside of his own (Charbonneau 1967:31-32). Vernadsky (1958:98-101) observes the same similarity in Ivan's action against the other Russian principalities. In 1463, the Yaroslav's princes

ceded their rights to Ivan and resigned their independence. The Rostov princes sold their rights in 1474. Prince Fedor of Riazan bequeathed his half of the Ryazanian principality to Ivan in 1503. The Grand Principality of Tver was conquered outright in 1485, as was a small northern Republic of Viatka in 1489. Novgorod had already been annexed in 1478. By the end of Ivan's reign, only half of the Principality of Riazan and the city of Pskov remained separate States outside of Moscow.

The long wars that waged between Muscovy and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania for control of the Rus' lands turned particularly ferocious as the sixteenth century dawned. Those conflicts must have strengthened the loyalty of the Rus' subjects of the Grand Duchy to a sovereign whom they also considered a Rus' prince to be and to a state that they continued to regard as not only Lithuanian but also Russian. In his final analysis of the incident, Serhii Plokhy asserts that different political loyalties and dynastic thinking overcame the potential for cultural solidarity between the two Russes. Once Tver, Novgorod, and Pskov had been subjected to the grand princes of Moscow, the enemy was easily identifiable in political terms as Muscovy. In diplomatic negotiations of the 1490s and early 1500s, the Lithuanian diplomats questioned the right of Ivan III to be called "Sovereign of All Rus" (Plokhy 2006:108). After the loss of Smolensk to Muscovy, Lithuania refused to recognize the addition of Smolensk to the title of the grand princes of Moscow. It also avoided the phrase "Sovereign of All Rus" in the grand prince's title, preferring to address him as grand prince of Moscow, which drew protests from the Muscovites. In Lithuanian diplomatic usage, Muscovite Rus' figured not as Rus' but as Muscovy – the term that became dominant in European accounts of Muscovy and its people (Khoroshkevich 2004:102-27).

For centuries, the history of Russia was moving towards the single objective, the formation of a great national monarchy (Solovyev 1948:42). The historical analysis of Ivan's III policies as described above does not reflect any great achievements or innovations in the traditions or ideology of the Muscovite princes. The intention of Ivan III to rule as an autocrat was by no means unique while his methods of consolidating his authority and increasing his territories were entirely traditional. It is the second aspect of his policy which is significant. Ivan was the first Grand Prince of Moscow to claim that all the Russian lands and not merely the Great Russian portion was his *otchina* or hereditary patrimony and he

was the first Muscovite prince to make the recovery of the "lands of Saint Vladimir" his basic policy.

An elaborate religious coronation of new Muscovite autocrator (*tsar*) introduced at the Uspensky Sobor in the Kremlin on February 4, 1498, fitted in well with Ivan's exalted concept of the dignity of the Grand Prince. The oration, benedictions and a special prayer of anointment conducted by the Metropolitan Simon and other invited bishops who participated in inauguration presented nothing less than the divine consecration of the autocratic sovereign and actually replaced the consent of the "*veche*" and/or the Khan's "*yarlyk*" as a source of legitimacy (Vernadsky 1958:124-167). This prayer of anointment symbolized that the Russian tsar was consecrated to his throne not by man but by God. Ivan's intention to care for "all Orthodoxy" showed his awareness of the sovereign's duty to care for the public weal; not only for his subjects but the "whole Orthodox Christianity". Thus, the whole ceremony of 1498 was an important expression of Ivan's concept of autocratic sovereignty, suggesting and unfolding a new Orthodox legend that Russia was the center of true Christianity and the Muscovite prince was the true representative of Christ on earth.

The rapid territorial growth of Moscow forced the grand princes to employ a new "Third Rome" ideology, embodied in titles, claims, legends and ceremonies which intended not only to legitimize Ivan's right to exercise autocratic sovereignty over the "lands of Saint Vladimir", but as a matter of fact, to elevate the very nature/essence of his authority to a higher level than mere patrimonial right, i.e., to combine his authority with a universal existential significance. The consolidation of Russian lands under Moscow resulted in the elimination of all other sources of independent authority except of those foreign powers whose Russian lands were considered the Grand Prince's patrimony. In this way, the Russian Orthodox Church pre-disposed itself for unlimited autocracy and lent an ideological and political support to the autocratic sovereignty of the Grand Prince. However, historically it would be a very disputable assumption to support Russian claims to be the heir of the great Roman Empire of the fifteenth century. The universal acceptance of their exclusive imperial and spiritual status was lost in the dark forests of the far-off North whose very existence as hardly realized were not so ambitious. After a serious defeat in the Livonian war (1558-1583), which was rooted in the desire of Russian Tsar Ivan the Terrible to

dominate Baltic people and to acquire their resources, transport and communication opportunities, many monarchical courts in Europe made fun of Ivan the Terrible's claim to be a direct descendant of the Roman Caesar Augustus Prus (Perrie & Pavlov 2003:36).

Even such great patriots of Russia as Zernov had to admit the following, "the Russians took upon themselves the cultural mission of Byzantium", nevertheless, "the Russians could not, of course, reproduce the unique combination of the Christian, Hellenic and Oriental Christianity", since "they did not belong to the Mediterranean commonwealth; they had never stood before the majestic ruins of bygone empires; they never read annals of their victories, crimes, and achievements. The names of Homer, Aristotle, and Virgil conveyed nothing to them... Moscow could not compete in either of these spheres with its great predecessors" (Zernov 1978:49-50).

The authoritarian notion of Orthodox mediation of faith and ecclesial practices/traditions presupposes a particular social form/model of the society structure. This polemic against the "institutionality" of the Orthodox Church appeals to the fact that:

Russian Orthodoxy valued altars, relics, and icons over complex theological arguments. The material realm quite literally embodied the incandescent presence of the divine. The sensory and the experiential dominated over the textual. Of the senses, a vision held pride of place. Icons and frescoes played a crucial function in conveying theological ideas and biblical tales to the worshippers. (Kivelson and Greene 2003:10)

Therefore, the greatest tragedy of Orthodox history is that the authority of their tradition lost its prestige because such authority appeared to be autocratic, while this type of government is completely foreign to the spirit/tradition of the first Apostolic Church. The flaw in the internal autocratic logic was in deviation from the New Testament love model of authority, which "is conceived in a way which must be called democratic rather than absolute" (McKenzie 1966:85). A viable collective entity of Russian Orthodoxy debunks historical continuity of traditional Christianity, crossing institutionally prescribed lines in individual/communal lives.

#### **5.4 Eastern Orthodoxy Identity as a Collective Phenomenon of Orthodox Mentality in the Muscovite (Russian) Autocratic State**

In many respects, Muscovite autocracy exhibits an entirely new phenomenon. Yaney singles out "two features of Russian society that have distinguished it historically from all others. One is the institution of autocracy; the other is the collective willingness of Russians to admit outsiders to full membership in their social/political structures" Yaney (1992:1). This Russian national consciousness of the autocratic collective "self" demonstrated a new political form of group solidarity that derived their sense of identity from their historic territory, common language, religious creed, collective memory, or a myth of common ancestry, cultural practices, civic values, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members (Chumakov 2003; Prizel 1998; Smith 1991). In his book on Eastern Orthodoxy *Light from the East: Authors and Themes in Orthodox Theology*, Nichols suggests concentrating "on the lived experience of the Orthodox Church today as a believing community" (Nichols 1995:2). For Nichols the real aim of such a research would be "to abstract both from history and from theology, and to concentrate instead on the human reality of the Church, in a quasi-sociological perspective". Nichols gives a proper credit to the approach found in Mario Rinvolucris study, *Anatomy of a Church* (1966) and correctly observes that Rinvolucris concentrates on the Church of Greece but looks at it as the classic example of Orthodoxy as a whole. The value of this approach is in the fact that it is highly concrete. It provides a good impression of what it feels like to live within the organisational and liturgical framework of the Orthodox Church.

It has been a recurrent theme in Russian historiography to justify the absolutistic character of Muscovite/Russian Caesaropapism (or Cäsaropapismus) as a religiopolitical theory which advances the idea that a secular ruler may also have authority over the Church within his realm (Bulgakov 1988; Dyakonov 1915; Ellis 1986; Fedotov 1966; Florovsky 1979; Khomiakov 1977; Lykshosherstov 2003; Tikhomirov 1897; Ustryalov 1842). The very source of the autocratic identity lies in absolutizing temporal national, cultural, governmental and ecclesial forms in post-Byzantine Russian society. Since the "authority exists in society and is based on the nature and constitution of society" (McKenzie 1966:7), the autocracy in Russia should be investigated as a collective phenomenon. The autocratic authority was chosen and sustained by the whole Russian society as a continuation of Byzantine model

of Christianity. At this historical stage, the new Russian state quickly demonstrated courage for incarnation and acceptance of heterogeneous elements of autocracy and their subsequent integration within the criteria of the Third Rome ideology. In our further deconstruction which we are going to undertake in this subchapter, we will briefly investigate how autocratic despotism of Muscovite autocratic state irreversibly transformed the Orthodox source of identity (in this regard, Eastern Orthodoxy operates as a *genre of identity*), invoking inherent links between imperial mentality, religion and nationality and how ecclesiastical discourse within Russian Orthodoxy was overlapping with the discourse of domination of power translating sacred contours of Orthodox Tradition into a political category of Muscovite canonical territory.

A perfect illustration of this point would be a critical evaluation of Shubin (2004:1-2), who correctly identified the problem of "re-writing" or a secondary compilation in Russian historiography, which had immediate and far-reaching influence on the national policy of the new Russian empire:

In writing this history, the author has sought to focus on Russian religion while including those areas of Russian political history and tradition which are needed to explain the religious history. Russian Christian history is largely that of Russian Orthodoxy, and fiction and legend need to be removed in order to present an objective account. The second problem is credibility. Russian Orthodoxy has rewritten its history over the years, beginning with the mid-14th century, incorporating much improbable embellishment. For example, records claiming that miracles were performed by the relics of saints abounded in earlier periods, while declining in later eras when more reliable documentation was available, and they were becoming almost nonexistent in the contemporary era. (Shubin 2004:1-2)

The prime objective here is to conceptualize and identify various macro-strategies employed in the construction of national identities of the Russian nation and to describe them using historical, theological and hermeneutic-adductive approaches. Historically, both Kievan Rus' and Mongolian Moscow Churches were late-comers to the Christian world and, from the perspective of the Byzantines, their provincial and barbarian status endured (Gudziak 1992:2). The Byzantines projected and preached an ideology of superiority to which Russian Orthodox Church always had a full-hearted inclination. The communal perspective of Orthodox Tradition as authority reiterated a collective tendency of symphony



between the Orthodox Church of the Muscovite State not only during its formative period (1400-1500), but also on its later historical stages. Thus, Russian Orthodoxy became a cultural mirror capturing all destructive elements of a "habitual post-Byzantine matrix" (Agadjanian and Rousselet 2005:45) in which spiritual power went hand in hand with the power of the Russian *imperium* (the state). Besides this fundamental criticism, Orthodoxy also failed to provide a sense of reassurance and meaning, even if the meaning of the words and the mysterious rituals remained obscure or incomprehensible (Braybrooke 1994; Lewis 1999).

Russian Orthodox Church was rather living on the proclamation of its exceptional status and its historically advancing glorification in the coming Kingdom of God. Thus, we must discern similar political semantics in the Orthodox's reaffirmation of their pre-eminence over other Christian denominations. At this point, the authority of Orthodox Tradition serves among other things as an instrument of legitimation of political and spiritual dominance. It is difficult to underestimate, in this regard, a thousand-year-long legacy of Orthodox Christian thought that had laid the foundations for moral and spiritual values and worldview in Russia. The Russian Orthodox Church, more than any other factor, had a unique role in cherishing Russian identity in troubled times of Russian history and had for more than a millennium played a key role in its cultural development (Chumakov 2003:6). Solzhenitsyn explains it this way:

For our country to find a steady way out of its era of misfortunes - a goal which Russia may or may not attain - will be a task harder than shaking off the Tatar Yoke: the very backbone of the nation was not shattered at that time, and the people's Christian faith was not undermined. (Solzhenitsyn 1991:56)

Here we see that the concept of Russian national identity, which we base our study on, appeared to be context-dependent and dynamic. Georgescu and Botescu assert that,

the necessity for historical knowledge continues to be placed in a framework of identities and roots and this seems to be based on a paradigm of continuity. Cultural/historical knowledge is considered to be the main support to resist the process of fragmentation and disruption in the present. It is still the main thing in which people are searching for shelters in defining themselves as identities. Nations often do not have a single history, but they are competing tales to be told. Benjamin claims that 'the voice of nation' is fiction, and 'history' is always a tale of victors celebrating triumphs. If we are to imagine ourselves as unique, we need a name to do so. (Georgescu and Botescu 2004:7)

Solzhenitsyn indirectly admits that the first major identity crisis of the young Russian nation ("era of misfortunes"), which occurred during Tatar Yoke, resulted in shame, backwardness and isolation. Thompson, investigating the reasons for the Christian culture of Byzantium in Russia, also came to the startling conclusion that "it was not the Mongols who were responsible for Russia's intellectual isolation [...], it was the Church" (Thompson 1978:120). Speaking about the genesis of ideology of "Moscow the Third Rome", Toumanoff comes to the same conclusion: "The Mongol temporal 'Iron Curtain' completed the Byzantine spiritual one" (Toumanoff 1954/55:433).

Maximick from the University of Victoria reminds, in this regard, that Russia, being a Eurasian nation, has struggled throughout the centuries to be a "civilized" and "progressive" western nation despite its empire being three-quarters Asian. Only in the seventeenth century, when Tsar Peter the Great was determined to transform Russia into a great, western European state, the Russians became aware of what they had perceived as their extreme backwardness in comparison to Europe and, as a result, the Mongol Yoke was further blamed for destroying the culture of Kievan-Rus' causing the Russians to fall behind Europe (Maximick 2009:14,20). This humiliating fact was recognized even by a great Russian writer Fyodor Dostoevsky who shamefully acknowledged that "in Europe we are Tatars, but in Asia, we are also Europeans" (cited in Mochulsky & Minihan 1973:646).

Once we proceed to the analysis of sources that are supposed to reflect the existence of the all-Russian (East Slavic) identity, we discover some impassable obstacles in our way. Plokhy (2006:40) insists that there is very little evidence that Kyivan Rus authors had a well-defined identity setting them apart from the non-Slavic subjects of the Rus princes. Nikita Tolstoi, for instance, supports similar conclusions, raising a question about the identity of Nestor, the presumed author of the Primary Chronicle. Some scholars assume that East Slavic (or "Russian") consciousness was a marginal component of the chronicler's identity (Ostrowski 1998, Tolstoi 1993, Rogov and Floria 1982). In this case, the national Identity can articulate to the respective community a powerful myth which fuses people together, creating a seemingly unstoppable force which emanates from mobilizing fundamental forces and beliefs of people, conveying a deep, manifest and embodied identity (Steyn 1997:4). This qualitative understanding of collective identity relates to a collective memory through which a contemporary group recognizes itself through a

common past, remembrance, commemoration, interpretation and reinterpretation. In other words, memory, as a pre-condition to any sense of identity, came to play a crucial role in the interpretation of the present (Schleifman 1998). These myths/symbols also present new ideas and values aiming to combine them with the power to motivate and sustain a nation (Cerulo 1995).

A national identity is fundamentally multi-dimensional. It can never be simplified or minimized to a single element (Georgescu and Botescu 2004:6). The main sources/elements of national identity for Smith, for example, include "a historic territory or homeland, common myths and historical memories, a common or mass culture, common legal rights and duties for all members, a common economy and increased territorial mobility for its members" (Smith 1991:14). Anderson (1991) conceptualizes a nation as "imagined community." He suggests that a nation can be imagined as a unique entity in terms of time and space but does "not rely on continuous acts imagination" for its existence. Emphasizing essentially artificial constructs of ethnicity and nationalism Anderson argues that "the members of even the smallest nations will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives an image of their community" (Anderson 1991:6).

The study of national identity is by nature a subjective process and it submits to changes along with the progression of time. Since "the concept of national identity relies on a thick layer of common assumptions, that compels us to extract some of the primary features of this notion" (Georgescu and Botescu 2004:6). Therefore, when some people share the aforementioned characteristics, they are entitled to form a national identity. Billig assumes in this regard that,

The attempt to even it out across cultural barriers or to paste past constructions of national identity over the presentday structures will fail to acknowledge the intrinsic subjective and fluid nature of a national identity. An 'identity' is not a thing; it is a description of ways of speaking about self and the community, yourself and your community and, accordingly, it does not develop in a social void but rather in relation with manifest forms of existence, 'identity' is a form of life. (Billig 1995:69)

A national identity reveals the objectification, the expression in words and works of the spirit of a particular people who inhabit a particular time and place (Vanhoozer 2002:313). A

nation is as such a collectivity in which the past and the present exist simultaneously. It is in the nature of a nation to be constituted by its past as well as by its present. Much of the effort to promote a nation is focused on the reaffirmation of the continuity of the present state of the nation with significant elements of its past. A nation is never an affair of a single generation. Thus, a nation always has a traditional legitimation (Schleifman 1998). Most notable among these works on the relation of Orthodox theology to the issue of Russian national identity and the continuity of Orthodox tradition within community are Chumakov 2003, Dragas 1980, Nichols 1989, Prizel 1998, Smith 1997, Valliere 2000, Zizioulas 1985.

The polycentric character of national identity is very much the result of how a community interprets its history - beliefs, and perceptions that accumulate over time and constitute a society's "collective memory" (Prizel 1998:14). Therefore, it is essentially in our reconstruction of the Russian autocratic past - which according to Spillman (1998) can be malleable and fixed - to apprehend a social cohesion of identity and correctly define the relationship between the present of a national community and its past. For Russians, identity is not a property, something they pose, but a relationship, a form of identification. Their national identity is closely connected with the community, attached to it and bonded to other fellow-members in a way in which they are not bonded to outsiders (Mach 1993). National identity is fundamentally a matter of dignity. It gives people reasons to be proud (Greenfeld 1992:487). Russians are not unique in their attempt to think well of their social group, to be proud of its heritage and to feel attachment to a once "glorious" past, national character, heroic tradition of the nation, patriotism and religion and in this way to have the security of belonging to a valued community (McGuigan 1999). It is axiomatic to consider today that nations cannot be conceived without a specific territory or homeland. Territory situates the nation, giving it roots and boundaries. In other words, territory not only represents the harmonious origins, the primordial past of the nation but also embodies the collective memory of its evolution. The struggle against outsiders who seek to destroy the nation transforms the territory into the sacred ground (Chumakov 2003:24).

Thus, the mythical construction of the past - centered on historically and emotionally entrenched shared memories (including those of past struggles) that are sustained through a sense of continuity between generations - is an essential component of national identity (Pennebaker 1997; Renan 1994; Smith 1991). The past experience of the community come

to play a major role in the way in which the present is perceived and depicted to create new political meanings. The shared histories of the past cement individuals' identities with the groups to which they belong. This bonding is sometimes so powerful that some people think it is sacred indeed. Sometimes even the whole nation, becomes an object of worship, a kind of civil religion for which one is prepared to die (Pennebaker, Paez and Rime 1997). Renan advocated the notion of direct human interaction, claiming that "the existence of a nation is an everyday plebiscite, a perpetual affirmation of life" (Renan 1994:17). This Renan's metaphor has often been used by upholders of state decentralization against autocratic pressures. Significant historical events form stronger collective memories, translating them in collective behavioral responses:

People have such a vivid, long-lasting recollection when it comes to flashbulb memories because they allow individuals to place themselves in the historical context. [...] Specifically, society should embrace and collectively remember those national or universal events that affected their lives the most. (Pennebaker 1997:5)

The construction of Russian national identities started in the post-Byzantine period when the Patriarchate of Constantinople confronted dichotomy between a traditional politico-ecclesiastical ideology and radically altered geo-political circumstances. After the fall of Byzantium, the situation in the Patriarchate of Constantinople was chronically critical. In his famous *Byzantine Theology*, Meyendorff strongly rebukes such approach claiming that "Byzantine tendency to freeze history for considering their empire and Church as expressing the eternal and unchangeable form of God's revelation would be a permanent and mythological feature of Byzantine civilization even if though it was constantly challenged by historical realities" (Meyendorff 1974:54-55). Meyendorff points out that Byzantium indeed "remained for several centuries the real capital of the Christian world. But its later theological development took place in an exclusively Greek setting. Still bearing the title of "Great Church of Constantinople-New Rome," it became known to both its Latin competitors and its Slavic disciples as the "Greek" Church. The result of these historical developments was the emergence of the Byzantine Church from the iconoclastic crisis as more than ever a "Greek" church. It might even have become a purely national church such as the Armenian. Unlike the West however where the papacy "passed to the barbarians" after their conversions, Constantinople, the "New Rome," remained the unquestionable and unique intellectual center of the Christian East until 1453. This "Rome" was culturally and intellectually Greek.

Gudziak argues that "the Hellenic character of Byzantine civilization brought into theology a perennial problem of the relationship between the ancient Greek "mind" and the Christian Gospel" (Gudziak 1992:61). In his interpretation the sixteenth-century Greek Orthodox Church "was a threatened ecclesial community and an ecclesiastical structure in distress. The loss of the protection of the Byzantine emperor had a profound effect on the identity of the Orthodox Church. Efforts to resolve concrete problems such as ecclesiastical discipline, clerical corruption and ignorance, fiscal insolvency, and general institutional weakness were continuously confounded by the corollaries of servility and captivity: opportunism and factionalism. At the time when Christian Europe was mobilized to reform and to address the particular needs and circumstances of the age, the Orthodox never developed momentum, the critical mass of resources or leadership to initiate and promote a movement of revitalization" (Gudziak 1992:61-62).

In addition to that, Gudziak indicates that the Orthodox Church "as a consequence of its apophatic theology and spirituality did not develop a dynamism in addressing the crisis of the world" (Gudziak 1992:62). Being under the Turkish occupation, "the Orthodox nation was no longer dominant in society. The patriarch was captain of the Christian vessel, but the bark was now carried by Ottoman seas". It was at this time that "Constantinople turned its attention to the Slavic East." Gudziak further suggests in his analysis that "the Greek were needy in many respects and not too proud to ask other Orthodox communities, especially the Muscovites, for support" (Gudziak 1992:62). The very dynamics in the Kievan Metropolitanate by the end of the fifteenth century profoundly duplicated developments in Greek Orthodox Church. It marks a major break in the history of the Kievan Metropolitanate – the division of this Metropolitanate into Ruthenian and Muscovite provinces.

Martin also argues that throughout the medieval period, Orthodox priests always supported government officials and soldiers as Vladimir's heirs progressively took over more of the eastern Slavic lands, since "the spiritual guidance, the promise of salvation, and the social norms and cultural forms of the Church provided a common identity for the diverse tribes comprising Kievan Rus' society" (Martin 1997:7-8). In contrast to Kievan Rus', the spiritual situation in the Muscovite state was quite different. In his seminal remarks, Zernov sees an order of historical development in the following way:

when the Russians were brought into the fellowship of the Orthodox Church, they were introduced into the superior world of Mediterranean civilization. The level of its culture and its artistic achievements were far above those reached by the Russians themselves, but the inhabitants of the Eastern Empire were, on the other hand, victims of such vice, cruelty, and superstition as were unknown to the childlike Slavonic peoples. (Zernov 1978:14)

These aspects, or, rather, these fundamental characteristics of the Russian Church, are bound up the one with the fact that the context of the mainspring of spiritual life in early Russia was the local parish church:

The Church was for a Russian his university, his theater, his concert-hall and his picture-gallery. On Sundays and feast days, the entire population gathered for the celebration of the Eucharist. The people listened to the reading of the Scriptures; they recited the Psalms and the Creed, lamented over Christ's sufferings and death and rejoiced in His Resurrection and Ascension. This was a unique training ground for them, which enlightened their hearts and minds and introduced them to the mystery of Divine Redemption. (Zernov 1978:15)

In this process of national identity formation, Orthodox Christianity was used as an excluding factor as well, since as early as the fifteenth century the "frontier" referred to the area that separated Orthodox peoples from the non-Orthodox" (Kollmann 1997:36). Orthodox self-identity points its adherents in the direction they should look in making the judgment about "the background beliefs that we may describe as mythical, in the sense that they idealize historical and contemporary reality so as to make appear that the nation is more monolithic than it really is" (Miller 1996:413). In his *Introduction to Christianity and the Eastern Slavs*, Gasparov recognizes that Eastern Orthodoxy was a collective enterprise capacious enough to accommodate a community of conversation, with room for disagreement, negotiation, and even contradiction:

It may be that the most characteristic feature of the Christian tradition among the Eastern Slavs, apparent from its very origin and evident in the whole span of its thousand-year history, is its 'implicitness.' Both the Church itself and the religious sphere of social life generally relied more on the continuity of tradition and the collective mind of its members than on objectified and abstracted regulations and institutions. (Gasparov 1993:2-3)

Smith extensively expounds this "gap approach" affirming that popular beliefs usually come to identify their communities of common beliefs but often the reality falls far short of the model, both in terms of an ideology of the national cause and the processes necessary for

the formation of nations, whether cultural, educational, legal, territorial or economic. It is only in the later medieval era that such processes began to develop in a manner that laid the basis for national formation and consciousness:

[...] in Poland and Russia, similar *regna* were established in the tenth to twelfth centuries, only to suffer dismemberment and, in the Russian case, the 'Mongol captivity'. Despite Slav predominance in both kingdoms, ethnic homogeneity was never as great as in ancient Egypt or Judca, nor was there as much economic or legal unification, let alone a public education system. Only their linguistic and religious cultures, the one Catholic, the other Orthodox, succeeded in crystallizing a sense of common and distinctive ethnicity, abetted by the memories of their early statehood under the Piasts and Rurikids (of Kievan Rus'). These memories were to play an important role in the later formation and definition of the Polish and Russian nations from the fifteenth century on. (Smith 1991:50-51)

Consequently, the authority of Orthodox Church Tradition sanctified Byzantine model of autocracy (caesaropapism) providing a striking example of the fundamental theological contradiction between the principle of autocracy and the New Testament principle of freedom (Gal. 5:13). The Russian autocracy constrains the development of the social organization of Muscovite state. McDaniel articulates some traits traditionally inherent to this phenomenon: "Territorial unity, national identity (primarily as the union of the true Orthodox believers), and autocratic power created the preconditions for the dramatic expression of the Russian state in the following centuries" (McDaniel 1991:16). The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were characterized by the consolidation of Muscovite hegemony in Russia and by first deliberate attempts on the part of the Orthodox Church to transform the Grand Prince of Moscow into a counterpart of the Byzantine Emperor. The impact of the great civil war in the Grand Principality of Moscow, the rejection of the Union of Florence, and the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks were all instrumental in inducing the Russian clergy to redefine the ideological position of the Grand Prince, who in the eyes of the Orthodox clergy began to conform to the Byzantine ideal of the Orthodox autocratic sovereign. A balanced historical approach also suggests that Eastern Orthodoxy in the early Muscovite state generated not only a special sense of "*bogoizbrannogo*" (elected by God) community, but also introduced to the society a rigid pattern/model of autocratic institutionalization perceived by Russian officialdom. Hence the Church's power gradually contracted from parish community to parish church, the Orthodox Church claimed more authority and armed herself with new Patriarchate ambitions and



Imperial administrative tools, like punishing heretics or legitimizing autocratic Muscovite caesaropapism. Based on the above mentioned, we may also conclude that national identity appeared in Russia as a spiritual and cultural outcome of Byzantine autocratic legacy, being a matter of moral and emotional identification with a particular community based on a shared loyalty to its constitutive principles and participation in its collective self-understanding.

Nevertheless, the main problem for Russian autocracy was the failure to create a meaningful paradigm of love-dominated community. According to the observations of Parsons, "a love-dominated community" should have 1) cognitively intelligible definition of what this (i.e. mutual love) entails with respect to their members (or community) own conduct and their expectations of reciprocal conduct from each other and from others with whom they interact; 2) responsiveness to appropriate leadership initiative in defining the obligation, rights, and tasks of such collectivity (Parsons 1978:319). Smith believes that religion (or tradition) has a potential to preserve a sense of common ethnicity as if in a chrysalis, at least for a period, as was the case with Greek Orthodoxy for the self-governing Greek Orthodox millet under the Ottoman rule. However, unless new movements and currents stir the spirit within the religious framework, its very conservatism may deaden the ethnic, or it may become a shell for an attenuated identity (Smith 1991:35).

### **5.5 Theoretical Discourse of Orthodox Tradition as an Instrument of Power Legitimation and Territorial Dominance (Expansion)**

For centuries, the national identity in Russia has been a key constitutive component in building a strong autocratic state. The neo-orthodox autocratic vision of emerging Orthodox elite prepared a soil for a wide-scale reassessment of the Orthodox Church Tradition in terms of "legal" versus "relational" categories. The dilemma is even sharper in the post-communist political system of Russia in which the ruling elites created a new political mythology and symbolic order not only to legitimate authoritarian Putin's regimes, but also to foster a purely territorial patriotism as a sense of political loyalty to the state. This discourse of Orthodox Tradition as authority refers to such terms as "native soil," "the Third Rome," and "Holy Russia", which are virtually cliches, but there is a much longer list of significant locations on the "cognitive maps" that Russians have drawn over the centuries.

An old debate about the country's "spiritual geography" closely linked to religion, ethics, culture and politics rages anew (Parthe 1997).

Gelman argues that "the political regime in contemporary Russia exemplifies the global phenomenon of electoral authoritarianism. By the 2010s, almost nobody used the term 'democracy' when referring to Russia, and debates among experts were mostly focused on how far the country had deviated from democratic standards. While 'pessimists' wrote of the consolidation of an authoritarian regime in Russia, 'optimists' avoided such firm claims, focusing instead on the low level of repression by Russia's political regime or labeling it as a 'hybrid' due to the presence of some democratic institutions. To some extent, these terminological controversies reflected conceptual problems in the study of regimes" (Gelman 2014:503-504).

### **5.5.1 Orthodox Legitimation of Power: The Selective Elaborations of Orthodox Theorists on Muscovite Political Hegemony**

The history of imperial Russia as a whole underwent a significant intellectual restructuring, collective analysis and synthetic interpretations including some excellent monographs written on specific topics in the field of Muscovite autocratic ideology in pre- and/or post-petrine period (Kivelson 1997, LeDonne's 1991, Raeff 1984, Sinitsyna 1998, Wortman 1995). Armstrong, Smith, Hastings, and other "revisionists" claim that the origins of modern nations are to be found in premodern national communities, or *ethnicities* (or "*nationalities*" in the tradition of East Slavic historiography), and to which Smith refers as *ethnics* (cited in Plokhy 2006:3).

In Muscovite Russia, the most powerful intellectual force was the Orthodox Church which together with the Grand Prince's Court enjoyed prerogatives to be in an advantageous position of a highly important source of political ideas. The concepts of authority held by the Church may be traced back to the Christianization of Kievan Russia when the Church was first confronted with the problem of defining the nature of its relations with the secular power. Since Russia's "baptism" came from Byzantium, the Russian clergy received their education from the Greek Orthodox Church whose clergy had well-developed ideas of the respective functions and proper relation of Church and State. Accordingly, the Russian Church would tend to define the responsibilities and mutual relations of the two in terms of

the Byzantine political thought. The ideas about the nature of the authority of the Grand Prince would thus be influenced by the Byzantine concept of the role of the Emperor, *Basileus Autokrator*, in Christian society (Meyendorff 1996b:7-29; Charbonneau 1967:65).

Due to the limitation of the research, it is impossible to examine in full the fate of the Byzantine legacy in the realm of political theory. For the sake of discussion, our basic interest would be to understand the influence of Byzantine political thought upon the development of Muscovite autocracy and if necessary to summarize the essential tenets around which Byzantine political ideology was centered, including the theory of imperial sovereignty. Much of our historical understanding of political behavior in Muscovite State revolves around the figure of a tsar, describing his unlimited autocratic power and his status as a divinely appointed father-tsar ruling over meek and unresisting subjects. The line of a popular belief in a "Byzantine heritage" was closely bound up with the headship of Orthodoxy suggested by the clerical theorists.

The first casual thread might also be called "*genetic ties*", for it refers to the blood relationship of the Grand Prince to the Byzantine Emperor that permeates the historical evolution of Eastern Orthodoxy as a religious tradition with its own specific ethos and spiritual content. The marriage of Ivan III with Sophia Palaeologus, the niece of the last Byzantine emperor, Constantine XI, gave in the eyes of many a kind of juridical sanction to the idea of Moscow as the heir to Byzantium. The claim to imperial descent put forth by the Muscovite princes was not based on Ivan III's Byzantine marriage, but was traced from Vladimir who had married Anna the Porphyrogenete, sister of the Byzantine emperor Basil II, and from Vladimir Monomakh, who received his imperial dignity and regalia from the Emperor Constantine IX (Runciman 1965, Kluchevsky 1960, Kollmann 1998, Meyendorff 1996). This sense of a "*proud difference*" that remained rooted in the Orthodox Tradition assumes that the imperial heritage of the Grand Prince would transfer a similar significance to the Russian capital city, which had been considered the center of Christianity until God punishes all his enemies and sets Constantinople free again from the infidels (Bushkovitch 1992; Raeff 1984). Kivelson argues that this idea was depicted even in the icon "*Blessed Is the Host*" of the Heavenly Tsar (better known as "*The Church Militant*"):

To the twentieth-century historian, this idea seems complex and far-fetched, yet the pattern of biblical typology and historical recurrence that underlie it were absolutely basic to Orthodox culture, embedded as they were in virtually all liturgical texts. Our modern progressive linear concept of time, by contrast, was largely absent. (Kivelson 1997:37)

The emergence of Muscovy from the early fourteenth century on as a political and spiritual authority in the East was counterbalanced by the fall of the Orthodox Slavs to the Muslim Turks in the Balkans in the late fourteenth century. The capitulation of the Byzantines to the Latin church at the Council of Ferrara-Florence in 1438–1439 and the consequent *de facto* establishment of the autocephalous Russian Church in 1448 in the midst of such political and military success only solidified Moscow's position in the Orthodox world (Flier 2003:134). The originator of the doctrine of "Moscow as the Third Rome" was a monk called Philotheus (Filofyei) from Pskov. In 1510, the learned *ihumen* wrote in his letter to Tsar Basil (Vassili) III the following:

The church of ancient Rome fell because of the Apollinarian heresy, as to the second Rome – the Church of Constantinople – it has been hewn by the axes of the Hagarenes. But this third, new Rome, the Universal Apostolic Church under thy mighty rule radiates forth the Orthodox Christian faith to the ends of the earth more brightly than the sun. [...] In all the universe thou art the only Tsar of Christians. [...] Hear me, pious Tsar, all Christian kingdoms have converged in thine alone. Two Romes have fallen, third stands, a fourth there shall not be. (cited in Kopanski 1998:200)

This powerful idea "introduced its three essential elements – universality, a symphony of powers and its eschatological setting" (Laats 2009:112) and was joyfully accepted by the Russians for "the national pride was now fully satisfied" (Shubin 2004:205). This large historiographical compilation made during the first half of the sixteenth century and containing many interpolations even within the adopted text of the Primary Chronicle has been considered by some modern historians a primary source despite the fact that its author, an official historiographer, prepared his text according to the ideological and political desires of the Muscovite rulers. It is appropriate to mention here the remark of Tikhomirov that the rule of Ivan III can account for the special interest toward Rome and the Roman Church in the older part of Nikon's chronicle (cited in Zimin 1960:20-21, Kuz'min 1962/1963:114). The spread of the idea was not limited to the writings of the time. It penetrated the official texts of the state and became the basis of the official ideology of the Muscovite state in the sixteenth century (Kartashev 1993:429). The potency of this ideology

derived from its affirmation. Instead of denying the past, it incorporated it with the present. In the same way as the overthrow of Mongol suzerainty did not mean the end of Mongol influence in Russia, but rather signified the continuation of the Golden Horde in Muscovy with the tsar as the successor to the Mongol imperial idea, the theory of Moscow the Third Rome was a fabric woven with Byzantine threads, and it only denied Constantinople's supremacy by asserting Moscow's succession to it (Toumanoff 1955:412).

It is particularly important to stress that a key constitutive component of the Muscovite paradigm about Third Rome was an 'Emperor' himself. Meyendorff asserts that the old Roman concept of the god-emperor was the basis of the idea of the divine origin of the sovereign's power. Rome has been more than a geographical, political, economical or cultural reality. It has been more than an empirical fact. It was proclaimed that the city was founded by the gods. And speaking about the empire and its center, Jupiter promised: '*Imperium sine fine dedi.*' Thus, the Romans believed that the city would never perish (Laats 2009:99). Shevchenko argues that "Roman Emperor was God's representative on earth, an instrument for the execution of God's purpose on earth. Agapetus, deacon of Hagia Sophia, expressed these ideas succinctly: by the essence of his body, an emperor is like any man. Yet in power of his office, he is like God, ruler of the All" (cited in Shevchenko 1954:142). With the triumph of Christianity in the Roman Empire, the Christian Roman Emperor was regarded as a sovereign appointed by God's will. In Byzantium, this idea became transformed into a mystical glorification of the Emperor. Called to rule by Divine Providence, the Emperor was considered the chosen of God who fulfilled divine will in his capacity as ruler of the empire protected by God:

The authority and actual power of the 'ecumenical patriarch' during the entire medieval period and until the fall of Constantinople (1453) always remained inseparable from the emperor. At all times, the famous text of the Sixth Novella of Emperor Justinian, issued in 535, was the ideological basis upon which the relation between emperor and patriarch were based: 'There two great gifts which God, in his love for humanity, has granted from on high: the priesthood and the imperial dignity' [...]. (Meyendorff 1996b:20)

The point should be clear that for ancient Orthodox Christians both *Empire* and *Church* were gifts of God, the harmony (symphony) that should exist between them resulted from the fusion of two concepts of universality - Roman and Christian. Thus, the aims of the Emperor and Patriarch were identical - the preservation of Empire and Church, bound to

one another in their imperial and universal institutional conception. The Ideal of Byzantium was the union and fusion of the Roman Christian Empire with the Greek Orthodox Church under the leadership of the Emperor and Patriarch. Thus, it was that the Emperor treated heretics as criminals against the state and the Patriarch excommunicated rebels against the Emperor (Charbonneau 1967:71-2).

These two aspects of new Christian universality (*Emperor* and *Patriarch*) merged well with the old Roman universalism and even transformed it. The office of the bishop of Rome became a new symbol of this universal symphony. In history, the empirical city of Rome has fallen from its high position, but the idea of the metaphysical Rome has survived. Like the belief in the divine origin of imperial power, the inheritance of Rome represented a special source from which the conception of the autocratic powers of the Byzantine emperors and their high claims on the world beyond the imperial borders derived. Byzantium, the sole legitimate Empire on earth, had a more elevated position than other States, for all the countries which had once belonged to the Roman *orbit* and had joined the Christian Church were considered by the Byzantine emperors as their everlasting possessions to be incorporated into the Empire. As the universal legitimate Empire had never actually surrendered its claim to world sovereignty, its mission was to unite all Christian states in response to God's command (Ostrogorsky 1956:1-14).

The theologians of Byzantium understood their history as a continuation of the history of the ancient Roman Empire. Indeed, they mistakenly claimed even more – the empire existed according to the plan of God. Thus, their intentions were also universalist. The people of Byzantium tried to be in every respect like the Romans. Even the name they used in Greek for themselves was Rhomaioi – the Romans. The pretension of the universal political might rooted in the ancient history and the pretension of the primacy of the bishop caused the patriarchs of Constantinople to pretend to be equal to the patriarchs of Rome, while the rulers of the Western Europe and the Byzantine Empire pretended to be the Roman emperors (Lettenbauer 1961:12-23). This particular nearness of the Emperor to God and the divine origin of his sovereignty implied the concentration of all authority in his hands. Since his sovereignty was an emanation of divine power, it was bound to gather up all the power on earth and could not be limited by any force, domestic or foreign. Christian ideas, thus, increased the autocratic powers of the Emperor who became recognized as the

Orthodox Autocrat. As bearer of the highest ruler's title and as head of the oldest Christian Empire, the Byzantine Emperor held a supreme position among rulers and stood as the father of all Christian peoples, the supreme legislator on earth to whom every Christian had to submit in all things concerning the Christian Commonwealth (Ostrogorsky 1956:4-6).

In Russia, this general medieval concept of sacred kingship was applied to Russian princes who, as mentioned earlier, were seen as junior members of the imperial "family" (Florovsky 1981:12). This process of "*translatio imperii*" ("translation of empire") was reactivated and reiterated in the theoretical construction of the Third Rome ideology. It emphasized the exclusivity of Muscovite Christianity, promoting a belief in the ultimate truth of Muscovite Orthodoxy and fostering the formation of a distinct Muscovite identity. In the realm of international relations, it served not only to establish a clearly defined border between Muscovy and its immediate neighbors (including the Rus' lands of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and later the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth) but also to legitimize aggression against them. The Muscovite literati used the religious factor to justify the conquest of Novgorod as well as Kazan (Plokhy 2006:146-147). According to Flier (2003:134), Moscow's first major victory over the Mongols at Kulikovo Pole occurred in 1380. The subjugation of Yaroslavl, Rostov, Novgorod, and Tver from 1463 to 1485 signaled the inevitability of Moscow's dominance over the other principalities of Rus' before 1492. But nothing can compare to the Orthodox zeal with which the clergy and the lay servitors of Ivan the Terrible attacked the Muslim faith of the defenders of Kazan. The religious rage unleashed against the "infidel" Tatars gives an ultimate glory for the victory to "our pious Sovereign". Plokhy assumes that "the chronicler was not exaggerating" (Plokhy 2006:147). In his fundamental research *The Origins of Autocracy: Ivan the Terrible in Russian History* Yanov gives a very precise disposition of political and ecclesial forces which created the role of a supreme arbiter (autocrator):

Unlike the state of Sweden, Denmark, or England, the Muscovite state appeared incapable of breaking the resistance of the powerful church hierarchy. On the contrary, in seeking to preserve the enormous worldly wealth of the church, the counter-reformist clergy managed not only to work out of all the ideological preconditions for an autocratic "evolution from above," but also to defeat the proponents of reform politically. Thus, they cleared the way for a new Tatar conquest of Rus', so to speak - this time not by Tatars but by its own Orthodox tsar. (Yanov 1981:11)

A distinctive dialectic between spiritual forms of authority and authorized governmental offices was lost or belittled. All important decisions were centralized in small hierarchical elite through theological-ideological justification and support of one tsar-autocrator whose political role took on huge significance under those conditions. The Orthodox Tradition was solidly established in the society (Wolff 1959). Gradually with peasant differentiation, a new class of service gentry (*pomeshchiki*) appeared as a backbone of Muscovite military power. This nobility likewise did not disdain its social exaltation of the national character of caesaropapism especially when interests and feelings of ordinary people were involved (Sinitsyna 1998). However, this pathological reduction of Christianity to autocratic paradigm, in Orthodox understanding, often led in Russian history to a bloody oppression of institutional critics of the autocracy (Kartashev 1993). Kopanski notes in this regard that,

Fyodor Dostoyevsky glorified General Skobelev's massacres of the Muslims in Turkmenistan as the divine act of a Christian 'God-bearing nation' (*narod bogonosetz*) in the quest for new domains inhabited by nomadic brutes. For him, Asia was epitomized by Islamic civilization rather than Buddhism, and he regarded the Russian pogroms of Muslims in Central Asia as a legitimate Christian holy war against the Islamic hegemony in the new promised land. When the Russian conquest of Turkestan was accomplished in 1882, Dostoyevsky described the Islamic Central Asia as the New Russia of the Orthodox settlers which will resurrect the old European one. (Kopanski 1998:195)

The formative influence of Byzantine political thought coincided with the time of Christianization of Kievan Russia. Although no Byzantine treatise on political ideology was translated into Slavonic in the Kievan period, the people and the rulers of Kievan Russia had good opportunities to become acquainted with the main principles of Byzantine political philosophy. Russian collections of canon law, translated from the Greek, contained not only canons of Councils, but also imperial novels and documents concerning ecclesiastical affairs and interests. Those documents were so impregnated with Byzantine ideas on sovereignty that clerics who used them constantly in church administration could not have failed to be profoundly influenced by their innate political ideas. Moreover, clerics were the advisors of princes. Since those documents were available in Slavonic translation, they were accessible to others besides priests (Dvornik 1956:76).



Those complex ideas of Muscovite autocracy were further developed and summarized in numerous works of Orthodox Panegyric literature which became increasingly popular after the fall of the imperial city and sought to demonstrate that autocracy represented the most “rational” and therefore “natural” form of government for Russia. An excellent tract to analyze, in this regard, is the Tale of Isador's Council, an anti-Florentine polemic written between 1458 and 1462 by Simon of Suzdal, a monk who had accompanied Isador to Florence but then turned violently against the Union. Shortly after it was written, the Tale was included in a compilation attributed to Pakhomius the Serb, the Selections from the Holy Writings against the Latins and the tale about the composition of the Eighth Latin Council of 1462 (Cherniavsky 1955:349-350).

The new emphasis on the autocracy-oriented theology led others Filofei's followers to arm their appeal for justice with numerous examples of Christian emperors who had condemned, punished, or banished heretics since "the pious tsars put to death many of the unrepentant amongst the Jews and the heretics" (Fennell 1951:501). If Filofei proclaimed Moscow the Third Rome and the Grand Prince the sole tsar for Christians in the universe, abbot Joseph Sanin of Volotsk (1439/40-1515), founder and abbot of the Dormition Monastery at Volokolamsk in 1479, started to preach the Christian duty of obedience to the sovereign and induced Ivan III to rule as an ideal Orthodox Autocrat vis-à-vis the Russian Church. He is best known in Russian history as the leader of the "Possessor" monastic movement. Possessors believed in extensive church holding and close cooperation with secular authority in order to do God's work. Their main opponent was Nilus of Sora (Russian, Nil Sorskii) who, as leader of the "Non-Possessors," minimized church holding, preferred a separation between church and state, and espoused the contemplative ideal of Hesychasm (Prokurat 2015:701-703). His major works include *Prosvetitel* (the Enlightener) and *Poslanii'a Iosifa Volotskogo* (The letters of Joseph Volotsky) (Prokurat 2015:703).

For Joseph, the tsar's power was unlimited already by virtue of its origin alone, since the Russian monarch was not only the head of the state, but also the supreme protector of the Church. Hieromonk Ioann argues that “although Joseph considered the power of the Church to be higher than that of the sovereign in theory, in practice he extended the latter over the Church also” (Zyzykin 1931:153-154). According to his theological approach, “God made a place for him on his throne,” and, therefore, "the tsar is similar to all people by his

nature, but he is similar to God most high by his power." Volotsky claimed that "The Tsar is Christ's first avenger against the heretic", directly referring at the same time to the example of the Inquisition of the "Spanish king". God handed over to the tsar's power and care, "the church and the monastery, as well as all of Orthodox Christianity." In this sense, the tsar acquires the character of a pontiff and God's deputy. "The tsar's court is not accountable to anyone – the state has primacy over the church" (Dyakonov 1915:157-163). Besides that, the followers of this doctrine – the Josephites – taught that divine honor must be granted not only to the living tsar but also to his images:

When the tsar's image is carried into the towns, then not only ordinary farmers and craftsmen, but also warriors, town elders, honest officials, and governors as well, must meet it with great honour and bow to the tsar's image as to the tsar himself. (Dyakonov 1915:177-181)

Moss (2011:45) points out to the existence of the anti-heretical legislation in both Byzantium and Russia that envisaged the death penalty for heretics (not for all, but for separate groups), and which the Church called on the emperor to observe. In Byzantium, the state laws envisaged the death penalty for apostates and Manichaeans. That is how they related to a series of public and more dangerous crimes (it was not the beliefs themselves that were punished, but the spreading of them), but other heresies were sometimes subsumed under these two large categories. Russia fully accepted the Byzantine laws (changing several of them in form), and already from the Ustav of St. Vladimir until the Ulozhenie of Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich, native laws envisaged such penalties as death for 'blasphemy' (burning, ch. 1, Article 2 of the Ulozhenie), 'for seducing from the Orthodox Faith into Islam [Judaism]' (burning, ch. 22, article 24), 'wizardry' (burning), sacrilege (death penalty), and there are other examples.

Although Josef's theories did not make a clear distinction between the functions of Church and State because, being faithful to the Byzantine Tradition, he viewed them as two inseparable institutions working harmoniously together for the welfare of Orthodoxy. His ideas of Church and State were formulated as a direct response to two great crises which faced the Russian Church toward the end of the fifteenth century: the proposed secularization of Church lands and the heresy of the Judaizers. In each crisis, Josef managed to play a central role, and his polemics constantly urged the Grand Prince to rule

as an ideal Orthodox Autocrat. In 1511, Joseph persuaded Basil III to apply his power against heretics in the same way that he had previously spoken with the father against the Novgorod Judaizers so that they should not destroy the whole of Orthodox Christianity. It was on the soil of the struggle with heresy that the duty of the Great Russian Prince to defend the faith was revealed. If in Byzantium the Kings' encroachment on the teaching authority of the Church stands to the fore, in Rus' we encounter first of all the striving to ascribe to the tsar Archpastoral rights in the realization of Christianity in life (Moss 2011:48-49).

It is plausible to assume that there was yet another reason why Russian theology and history were bound to center on monarchs and why the majority of apologies were written at their behest. The idea of the unity and indivisibility of the Russian Church, embodied in the Metropolitan of Kiev and all Russia, was gradually transferred to the political sphere and gradually gave rise to the idea of the unity of the lands inhabited by the Russian Orthodox people - the old Byzantine idea of the true faith being coterminous with political boundaries. The Church was prepared to support a prince who could potentially realize this ideal, as well as maintain order and stability so that the Church could fulfill its mission. Thus, the rising power of the Grand Princes of Moscow was buttressed by the Church, which expected the prince to recognize his responsibilities as an Orthodox sovereign and rule accordingly (Vernadsky 1953:299-325). To understand how autocratic ideology derived from a theory intended to defend the rights of the Church, it is necessary to study the key passages from the Epistle to Ivan Vasil'yevich:

I [write] to you, the Brightest and most highly-throning Sovereign, Grand Prince, Orthodox Christian tsar and lord of all, rein-holder of the Holy Ecumenical and Apostolic Church of God and the Most Holy Virgin... For the Old Rome fell because of its Church's lack of faith, the Apollinarian heresy; and of the second Rome, the city of Constantine, the pagans broke down the doors of the churches with their axes... And now there is the Holy Synodal Apostolic Church of the reigning Third Rome, of tsardom, which shines like the sun in its Orthodox Christian faith, throughout the whole universe. And that is your real pious tsar, as all the empires [tsardoms] of the Orthodox Christian faith have gathered into your single empire... you are the only tsar for Christian in the whole world. [...]. (cited in Cherniavsky 1958:619)

Tsar Ivan the Terrible developed these ideas, specifying that the structure of the earthly state is a copy of the heavenly state, and the earthly tsar is like God's deputy on earth. According to his teaching, the tsar is not put there by the people "as the headman of a district".

We are the submissive Ivan by God's mercy, and not by the rebellious people's desire," wrote the Moscow Tsar Ivan the Terrible about himself at the beginning of his official letters and documents. Ivan the Terrible considered the objection that secular authorities may be poor, distorted copies of heaven as analogous to the Manichaeism heresy, which taught that Christ is master of the heavens, but the earth is governed by people at their own discretion. Ivan the Terrible taught that "the banner of victory and the true cross" were given by Jesus Christ first to Constantine, the first Christian emperor, then to other Byzantine emperors, until "the spark of piety went to Rus". (Ustryalov 1842:156)

This open definition received a more detailed specification: besides the natural state function of "encouraging the good and punishing the wicked," Ivan the Terrible ascribes to the person of the tsar certain representative spiritual authority. "I believe," he said, "that I, as a servant, have to give an account for any sin of those who are under my authority, whether intentional or unintentional, in order not to sin by negligence" (Ustryalov 1842:157). Similar views of the tsar were determined by the theology of that time, according to which the tsar became as though a sacrifice for the people's sins, repeating in his being the Saviour's sacrifice (Ustryalov 1842:157). However, in reality, by that time Ivan was gravely ill, while his country was devastated not only by the prolonged and disastrous war but, also by the policy of *oprichnina*. In pursuing it, Ivan set aside a part of the Muscovite realm for himself, introducing a separate administration and army (*oprichnina*) in an apparent attempt to establish his unlimited rule and build a utopian authoritarian state (Kollmann 1998:748–70.).

The idea of autocracy was profoundly popular among Orthodox or even liberal theorists in eighteenth-century Russia. Tatishchev, for example, denied the feasibility of any form of government except autocracy in a country of Russia's size, location, and cultural level: "Large regions, open borders, in particular where the people are not enlightened by learning and reason and perform their duties from fear rather than an internalized sense of right and wrong must be an [unlimited] monarchy" (Tatishchev 1887:136–37). Anything less than absolute power would invite anarchy and invasion. Hence, Tatishchev reasoned, Peter's unlimited power gave him the right to choose his own successor without regard to bloodline;

on this issue, the rationalists stood alone since the other historians respected the overwhelming sentiment in favor of hereditary monarchy (Whittaker 1998:40).

Whittaker also argued in this regard that "the figure of the Russian autocrat as the equivalent of other European absolutist monarchs supplanted the image of an isolated and unique Orthodox ruler" and after the Petrine reforms "the interpretation of autocracy itself became an enterprise that reflected shifts in domestic politics, changing Enlightenment criteria for good government, and varying public values, attitudes, and expectations" (Whittaker 1998:32-33). Unlimited monarchy in Russia was not only the sole rational choice, as Tatishchev asserted; the experience further suggested that it was also the most natural or innately correct form of government since it functioned like society's most natural and basic institution, the family. The source of autocratic power flowed from a proposition that "the monarch is like a father," with the state a family writ large; thus, the child's or subject's lack of freedom was natural and just until the father or monarch could guide his charges to maturity (Whittaker 1998:40).

This position was concordant with the shifts in public attitudes towards absolutism in Russia. Tikhomirov reiterated this absolutistic principle in his words and declared the political conception of Ivan the Terrible "an ideal, following from a purely Orthodox understanding of life" (Tikhomirov 1897:56). He even stressed the thought that Roman Caesarism had a correct sense of monarchic power when it "tried to attribute personal divinity to the emperors" (Tikhomirov 1897:48). There were many other examples of similar imperial trajectory. This is, for example, what Archbishop Brianchaninov wrote on the issue:

What is a pious tsar to a pious realm? He is a God's servant, the messenger and acolyte of the Heavenly Father, the living instrument of God's providence, the executor of God's intentions for the people. (Brianchaninov 1863:24-25)

A more picturesque description of the tsar was given by Petrov, a well-known monarchist:

Anything that the God-lighted sun is for nature, the God-given tsar is for his realm. If the light of the tsar's eye shines – tears are dried, sighs are satisfied, laborers are encouraged, and courage is renewed. The tsar's generous right hand opens, and disasters are lightened. The tsar's word is issued, and everything is put into well-disposed order, everything is stimulated to activity. (Petrov 1926:105)

Another Orthodox theologian, Trubetskoy wrote in defence of the monarchy that "the tsar's authority takes on the character of sacred service, and its bearer becomes God's anointed sovereign. In the course of obligation, the monarch expresses the people's conscience in the historical succession of its development. [...] That is why the tsar's person as God's anointed sovereign is surrounded by an aura in the people's eyes" (Trubetskoy 1926:172).

It is significant to note that Russian autocrats themselves realized the unnatural character of organized relations between *state* and *church* under which the Orthodox Church, securing its leadership and primacy, was transformed, in fact, into one of the departments of the state. Under the tendency to increase absolutism in Europe, the threat of the church's complete dependence upon the state became too real. Peter I, the great reformer of Russia, considering in mind the reforms of Patriarch Nikon, as well as his deposition and prosecution, understood well that an independent patriarch could become a serious barrier on the path of the reforms he carried out. Thus, during his first trip abroad (1697-1698), he held a two-hour conversation on the subject of the church with Crown Princess Anne of England and discussed church matters with the Archbishop of Canterbury as well as other Anglican bishops (Lykshosherstov 2003:210).

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York appointed special theologian consultants for Peter the Great. But most of all, the Russian tsar admired the admonishments of William of Orange who, using the examples of Holland and England, advised Peter the Great to become head of the Church himself in order to have complete monarchic authority at his disposal (Nikolin 1997:208). Peter's main associate in spiritual matters was bishop Theophan Prokopovitch who in his letter to abbot Markel Radyshevskij substantiated the new claims of the autocrat Peter as follows: "It is clearly shown in the book about the emperor-pontiff, that the tsar is a judge and sovereign of all clerical ranks, and these, every rank, and the patriarch himself are subject to the Emperor, being under the jurisdiction of the Tsar, just as any other subject. And this will be like pricks or like dust in the eyes to those who crave spiritual power or wish to be patriarch" (cited in Kartashev 1991:322).

Having returned to Russia, Tsar Peter I issued the first decree of December 16, 1700, on the beginning of church reform and the abolition of the institution of the Patriarch: "The Patriarchate is declared not to be [...]" (Talberg 1959:532-533). Peter struck his fatal blow

at a time when the Church was grievously weakened by the Schism. He destroyed the harmony which had previously existed in Russia between the Church and the Tsardom and deprived the Church of its freedom. For two hundred years, it had to remain in captivity to the Empire. Peter, therefore, decreed that the Patriarchate should be replaced by a collegiate body called "the Holy Governing Synod", the constitution and the functioning of which had no precedents in the history of the Eastern Church. He was a great admirer of Luther and praised him highly because he had helped to bring the Church under secular control (Zernov 1978:120-21).

Thus, Filofei's illusion of Slavic Third Rome was confronted again with the despotism of a secular Caesar. The extent of the spiritual humiliation of the Orthodox Church may be illustrated by the fact that even the sermons and precepts to the priesthood and people imposed earlier as a duty of the bishop, now had to be compiled in the Ecclesiastical Collegium, "since not every bishop can compile a pure word" (Pavlov 1902:506-506). Since then, the new order of church management was always recognized by the majority of Orthodox clergy as shameful and burdensome. Advocating Christian universalism, Solov'ev argued that Russia's mission was to reconcile the East and the West, overcome all forms of particularism and usher in an age of worldwide organic unity. In this regard, "Third Rome" was immediately relevant because it demonstrated the historicity of Russia's mission and stood as a metaphor for the "Russian idea." According to Solov'ev, Russia was not only third in succession after ancient Rome but a representative of the "third principle," capable of uniting East and West by its very selflessness. The reforms of Peter the Great and the opening to the West demonstrated "that Russia was not called to be only Eastern, that in the great conflict between East and West she should not stand on one side representing one of the struggling parties — that in this matter she possessed a mediational and conciliatory obligation, that she should be in the highest sense a third judge of the conflict" (Szporluk and Poe 1997:11). Florovsky passionately refutes that historical misfortune of Orthodox Church asserting that "this actual 'Caesaropapism' was never assimilated, adopted or recognized by the church's consciousness or conscience itself, although individual church people and church figures yielded to it, and were quite often even inspired by it" (Florovsky 1991:89).

Russian church historian of the last century Bolotov emphasizes in his study of Russian autocracy some fundamental parallels with Byzantine legacy, assuming that "the relations of church and state as they were formed during the reign of Constantine are not ideal, of course. The emperor abandoned the position he earlier occupied of the neutrality beneficial for church life and permitted himself to interfere fairly often in church affairs" (Bolotov 1994:51). In this way, a long period of captivity to the state (later identified as Caesaropapism, a kind of ideological servitude and subordination of the Church to the secular institutions) began for Christ's Church. This is a turn of events that the earliest Christians did not expect. The pagan state had bowed at last before the spiritual strength of Christianity, but Christianity, in its turn, fixed its eyes on that which held to the kingdom of this world: power, wealth and earthly glory. A prominent Russian theologian Schmemmann argues in this regard:

Where your treasure is, there your heart will also be. The true tragedy of the Byzantine church is not in the arbitrariness of the emperors, not in sin and stumbling – it consists, first of all, in the fact that the real 'treasure' that completely filled its heart and subordinated everything to itself, was the Empire. Violence did not conquer the church, but the temptations of 'flesh and blood' charmed the church's consciousness with an earthly dream and earthly love. Itself poisoned Byzantium in turn poisoned with its own sin those who received the Christian gospel from it (cited in Nikolayev 1997:34).

Longworth characterizes the idea of the Third Rome as a "myth" that was invented to provide the state with a religious justification for uniting not just the Orthodox Russians but all Christians, whether in Russia, Ukraine, the Balkans or the Levant. Even after the foundation of the Patriarchate in 1589, the Russian Church rightly continued to recognize its inferiority to Constantinople, for the bishop of Moscow occupied the fifth place in the hierarchy of patriarchal sees (Szporluk and Poe 1997:6). Nichols assumes that "it is the rivalry of Constantinople and Moscow, the Second and Third Romes, which has produced the present multiplicity of Orthodox Churches and by the same token, what interests us more, the modest plurality of Orthodox theologies in the world today" (Nichols 1995:11). Nichols also stresses intense and destructive effects of the increasing competition between those Orthodox Patriarchates:



Essentially, what we have between 1450 and 1800 are two mega-Churches, the Church of Russia, protected by the Tsardom, and the Church of Constantinople, to which the Ottoman Empire gave rights of governance over all other Orthodox Christians within the Turkish Empire. The Church of Russia dominated all the Orthodox that the Tsardom could swallow, and, notoriously, Tsarist Russia was an imperialist power, an expansionist power, from Peter the Great onwards. The Church of Constantinople dominated everyone else, and with the support of the Ottoman government made and unmade the patriarchs of the other ancient sees, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem. (Nichols 1995:10)

It was a direct implementation of Filofei's concept in practice, for what actually happened was that both of those two great churches used political events to break up the ecclesiastical empire of the other. To begin with, in the nineteenth century, this meant the Russian Church encouraging rebellion against Constantinople. Thus, it was through Russian pressure on the Ottoman Porte that Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem regained their independence, Jerusalem in 1845 and the other two in 1899. Similarly, it was through Russian influence that the Greeks and other Balkan peoples won their independence both political and ecclesiastical. Thus, the Church of Greece became autocephalous in 1850; Bulgaria in 1870, Serbia and Romania in 1879. In the twentieth century, the boot was on the other foot. The Church of Constantinople took advantage of the weakness of Russia after the Bolshevik Revolution and her international isolation to hive off huge chunks of the old Patriarchate of Moscow, creating autocephalous Churches in Georgia, Poland and Czechoslovakia (Nichols 1995:10-11).

The idea of Moscow as the Third Rome in the economy of divine providence entrusted to Russia revived again during the reign of Tsar Alexander II. The wars waged by Russia for the liberation of Bulgaria in 1877-1878 and Serbia in 1914-1917 can be seen as prefiguring the full realization of that role. Then came the revolution, in which the Third International represented a grotesque parody of the noble ideal of the Third Rome (Ulyanov 1994:152-162). The exaltation of the Russian Church and state to patriarchal and "Third Rome" status respectively shows that, the initial mainstream of Orthodox theology operated by the presupposition that Russian Orthodox Church was the Greek Orthodox Church, i. e., the Third Rome was qualitatively higher than the Second Rome. There was a similar tendency in Byzantium towards the caesaropapism. However, the doctrine of the symphony resisted vehemently against this tendency. In Russia, this doctrine was not able to oppose the idea of the eschatological ruler and henceforth the state has always dominated the church

(Bercken 1999:151-164). During the Great Schism in Russian Church the Orthodox Council of 1666/7 delivered the refutation of the previous Council of 1551 which taught that Moscow Orthodoxy was the pattern for the rest of the world:

We declare the Council of 1551 to be no Council at all and its decisions not binding, because the Metropolitan Macari and those with him acted and made their decisions in ignorance, without reason, and quite arbitrarily, for they had not consulted the Oecumenical Patriarch. (Zernov 1978:102)

It is worth mentioning that a number of contemporary scholars (Bushkovitch 1992; Kivelson 1997; Kollmann 1998; Laats 2009; Meyendorff 1996; Østbø 2016; Sinitsyna 1998; Szporluk & Poe 1997; Ploky 2006) now agree that in the Muscovite period, the idea/claim about Moscow as the Third Rome was known only in limited ecclesiastical circles; moreover, it did not become part of scholarly and public discourses until the 1860s. Meyendorff gives a more reasonable interpretation to this phenomenon:

It appears to me that the role of the theory of 'Moscow-Third Rome', as an inspiration of Russian politics in the post-medieval age, is much too often given exaggerated importance. Whenever it was used in Muscovy, it served as a subsidiary element in the building up of a national state, not as an ideological focus. (Meyendorff 1996b:145)

### **5.5.2 Orthodox Legitimation of Territorial Expansionism and "Land" Patriotism in the Construction of Russian National Identity**

The view of Orthodoxy as the universal spiritual ethos (rather than a tradition among others) has a strong appeal (Agadjanian and Rousselet 2005:38). The territory is so inextricably linked to the national identity of Russians that they cannot be separated. Neither the identity, or consciousness shared by members of a nation, nor the physical territory of the nation itself can be viewed in isolation (Kaplan and Herb 1999). This "territorial" notion of pan-Orthodoxy builds on the insights of superiority associated with an entire philosophical system rebutting post-modernism through the assertion of "Orthodox civilization" as not just Civilization among others — in the sense of Arnold Toynbee or Samuel Huntington — but as a historical project expressing a profound quest for the majority of humankind (cited in Panarin 2002:246).

It is, for example, reflected in some official documents of the Orthodox Church, like *"Osnovnye printsypy otnoshenia Russkoi pravoslavnoi tserkvi k inoslaviu"* (*Basic Principles of the Russian Orthodox Church's Relations with Other Christian Denominations*) approved by Church Council in 2000. This document clearly states: "It is only through the local community that each Church member relates to the entire Church. Breaking his/her canonical ties with the Local Church [Pomestnaia Tserkov'], a Christian automatically damages his/her beneficial unity with the entire Church body, is torn off from it" (*Church Council of Russian Orthodox Church*. 2000. ch. 1. p. 10). The Manifesto of the National-Patriotic Front Pamiat' also emphasised Eastern Orthodoxy above all else. It stated that Pamiat's programmatic demands were not centred on politics, economics or demography, the central concerns of other organisations, but instead "our aim is the spiritual revival and unification of the People of our Fatherland which has been tortured and plundered by aggressive Zionism, Talmudic atheism, and cosmopolitan usury" (Garrard 1991:135).

In this sense, a "historic land" is one where terrain and people have exerted mutual and beneficial influence over several generations. The homeland becomes a repository of historic memories and associations, the place where 'our' sages, saints and heroes lived, worked, prayed and fought. All this makes the homeland unique. Its rivers, coasts, lakes, mountains and cities become 'sacred' — places of veneration and exaltation whose inner meanings can be fathomed only by the initiated, that is, the self-aware members of the nation (Smith 1991:9). Therefore, nations cannot be conceived without a specific territory or homeland. Territory situates the nation, giving it roots and boundaries. In other words, territory expresses internal cohesion and external differentiation (Herb 1999:17). Bassin addresses the legacy of Russian nationalism as a paradox of fundamental ambivalence exemplified by the Slavophiles and the Pan-Slavs ideology. In his interpretation, Russia was an empire by virtue of the simple circumstance that consisted of the territories of a dominant national group (Great Russians) which ruled over those of subordinate nationalities (Bassin 2003:257-267). Bassin reminds that Russia's geographical existence within a larger zone of Eurasian civilization meant that Russian culture had been shaped to a not insignificant extent by influences coming from Asia, a conclusion which Trubetskoy used to underscore and enhance Russia's elemental differentiation from Europe:

The Russians, the Ugro-Finns, and the Volga Turks comprise a cultural zone that has connections with both the Slavs and the 'Turanian East,' and it is difficult to say which of these is more important... It is usually forgotten that our 'brothers' (if not in language or faith, then in blood, character, and culture) are not only the Slavs but the Turanians. [...]. (Trubetskoy 1991:81-99)

The conjunction of these two presuppositions — the idea of the land and idea of the nation — gives rise to what Grosby (2002:191-212) defines as "the sociological, anthropological, and phenomenological puzzle of territoriality", which refers not merely to a geometrically delineated space; it rather refers to the transcendental significance of that space; it refers to the life-ordering and life-sustaining significance of a space which makes that space into a meaningful structure:

In the so-called secular and individualistic twentieth century, millions and millions of human beings have given their lives for a land and a country which they believe to be their own. These and other events, especially recent ones in Eastern Europe, tragic though they are, vividly indicate that territorial integrity and territorial sovereignty remain extremely important in the organization of human society. Such events indicate that the significance which is attributed to territoriality remains a fundamental, constitutive element of modern society. (Grosby 2002:191)

A territory in national myths becomes a sacred symbol of the nation's existence. The destruction of the fantasy of the nation occurs through inflicting real injuries on bodies. In fact, the aim of war more generally is to rape the enemy's "motherland", the body of the community (Hall 1999:52). However, on the other hand, the authoritarian language of territorial paradigm can be easily translated into the subject of institutional geographical dominance. In the Orthodox approach, "Canonical territory" is another ecclesiastical and political category widely used to denote this space of domination. It refers to conventional delimitation of the geographical areas between autocephalous Eastern Orthodox Churches, recognized as a part of the historical ecclesiastical custom. Its canonical validity is based upon a number of texts, including Romans (15:20-21), the Eighth rule of the First Church Council, and the Thirty-fourth Apostolic Rule (Agadjanian and Rousselet 2005:40). This appeal to the notion of "canonical territory" became extremely topical after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Having become history, the USSR left an "ambiguous legacy" to Russia. The unexpected headlong collapse of the Soviet Union — that appeared to the rest of the world to be at the height of its power mere two decades ago — came as an agonizing

surprise to Russians. The ex-Soviet Russian nationality has rapidly come to terms with several big losses and multiple crises coexisting and reinforcing each other (Chulos 2000; Chumakov 2003).

Pointing to the concept of "canonical territory" (Bremer 2008:229-35), the Russian Orthodox hierarchy claim that these territories are independent and mutually exclusive geographical regions "belonging" to a certain Orthodox Church (Romanian, Bulgarian, Russian, Georgian, and others) Historically, this tradition of jurisdictional partition has occurred throughout centuries and has been fixed in a series of church documents. In most cases, it reflected political borders and imperial spheres of influence, and, at the same time, it reflected the fluctuating areas of ethnic distribution. The "canonical territory" of the Russian Orthodox Church has long been movable and was widening along with the Russian imperial expansion and the diffusion of Russian ethnic settlements. Now this "canonical territory" is usually identified with the former space of the Russian Empire or even the Soviet Union with the exception of Georgia (with its patriarchate, autocephalous since 1917) and Armenia (with its independent and non-Orthodox patriarchate), and sometimes with the addition of China and Japan (Chaplin 2000).

In the previous chapters, we had already discussed how the Moscow's household decisively submitted all neighbouring territories to the autocratic rule while bringing the *princes* and *boiars* of Vladimir land into its own organization. In that historical situation, "a time-honoured though constantly squabbling federation of princes was massed into one single household, and service to the prince of Moscow became the principal mark of social status throughout the ancient territory of the Vladimir *grandprincedom*. A term signifying servant (*dvorianin*) was about to become the Russian equivalent of aristocrat" (Yaney 1992:6) Thus, the whole system of Russian absolutism serves as "evidence of national respectability, as a certificate of Russia's affiliation with the European family" (Yanov 1981:74-75). Nevertheless, Smith argues that "judged by these criteria, the imperial route for forming territorial political nations has had only partial success to date" (Smith 1991:102). He includes in his conclusion a few empirical examples to consider. At first, he started with imperial Russia of the last century, showing that

tsarist rule saw both the attempted modernization (often interrupted) of social and political institutions and the use of official nationalism to Russify large parts of the empire's population and assimilate them through the imposition of Russian culture and Orthodoxy. At the same time, the gulf between rulers and the ruled within the dominant Russian ethnic core widened, despite the abolition of serfdom in 1861; the westernized culture of the aristocracy and the Orthodox beliefs and rituals of the peasant masses expressed antithetical visions of Russia. (Smith 1991:102-103)

Smith's second example has to do with the repudiation of both visions for a Marxist 'proletarian' during the October Revolution since this alternative sought "to turn the Russian empire into a federation of soviet republics for the most important peripheral *ethnies*. But the civil war, the building of 'Socialism in One Country' and especially the dangers of the Great Patriotic War against the Nazis brought a partial return to the traditional, even religious, heritage of Great Russian nationalism. Today, that heritage is sought more openly at the cultural, if not the institutional, level. At the same time, even so partial a return under *perestroika* has been accompanied by growing nationalist demands of non-Russian demotic *ethnies*, demands that could imperil the socialist vision and its federal expression" (Smith 1991:103).

This complicated relationship of *territory* and *ideology* suggests for Smith the existence of "a definite social space, a fairly well demarcated and bounded territory, with which the members identify and to which they feel they belong" (Smith 1991:8) and is best understood as an indispensable element of his definition of national identity, which in Smith's approach consists of "a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members" (Smith 1991:14). Alter (1985:23) also points out that a close connection exists between nation and state. Rex claims that a classical political interpretation of a nation drunk too deeply from the multicultural well of ethnocultural symbols, since "the problem is that, while it denies particularistic ethnic loyalties or subordinates them, it has itself to create its own sense of belonging, and it does this very often for instance to the mother country or the fatherland" (Rex 1995:27).

During the institutional challenges, most Orthodox clergy developed after 1991 a sort of "Synodal piety" (Skobtsova 1997:42-45) where religion was seen as an attribute of the

"Russian idea" and the national identity was emphasized as one of the major religious values. Agadjanian and Rousselet argued that this inherent link between religion and nationality invokes yet another one: it involves a larger ethnic community of Eastern Slavs (besides Russians, also Ukrainians and Belorussians) and thus operates through trans-national religious networks. For the Russian diaspora, Russian Orthodoxy constitutes one of the main expressions and markers of ethnic identity, going across new national borders but also creating protective symbolic barriers. This kind of trans-nationalism is particularistic in two senses: by referring to a specific ethnicity (Russians and Slavs) and to a specific "canonical territory" (Agadjanian and Rousselet 2005:41). Being traditionally inclined to a geographical factor, the Russian sense of identity experienced an interesting semantic shift: suddenly, the Russian Church ceased to be limited to the Russian and Soviet Empire and became "transnational," even if the administration of the Church was constrained within the framework of the Russian Federation. Therefore, territory is always a meaningful and vital constituent of the definition and identification of the group living in it. It is not simply an area within which certain physical actions are performed, not an exclusive domain of a community; rather, it refers to a structural, symbolic condition which has significance for those who act within it and towards its national identity (Grosby 1995; Mach 1993; Schlesinger 1991).

According to the Orthodox canon, there can only be one jurisdiction on the territory of a single state. The proposed union of Orthodox Ukrainian Churches is a serious threat to Moscow. If the churches in Ukraine are unified, Kiev will resume its historical role as the direct inheritor of the Kievan Rus'. Evans ascribed the Church's interest in Ukraine as singularly focused: "The main interests of the ROC in Ukraine are territorial: to maintain its canonical dominance and physical presence, and to guard Russian cultural influence. Ideally, it would completely eliminate the ecclesiastical competition in Ukraine" (Knox 2005:83). Thus, ethnicity became a dominant focus in the Church. Oeldemann argues that the connection of Russianness and Orthodoxy became by far more pronounced than ever before, indicating the ambivalent position of the Moscow Patriarchate:

on the one hand, all ethnic Russians are considered to be — at least potential — members of the Russian Orthodox Church, on the other hand, the Moscow Patriarchate explicitly describes itself in its statute to be a "multinational" Church, to which, apart from Russians, Ukrainians, White Russians and Estonians also Komi and Mordovinians belong who became Christians by Russian Orthodox missionaries. (Oeldemann 2008:233)

Although Orthodox theology has always been "territorially" oriented, some modern scholars (Hosking 1998; Letham 2007; Levin 1993) assume that Orthodox territorial expansion was not entirely successful. Subsequently, Russians developed a hybrid of paganism and Christianity, labelled *dvoeverie* (dual faith). For example, to maintain good favour with *domovoi*, the pagan god of the household, upon moving in, the head of the house would hold an icon in one hand, food for the god in the other, and cross himself in the Orthodox custom. Orthodox occasions were often superimposed on to existing festivals, so that painting Easter eggs was a celebration of the traditional pagan festival of spring. Those practices were so widespread, particularly among the Orthodox peasantry, that scholars regard *dvoeverie* as synonymous with medieval popular Christianity. Whatever the reasons, *dvoeverie* persisted until the early twentieth century.

Eastern Orthodox theological reflection is comprehensive in the ways it seeks to objectivise the idea of "Holy Russia" as "the whole world and even [...] paradise under the sign of the true religion" (Fedotov 1935:67). Ivan Ilyin, a late-19th-century espouser of monarchy, believed that monarchical conscience of law corresponds to such values as religious piety and family. His ideal was a "Holy Rus'" (not simply as a national historical idea since it is not equal to the Kievan or Muscovite period), so much as a universal, spiritual concept. For Ilyin, there is no Christian land that is not part of "Holy Rus'" This is the Russia that belongs to the people; it is intangible, not made by human hands (*nerukotvornaia*), and thus indestructible (cited in Parthe 1997:4). Therefore, "the appellation '*Sviataia Rus*' ('*Holy Rus*') conveys the centrality of Orthodoxy to Russia's historical and cultural development" (Knox 2005:41).

Ilyin's ideas (1993) readily spread from another concept - "internal Holy Rus'" which, according to Ilyin, exists within all true Russians, no matter where they live, giving them a sense of an internal freedom that can be experienced in exile or captivity. This ever-present sense of "inner" Russia manifests itself as a source of comfort, mobilization and strength -



that has been culturally adapted to fit the post-Soviet sense of humiliation, of a "great nation" reduced in size and the respect it commands (Alfeyev 2001:3). The laity defended this Orthodox pronouncement from the encroachment of the state, particularly in rural areas, where the peasants were generally more pious (Davis 2003). Although there is no absolute agreement on many issues that constitutes modern Orthodox theology, there is still a sufficient continuity of Orthodox Tradition that seeks to be centered upon territorial principles of dominion, regardless of nature of the governing political regime. In order to illustrate this point, we may recall the way Metropolitan Sergii issued a statement in 1927 on behalf of the Orthodox Church, a 'Declaration of Loyalty' to the Soviet Motherland:

We want to be Orthodox and, at the same time, to recognise the Soviet Union as our civil motherland, whose joys and successes are our joys and successes, and whose setbacks are our setbacks. [...] Whilst remaining Orthodox, we remember our duty to be citizens of the Soviet Union. (cited in Stragorodsky 1995: 268–72)

In opposition to the monarchical view, a group of outstanding Russian theologians (Alexeev, Berdyayev, Frank, Soloviev, Speranskiy and others) entered into a debate with a pro-western interpretation of the autocratic monarchy, claiming that neither in Holy Scripture nor in classical patristic was there any serious substantiation for the office of tsar by the New Testament church, or for the recognition of a "sacred character" of the Holy Rus'. An Orthodox theologian Berdyaev addressed this subject in 1926 in his famous *An Answer to a Monarchist's Letter*:

The recognition of an ecclesiastical and dogmatic significance of an autocratic monarchy and the peculiar sacramental nature of the tsar's anointing seems to me a genuine heresy for which we will be cruelly punished. [...] The Christian religion refutes absolute state power at all. The state has, in its essence, a pagan and an Old Testament nature and, as such, it has obtained consecration and justification in Christianity. And a New-Testament Christian state is conditional symbolism, which has turned into a lie and become impossible. (Berdyaev 1926:141)

Hence, the Orthodox Tradition of "sacred geography" has been challenged and reconsidered in the twentieth century, the combination of these theological concerns is burdened now not only with a question of national identity: "Who are we, Russians?", but is matched as well with the second question: "Where are our borders?". Speaking, in this

regard, about the inconsistency and complexity of the Russian soul, Berdyaev stresses "two streams of world history" (East and West) which "jostle and influence one another", since "the Russian people is not purely European and it is not purely Asiatic". Berdyaev assumes that Russia is "a complete section of the world, a colossal East-West" that unites two worlds within the Russian soul. These two principles are always engaged "in strife the Eastern and the Western", being related to the "spiritual geography":

There is that in the Russian soul which corresponds to the immensity, the vagueness, the infinitude of the Russian land, spiritual geography corresponds with physical. In the Russian soul there is a sort of immensity, a vagueness, a predilection for the infinite, such as is suggested by the great plain of Russia. For this reason, the Russian people have found difficulty in achieving mastery over these vast expanses and in reducing them to orderly shape. (Berdyaev 1947:2)

Three factors in particular problematize this relationship. At first, this structural fundamentalism of Eastern Orthodoxy with its unique emphasis on territorial hegemony was shattered when millions of Russians lost their territory, what symbolized the humiliation of the country in the eyes of the world, a diminution of Russia's prestige and security, and a threat to Russia's identity (Ringmar 1996). The dissolution of the Soviet Union was accompanied by a reversal of evaluations of imperial Russia. In Russia, challenges to official history became weapons in the political offensives of *Perestroika* and the subsequent struggles for control over the new politics emerging after 1991. Much of the history published in the popular press in the last years of the Soviet Union and the early years of the new Russian Federation described the whole Soviet period as a perversion of "normal" development (Burbank and Ransel 1998). The Russian President lamented his country's precipitate decline in the international status. Putin famously declared in 2005 that the collapse of USSR was "the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century" (cited in Bowker 2007:3). Later, Putin was equally determined to rebuild the military after years of decline. Both the US and the Soviet Union who believed their ideologies – liberal capitalism and Marxizm-Leninism respectively – had universal relevance and both sought to promote them around the world (Bowker 2007:4,11).

The second issue has to do with a psychological incompatibility of many Russian people to reconcile themselves to the theory that geography is the main outcome of history, i.e., to

reconcile this flexible sense of Russian space (*prostranstvo*) with enduring national “border-consciousness” to redefine for themselves in full complexity the notions of Russia and what it is to be Russian (Guroff and Guroff 1994). This modern problem of national identity in relation to the post-Soviet Russia can be expressed by the classical definition of Jurgen Habermas who states that “a social system has lost its identity as soon as later generations no longer recognize themselves within the once-constitutive tradition” (Habermas 1975:5).

The third issue, related to the loss of empire, was the fear of maintaining territorial legitimacy, which was renewed with secessionist aspirations in Chechnia. Russia’s wars in Chechnya 1994–2009 served to strengthen Russian national identity and increasingly define it in terms of the ‘other’, the Islamic Chechens. Knox argued that the campaign for independent Orthodox churches in former Soviet states has also affronted Russian national chauvinists who regard the post-Soviet space as a legitimate sphere of Russian dominance and, therefore, a Russian Orthodox territory. Socio-economic difficulties led to disaffection with the reformist leadership and the increasing support for politicians who seek to explain Russia’s post-Soviet problems as attacks on national integrity and prosperity (Knox 2005:138). Theorizing over the fact “that Russia is so enormous” in terms of its geography, Berdyaev arrives at a double-edged conclusion regarding two sides of Russian territorial agenda. He claims that it was not “only the good fortune and the blessing of the Russian people in history”, but it was also the source of the “tragic element in the fate of the Russian people” (Berdyaev 1947:217). Therefore, it is necessary to “accept responsibility for the immensity of the Russian land and to bear the burden of it”. Berdyaev asserts that Russians failed the task “to organize the Russian land”. The origin of Russian misfortune relates to “the unhealthy hypertrophy of the State” which “was accepted”, but nevertheless “crushed the people and often tortured them”. Berdyaev insists that a substitution took place within the consciousness of the Russian idea and of the Russian vocation:

Both Moscow the Third Rome and Moscow the Third International were connected with the Russian messianic idea; they represented a distorted form of it. Never in history, I think, has there been a people which has combined such opposites in its history. Imperialism was always a distortion of the Russian idea and of the Russian vocation. But it was not by chance that Russia was so enormous. This immensity was providential and it is connected with the idea and the calling of the Russian people. The immensity of Russia is a metaphysical property of it, and does not only belong to its empirical history. (Berdyaev 1947:217)

## 5.6 Theological Observations

To understand Eastern Orthodoxy, we need to understand its dogmatic structure, historical disposition and formative influences as those are reflected in the respective writings of its theologians/theorists. In the beginning, the assumption was made that a shared sense of identity within a particular state is a key component in building a strong nation as well as in apology for official religion. Thus, if we interpret Russian national identity as a purely discursive construct which contains specifically developed national identity narratives (like territory/land, national pride, Orthodox faith, ect.), the process of national identification is promoted by the emphasis on 'territorial superiority' and 'national uniqueness'. This idiosyncratic character of Russian authoritarianism should really come as no surprise, inasmuch as audiences in Russia are ready to accept ideological pronouncements wholesale, tending instead to simplify, exaggerate, and misunderstand the dangerous content of new Russian pseudo-messianic hegemony or territorial expansionism. It should also be regarded as an intentional by-product of Putin's propaganda and a potential threat to Russia's bordering countries that could affect their economy (for instance, different trade embargo for Baltic countries) or territorial integrity (Russian invasion to Abkhazia and South Ossetia after the Russo-Georgian War in 2008 or Crimea annexation in 2014 during the Russian-Ukrainian conflict).

A sense of territorial belonging to the motherland has always played an important role in self-determination of peoples and nations, and Russia is, by no means, unique in this respect. In the circumstances described above, as in all systematic crises, the authority of the Orthodox Church Tradition provided an effective symbolic capital for the construction of new models of identity, including that of a collective national identity. As we observed, the national idea of land/territory is still identified in Russian cultural, spiritual, and political consciousness as "*Velikaya Rossiya*" (Great Russia) or "*Rodina Mat'*" (Mother Russia) and serves as an ideological marker/indicator and guarantor of genuine 'russkost' ("Russianness"). At the same time, there is no ground in the New Testament for coercive dominion of one great nation over other small nations. Moreover, every civilization which yields to the temptation of blunt autocratic power/authority, believing in its own perfection and eternity, brings about its own destruction. The territorial sovereignty is not unconditional. It is always subject to the absolute overlordship of God. In the Bible, we are confronted with a remarkable phenomenon of fallen civilizations. Their dominion seemed to

be permanently assured and the sense of unshaken security made impossible self-criticism and repentance. Nevertheless, every advance in civilization may be the occasion of sin when it turns to self-confidence instead of dependence on God and, consequently, the unrepentant civilizations are swept away.

## **5.7 Methodological Observations**

The prime methodological objective of this chapter was to conceptualize the various macro-strategies of territorial expansionism and "land" patriotism employed in the construction of national Russian identity and to describe them using a hermeneutic-abductive approach. Methodologically, Muscovite rulers considered their own faith and Orthodox Church as the only authentic spiritual entity in the world. The rapid territorial growth of the Muscovite State forced the Grand Princes to accept a new "Third Rome" theory that systematized and legitimized the concept of Moscow as a new Jerusalem (alternatively Second Kiev). That point of view was partially reinforced by the actual separation of Muscovite Orthodoxy from the rest of the Christian world after the Union of Florence. Ivan III successfully translated the patrimonial model of Kievan princehood distribution of power into divinely-commissioned autocracy over all Russia. Moreover, Muscovite autocracy was clearly very flexible ideologically and pragmatically when it came to the acquisition of new territories. In the realm of international relations, new Muscovite autocracy promptly legitimized aggression against its immediate neighbors, exercising its sovereign rights under the full spiritual patronage of the Orthodox Church as a divine gift that derived directly from God and not from the hands of men.

This autocratic shift impacted the essence of the Orthodox Tradition and the Gospel it proclaimed in many ways. The methodological tension between the authority of office and the validity of personal endowment (which always exists as a basic concept in organizational and charismatic structures) forced Orthodox clergy to defend convenient but disturbing porousness of such hybrid theological categories like a "Third Rome" or "canonical territory" of one ruling church. Thus, the transformation of the Orthodox Church into a power structure was not the confirmation of true Gospel authority, but an indication of its methodological perversion. According to the New Testament, the true power of the Church is based upon a "love model" of authority. The autocratic (authoritarian) model of authority is foreign to every line of the New Testament in which authority is mentioned. It is

hardly necessary to add more historical or theological evidence to establish the fact that the Orthodox Church has experienced corruption in many forms. It has known caesaropapism, bribery, simony, nepotism, backwardness, tradition-boundedness, conservatism and other vices. All these negative features can be applied *mutatis mutandis* (engl. *the necessary changes have been made*) to contemporary Orthodox Christianity to demonstrate misleading and destructive effects of autocratic theology in its anti-scriptural and anti-modern methodological stances.

### **5.8 Historical Observations**

In the recent years, the "Third Rome" concept has remained an object of thorough academic attention in both Western and Russian historiographies, which attempt to trace a further development of autocratic ideology in Russia and looks, increasingly, though by no means exclusively, to its professional expositors (historians, theologians, philosophers) as they articulate their valid presuppositions regarding this stage of Russian history. The disappearance of the Byzantine Empire had a decisive impact upon the development of autocracy in Russia. Ecclesiastical unity and administrative uniformity were always the aims of the Russian Orthodox Church. Church history had shown that these objectives could best be achieved only through secular consolidation under a single power, and this position was consistent with the maxima of Byzantine political philosophy about autocratic sovereignty. Thus, it was that the Muscovite clergy hailed the Grand Prince as sovereign, and in the contest for secular power supported him as the God-chosen sovereign of the Russian land.

The origins of autocratic ideology in the historical construction of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority may also be traced in the respective connections between the empire's core cultural identity (*narodnost'*), the form of political authority (*samoderzhavie*), and the character of the historically dominant faith (*pravoslavie*). Muscovite ecclesiastical authorities expended a considerable amount of intellectual energy of the Church to create and promote an autocratic ideology of state power, expressing their ideas in images and architecture as well as in texts. Impacted by this ideology, the Muscovite Orthodox Church made good relations with the ruling princes as the basic policy and started to preach the ideas of autocratic sovereignty learned from Byzantium with the simultaneous rejection of the political traditions and divided structure of authority inherited from Kievan Russia. A

disproportionate emphasis on the position of authority of one man and territorial-ideological claims advanced by the Muscovite State revived Byzantine concepts of autocracy, which never became part of the practical working ideology of the Kievan princes but was fully employed and applied by the Muscovite Church to the contemporary political situation. The legacy of those autocratic ideas produced and facilitated a unique national and imperial consensus as a future foundation of the Russian monarchy.

The geopolitical and cultural continuity of the Tsarist-Soviet empire and revitalized Russian Orthodox fundamentalism, regardless of the political and economic régime in Moscow, explicitly demonstrates the nature of all-Russian hegemony *via* animation of an imperial obsession among the rulers of the Kremlin who attempted to improve Russia's strategic status by re-annexation of the so-called "near abroad" either emancipated Islamic East or Livonian states in the West. Many Russian theorists (both theologians and historians) inspired by the Byzantine legacy/political advancements and Peter's achievements creatively elaborated the mythologeme about Moscow as the Third Rome, anchoring the legitimacy of Riurikid's and Romanov's lines to Roman/Byzantium models of autocracy. Nevertheless, a more detailed examination of the same subject deals with a valid criticism and a failure of the contemporary Orthodox theology to explain the bias of the "Third Rome" concept in the light of modern historical research.

## **5.9 The Alternative Vision of Russian History: Gumilev's Theory of Ethnogenesis in the Context of Modern Eurasianism**

While the alternatives to the historical view on Orthodox Church Tradition formation amongst East Slavs previously presented in the research are not limited to Gumilev's theory of ethnogenesis, this sub-chapter briefly provides a sketch of the terms "Eurasianism" and "Eurasia" which have once again come to the fore on the post-Soviet political and intellectual scene since 1991. Bassin and Pozo (2017:8) assume that over their long history, Eurasianist concepts have been shaped by a diverse set of impacts, influences, and specific concerns, and have taken many different guises and modulations to the extent that it is more accurate to speak today about multiple Eurasianisms rather than to refer to a single cohesive Eurasianist canon. This Eurasianist terminology in the interpretation of Laruelle suggests that "Russia and its 'margins' occupy a dual or median position between Europe and Asia, that their specific traits have to do with their culture

being a 'mix' born of the fusion of Slavic and Turko Muslim peoples, and that Russia should specifically highlight its Asian features" (Laruelle 2008:1-2).

The conceptual framework for the current study attempts to recognize the force of both points to balance the research, since "Eurasianism" puts forward a different principle to determine the relative level of passionary ideals for ethno-differentialism and the idea of Russian distinctiveness. These ideas have undergone a profound transformation, growing beyond purely intellectual circles to which it had been confined for about a decade, entering a larger public space. Consequently, we will then discuss how examining such perspective may help bridge the gap in the theoretical dialectic between Eastern and Western notion of Orthodox Tradition as authority.

A theoretical interpretation of the issue should also include the hermeneutics of suspicion in the deconstruction of Gumilev's hypothesis of ethnogenesis since he deliberately avoids certain conceptual problems traditionally associated with naturalistic understanding of history. Titov argued, for example, that Gumilev's theory of ethnogenesis "cannot be accorded the status of a proven scientific theory. There are few rigorous criteria and a lack of conceptual linkages between ethnic and sociocultural aspects of history". It should rather be seen as "a foundation for a novel approach to understanding ethnic history, rather than a complete scientific theory" (Titov 2005:89).

The historical roots of the Eurasianist movement include numerous important figures of the Russian exile community: a geographer and economist Savitsky (1895-1968), an ethnographer Trubetzkoy (189-1938), an aesthetic critic Suvchinsky (1882-1985), a linguist Jakobson (1896-1982), a philosopher Karsavin (1882-1952), a historian Vernadsky (1887-1973), a religious thinker Florkowski (1893-1979), and a legal philosopher Alekseev (1879-1964). Among its lesser-known adherents were a historian Shakhmatov, a literary critic Sviatopolk-Mirsky, an orientalist Nikitin, and many others, who contributed, to differing degrees, to the development of Eurasianism (Hay 1968:120-125; Laruelle 2008:19; Lewi and Wigen 1997:12-17).

Laruelle recognizes Eurasianist theories as "an Ambiguous Orientalism" and "Russia's Easternness" claiming that, "In their writings on historiography, the Eurasianists attack the



classic Kiev-Moscow-Saint Petersburg triad in Russian history, which they consider Eurocentric" (Laruelle 2008:40-41). She argues that the Mongol Empire represents a key element in Eurasianist theory, for it is situated at the very junction of the Eurasianists' history/historiosophy and their geographic ideology of the steppe. As a many-facet symbol, it is present in every Eurasianist argument and may be used to advocate both the relativism of Russian culture against Europe and its universality for the rest of the non-Western world. Therefore, according to Laruelle's interpretation,

the function of the Mongol Empire is to have revealed Russia's identity. For the Eurasianists, the Mongol Empire was incarnated in the figure of Genghis Khan, who, they claim, brought out Russia's hidden identity: power, control over both territory and circumstances, a universal perspective in thought and action, and so on. The Mongol Empire crystallized an experience of self-realization, formulated Eurasian identity geographically, and thus became the true driving force of Russia's entry into history, having given an ideological expression to Russia's intrinsic telluric force. (Laruelle 2008:41)

According to Titov (2005:47-48), Gumilev adopted Vernadsky's ideas about the biosphere to the study of ethnic history. In particular, three concepts from Vernadsky's theory played a central role in Gumilev's thought. The first was Vernadsky's contention about the logical inseparability of man and nature. The second one addressed the importance of biochemical energy for the functioning of living organisms. The third one was a special role of humans in the biosphere. Within this framework, Gumilev attempted to explain how ethnic collectives operated. Gumilev's account of Russian history focused in-depth on a distinction between Kievan Rus and Muscovite Russia, the role of the Mongols in the formation of Russian ethnos, and the interpretation of Russian history in terms of phases of ethnogenesis. However, his views were dominated by a strong anti-Western bias and are not always compatible with the theory of ethnogenesis.

In his book *Drevniaia Rus' i Velikaia Step*, Gumilev argued that the "Slavo-Rossy" peoples formed the largest and predominant ethnic group. With the decline of the Rus' Khaganate, Kievan Rus' represented the final stage of Slavo-Rus' ethnogenesis in which Eastern Orthodox Tradition was described by Gumilev as a key developmental factor in terms of its original and healthy tendencies:

In the historical literature, there was a long debated but never solved question: why did Moscow, and not Tver, Smolensk, Ryazan, or Novgorod, turn out to be the center of Russia's unification? Some gave geographical grounds for that. But Moscow is not in a better position than Tver. Other sources gave economic explanations. It seems to us that there was a chance that played the role, namely: the friendship of the metropolitan and Grand Prince. Russian people, having already felt what it was to be Russians, had been in danger by pagan Lithuania, Catholic Poland, and the semi-gentile, semi-Muslim Horde - they were not united by the loyalty to their prince: because there were many princes, and it was not clear whom to prefer. They had a common affiliation with the Orthodox faith. Not a theocracy, when the pope, as governor of St. Peter, ruled the whole Western Europe, or at least tried to control it, more or less unsuccessfully. But it was an idiocracy. That is, the idea of Orthodoxy, whose servant was the metropolitan, the head of the entire Orthodox Church in Russia, - it was clear and understandable for all... So it will not be a mistake to say: Orthodoxy was the foundation of the unification of Russia. (Gumilev 1993:12)

In addition to that, Gumilev interpreted the formation of the Russian imperial state, unlike its counterparts in Western Europe and North America, as an essentially harmonious and voluntary process in which non-Russians were always treated as equal members (Gumilev 191:140). It should be noted here, that Gumilev's evaluation of the most famous instigator of this process — Peter the Great — was ambivalent. He initially condemned the tsar for his Europeanizing inclinations, but eventually “amnestied” him in recognition of his services in expanding and fortifying the Russian state (Gumilev 1991:141).

Along with this interpretation, Gumilev identified the mechanism that triggers ethnogenesis and gave it an excellent name: ‘passionarnost’, (from the Latin word ‘passio’, ‘passion’ or ‘strast’ in Russian). Gumilev realized that the birth of each new ethnic group was preceded by the appearance of a certain number of individuals with a new passionary character (Varustin 1990:20). Therefore, when Gumilev finally presented a full elaboration of his theory of ethnogenesis in the 1960s, “passionarnost’ emerged as a key element of the entire process, and he would come to regard it as his most important theoretical discovery. At this early point, however, he had no clear conception of it, beyond the fact that it represented some sort of force or energy driving certain people to initiate activities that led to the formation of ethnies” (Bassin 2016:80).

Gumilev suggests that the key to understanding a special place of humans in the biosphere was their ability to adapt to various environments. He argued that ethnos, as a form of collective existence specific to humans, adapted to the environment, rather than political

and social institutions. People adapted to a new environment by changing their behavioral stereotypes, instead of physical characteristics, as was the case with other mammals. This did not have an explanation in either social or biological terms. Therefore, a different kind of phenomenon was involved. This specific form of adaptive behavior was ethnic transformation or ethnogenesis. Gumilev suggested that ethnic division was that key human characteristic which allowed a man to spread over the planet and become a factor of geological importance, a fact which Vernadsky emphasized. The ability to develop distinct behavioral stereotypes appropriate to different environments, a key feature of any process of ethnogenesis, meant that the biological evolution of human race had reached a new phase of development, in which biological evolution was superseded by ethnic development (Titov 2005:47). Gumilev illustrated this assumption by Russian colonization of Siberia, European expansionism, and the Ancient Greek colonization of the Mediterranean, emphasizing this distinction in the following way:

Each ethnos has its own internal structure and its own unique stereotype of behavior. Sometimes, the structure and the behavioral stereotype change between generations. This indicates that the ethnos is developing and that ethnogenesis has not died out. Sometimes, the structure of ethnos is stable because a new generation repeats the life cycle of the preceding generation. Such ethnoses are called 'persistent' or static. (Gumilev 1989:91)

While, the initial ideas of Eurasianism were originally a creation of Russian intellectuals, a variety of different national-geographical contexts was investigated and conceptualized today both within Russia's current borders (in Tatarstan, Sakha-Yakutia or Bashkortostan) as well as beyond the limits of the former Soviet Union (in Turkey, Hungary or Germany). Ideologically, Eurasianism, as originally formulated by Trubetskoi and Vernadsky, and later elaborated by Gumilev, involved a project for the national homogenization of the post-imperial landmasses and peoples on the principle of hyphenated or nested identities: for instance, Russian-Eurasian, or Kazakh-Eurasian, or, as Torbakov (2013:61-85) explains in his analysis of Vernadsky's thought, a Ukrainian-Russian-Eurasian entity, where "Eurasian" serves as a common denominator. The scholarly attention in the West regarding the resurgence of geopolitical thinking in post-Soviet Russia is focused on two geopolitical movements: prospects for Russia's rapprochement with the West (Westernism) and a re-emergent alternative, the ideology of Russia's uniqueness in Eurasia (Eurasianism) (Sidorov 2006:317).

The main trend today in the modern Neo-Eurasianism is, however, focused not on these ethnobiological Gumilev's principles themselves or Eastern Orthodoxy, but rather on the manner in which they are refracted through the prism of Russia's historical experience. This movement presents two alternative views of Russia's historical legacy, both of which are articulated in specific contrast to the Eurasianist perspective. Most proponents take a negative view of Russia's imperial experience, claiming that it represented a protracted historical disaster for the Russian people (Bassin 2017:77). A Russian historian Shiropaev (2002–2003), for example, argues that the centuries-long processes of expansion, conquest, and absorption of foreign lands and peoples led the builders of the empire to neglecting the vital principle of racial purity. The unification of the Russian state proceeded exclusively “on the principle of soil,” and as the assemblage of ethnic groups within the imperial state structure grew ever larger, it provided ever greater opportunities for miscegenation between them. The inevitable result was the progressive dilution and debasement of the Russian nation-race: a veritable “racial entropy” that conditioned the steady dissolution of the Russian people into the surrounding Turkic and Finno-Ugric masses.

Kotkina (2017:106) also suggests a meaningful connection between two prominent geopolitical ideologies in Russia today. The first ideology, Eurasianism, appeared as an intellectual response to the collapse of the Russian empire after the Bolshevik Revolution and gained a scientific popularity after the disintegration of the Soviet empire. The second (a relative newcomer into Russian intellectual life) is the concept of the *Russkii Mir* or the Russian World, which in spite of the ardent support from the Russian Orthodox Church, did not enjoy widespread recognition until the Russian annexation of Crimea and the outbreak of war in Eastern Ukraine in 2014:

In any case, the binary formed by the unstable relation between Eurasian ideas and the notion of *Russkii Mir* relates directly to the salient political role of the Eurasian tradition, as well as the Russian state's relative ability (and willingness) to set a final, official interpretation to its historical and international identity. Over the last years, attempts have been made to regain the sense of historical time and to ideologically embed the current Russian regime into a “big picture” of “universally important destiny. (Kotkina 2017:109)

An ideological variety of Eurasianist movement in modern Russia created a phenomenon of Orthodoxy-related geopolitics as an inclusive, umbrella term. Tsygankov, for instance, distinguished five schools of Russian geopolitical thinking that broadly represent two groups of authors: those in the Western Liberal tradition (writing on topics such as adjustment to Western dominance in Eurasia, geoeconomic challenges and the geopolitics of cooperation, and political stabilisation) and Eurasianists and their supporters (who write on defence of post-Soviet Eurasia from the West and Eurasianist expansionism) (Tsygankov 2003:101-127). Sidorov explains that “it is not about the Russian Orthodox Church’s teaching *per se*, rather more about various Orthodox, quasi-Orthodox or even secular intellectual movements in post-Soviet Russia that use the Church historiosophy in their geopolitical constructs” (Sidorov 2006:318). He easily identifies in Orthodoxy-related geopolitics “a convenient substitute label for a more accurate term ‘Third Romist geopolitics’, which is “a formal criterion for labeling authors as belonging to ‘Orthodox’ geopoliticians” (Sidorov 2006:318).

In his article titled *The Twist of Mind*, a historian Sergeev (2012:35-42) heavily criticizes the writings of Eurasianism’s founding fathers as “flawed,” “unscientific,” and downright “Russophobic”. Nevertheless, he recognizes the classical Eurasianism as the most “congenial” to the nationality policy of today’s Russia, whose leaders “are nostalgic about the notion of the ‘Soviet people.’” Sergeev (2012:38-42) also argues that Russian leaders find the concept of the “Eurasian nation” quite appealing – especially in that it assigns ethnic Russians a secondary role in a state that has been created by their sweat and blood. Likewise, Laruelle assumes that the real effect of Eurasianism has little to do with the dissemination of intricate doctrines on the nature of the relation between Russia and Asia; that remains a minor topic in claims about Russia's distinctiveness:

This essentialist interpretation of the world serves an undisguised political objective: to show that the Western model is not applicable to the post-Soviet countries because civilizations cannot adopt anything from the outside. Thus, Eurasianism has acquired a none-eligible influence over the political and social climate in post-Soviet countries in general, and Russia in particular, by disseminating the idea that culture constrains the liberty of the individual: Individuals must respect the essence of their national group (often expressed in an ethnicist terminology), not try to oppose it. The Neo-Eurasianist "sciences" thus serve to justify a kind of cultural fundamentalism. (Laruelle 2008:12)

## 5.10 Conclusion:

A brief sketch of the Russocentric ideology of Eurasianism identifies a certain set of philosophical and theological presuppositions, which can be expressed in a dual view of Russia's special relationship with Europe and Asia, geopolitical bipolarity, and a strong affiliation with the Eastern Orthodox civilization. The holistic theory of ethnogenesis elaborated by Gumilev in terms of an intrinsic interconnection between organic life and geographical environment received a well-earned public attention in the 1960s as part of a new interest in ecology and environmental problems in the Soviet Union. However, the Russian Eurasianism that emerged after the *Perestroika* was highly diversified ideologically. The study of the contemporary concept of Eurasianism demonstrates that this movement is characterized by frequent overlaps of ideologies, such as Orthodox Nationalism/Fundamentalism, Geopocalyptics of the Postmodern, Neo-Panslavism, Statism/Eurounionism, Neo-Eurasianism, New Chronology, and even Neo-Orthodox Communism (Sidorov 2006:318).

Admittedly, we may conclude that Neo-Eurasian authors, in particular, utilize Gumilev's name to support their own views without making a critical study of either the theory of ethnogenesis or its relation to Eurasianism. If Gumilev did stress a foundational role of the Eastern Orthodox Tradition and interpreted many radical transformations of the environment in connection with the emergence of a new ethnos and its original behavioral stereotype, Neo-Eurasianism underwent a significant ideological twist and lost its conventional homogeneity. Neo-Eurasianism in a modern context provides for Russian ideologists a new mental frame, holding a firm grasp on the same imperial geopolitical imagination, which promotes modern Russia as a multinational heterogeneous empire or portrays it as the embodiment of the Eurasian heartland in the eternal struggle with a decadent Western civilization. It was also noted, that Laruelle (2000, 2001) was the first western scholar to challenge Gumilev's relation to the original Eurasians, claiming that his theory of ethnogenesis was a radical departure from the ideas of the original Eurasians. Titov (2005), in contrast to Laruelle, argues that Eurasianism was an important part of Gumilev's thought and that his links with the original Eurasians were an important element of his intellectual life. A more balanced critical observation identifies a crucial distinction between the theory of ethnogenesis and Gumilev's Eurasianism.

**CHAPTER 6**  
**AUTHORITY OF ORTHODOX CHURCH TRADITION IN POSTMODERN**  
**CONTEXT: THE PROBLEM OF THEOLOGICAL SYNTHESIS**  
**AND CONCILIAR CONSENSUS**

I revere the fullness of His Scripture...

Tertullian, *Adv Herm* 22

But let them believe without the Scriptures if their  
object is to believe contrary to the Scriptures

Tertullian, *De Prae Haer* 23

**6.1. Introduction**

"Your word, o Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens" (Ps. 119:89). But can we state the same thing about Church Tradition? What is Eastern Orthodox Church Tradition: "slavish imitation of the past" (Congar 2004:3), a sacred "continuum of fidelity" (Hagen 1994:287–311) or another stream that "flows into the same pool of divine revelation"(Rhodes 2000:48)? Is it an "immutable" and "unchanging" relic (Williams 2005:22) or "tradition [which] is only a means of interpretation, a relative authority, a *norma normata*? The *norma normanos* is the living Word of God itself" (Prenter 1951:110). The great divergence between the Orthodox and Protestants is still preoccupied with the question whether the unique content and authority of Orthodox Church Tradition can be examined, attested and proved by the sound scriptural theology, a balanced, self-aware history, and authentic apostolic practices in accordance with the criterion of universality required for "Orthodox consensus" (Pelikan 1971:333-357). We still need to diligently re-access the controversial question whether the gulf which separates Orthodox and Protestant doctrines on the relation between Scripture and Tradition is unbridgeable (Cullmann 1966:98). "The necessity of approaching the complicated issue of Scripture and Tradition relationship and its authority from the perspective of contemporary Evangelical theology does not only include a theological interest and practical implications, but also presumes (1 Peter 3:15) that all Christians, including Protestants, have always been called on to defend their integrity of faith, certainly no less today than at any other time in history" (Lykoshorstov 2013:163).

## 6.2 The Search for Consensus

Until recent years, very little scholarly work was done in the realm of comparative theology of Slavic Evangelicals and the Eastern Orthodox. Protestants in Russia interested in Eastern Orthodox theology and

attempting to evaluate it critically, try to understand what source of theologizing is considered authoritative by Orthodox Christians. Some uncritically assume that the idea of Tradition in Eastern Orthodoxy corresponds to the idea of the Bible in Protestantism, or to the idea of some kind of authority par excellence in Western Christianity. However, at the outset, we assert that this issue is the most problematic in Eastern Orthodox theology. (Shlenkin 2008:181)

A growing number of church theologians are supporting the necessity of visible ecclesial unity operated under one dominant tradition, which immediately raises a perennial problem of the authorities by which unity is maintained. There is also growing recognition among theologians of the need to recognize the authority of Scripture as a supreme authority alongside the authority of tradition (Cary 2010; Horton 2004; McDonald 2007). Since it is not self-evident, for many Evangelicals, that *tradition principle* is constitutive of or necessary to Christian faith. Another purpose of this chapter is to review whether ecclesial *tradition principle* has been theologically congruent and historically immutable through most of Christian history. There are other themes – of transnationalism, globalization, nationalism, and identity – that create a theoretical framework for the study. Historical and hermeneutical considerations of the problem relate to the question that confronted the Early Church:

Whether tradition was creative or subordinate? Does church tradition simply reaffirm the revelation given in Scripture, or does it contribute new light not to be found in Scripture? Is tradition dependent on what Scripture records or is it independent in the sense that it can define new truth? Or are Scripture and Tradition interdependent in the sense that neither has efficacy apart from the other? (Bloesch 1994:143).

In order to respond the inquiry effectively, this chapter is intended to raise a question about a new theological consensus which is inextricably linked with the three most classical designations: 1) *lex credendi*, the faith of the Church or matters of belief, 2) *lex orandi*, the prayer of the Church or matters of worship, and 3) *lex vivendi*, the life of the Church or matters of ecclesiology (Arzola 2007:3). The underlying concern is to assess the validity of the ideas of authority and structure in relation to the controversy discourse over authority of



tradition, which was largely centered around theological disagreements between Orthodox conservatives who sought close adherence to the Orthodox confessional heritage, and modern evangelicalism which sought to maintain a greater theological latitude under Protestant principles of the supreme authority of the Bible (Buschart 2006:154). Alongside this dedication to the progressive development of the consensus regarding the subject of Orthodox tradition, Negrov (2008:7-15) believes that an equally vigilant attention should be given to hermeneutical consistency in interpretation.

### **6.3. Consensus Trends in Eastern Orthodox Approach**

The contemporary contours of Orthodox theology of tradition emerged from a complex framework of theoretical trajectories embedded in differentiated patterns of social exclusion and sometimes expressed in oppositional thought structures. The authoritative and centralized character of modern Orthodox Tradition was the product of a gradual historical development over more than a millennium (Allison 2011; Andreopoulos 2011; Benz 2009; Berger 2005; Hobsbawm 1983; Makrides 2012; Prizel 1998). The modern appropriation of Orthodox consensus regarding theology as *per se* refers to the intellectual tradition of Eastern Orthodox Christian churches, which primarily, though not exclusively, includes those Christian communities with historical ties to the Byzantine tradition. There are at least two basic theological trajectories in the Byzantine Tradition: the first concerns well-known Christological controversies that occasioned the convening of the seven ecumenical councils, and the second trajectory is normally defined as understanding God in terms of what God is not (Papanikolaou 2011:358-359). The dogmatic proclamations of these councils reflect non-negotiable, authoritative axioms of Orthodox theology from the Byzantine tradition to the present, of which the most foundational is the affirmation of divine-human communion in the person of Jesus Christ. Some of the key figures of the Byzantine period who contributed to the theological controversies on the person of Christ and whose works are authoritative for Orthodox theology are Athanasius of Alexandria, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa, Cyril of Alexandria, and Maximus the Confessor (Papanikolaou 2011:358-360).

Second, in recent years, the issue of Church Tradition authority has been at the forefront of theological discussions in Orthodox literature with a dominating theological framework of a "one-only-true church" perspective, for "its unrelenting insistence that it alone is the only

true church of Christ on earth must be questioned, especially as it impinges upon the necessity of Christian unity" (Clendenin 2003:149). One common feature that shapes both normative and practical dimensions of the Orthodox approach to the consensus of traditional authority has to do with a new church awareness of superiority and exclusivity of their Church Tradition. In a theological aspect, "ultimately, the conflict between East and West resides in two conflicting spiritual perceptions of tradition" (Meyendorff 1983:97). Florovsky points out that the common understanding between East and West will be possible only when "the common universe of discourse" is recovered (Florovsky 1974:161–162). The real challenge from the epistemological point of view is that Orthodox scholars do not always speak the same language when they refer to the content of Tradition. Negrut suggests that this is true, "not only between the adherents of the two approaches ('one-source' or 'two-source') but also amongst those who belong to the same approach (Negrut 1994:100). Konstantinidis and Archbishop Michael, for example, belong to the same trend ('two-source'), and yet disagree concerning the content of Tradition. Thus, Konstantinidis affirms that Tradition includes:

(1) the valid and authentic interpretation of Scripture in the Church; (2) official formulations and confessions of faith; (3) the formulations, definitions and creeds of the Ecumenical Councils; (4) larger accords of the teaching of the Fathers and ecclesiastical authors (*Consensus Patrum*); and (5) the forms, acts, institutions and liturgies of the early church, which form the living expression of the apostolic spirit in the way of worship in the Church. Everything which remains outside these forms can be ecclesiastical tradition but not the Holy Tradition of dogma and saving faith. (Konstantinidis 1978:224)

Congar defines "consensus patrum" or "unanimous Consent of the Fathers" as "locus" of the divine action". He argued that in every age:

the consensus of the faithful, still more the agreement of those who are commissioned to teach them, has been regarded as a guarantee of truth: not because of some mystique of universal suffrage, but because of the Gospel principle that unanimity and fellowship in Christian matters requires, and also indicates, the intervention of the Holy Spirit. From the time when the patristic argument first began to be used in dogmatic controversies - it first appeared in the second century and gained general currency in the fourth-, theologians have tried to establish agreement among qualified witnesses of the faith, and have tried to prove from this agreement that such was, in fact, the Church's belief. (Congar 1966:397-400)

Thirdly, the subject of consensus is made even more complex in two main schools of thought within the Orthodox approach. The first group of Orthodox theologians (Andreopoulos, Bogdashevski, Bulgakov, Gillquist, Hilarion (Troitsky), Khomiakov, Kuraev, Lossky, Maseko, Ouspensky, Pomazansky, Raphael (Karelin), Staniloae, Ware, and Zenkovskiy) researched a wide range of historical, theological and spiritual perspectives of Orthodox Church tradition. They criticized the "western captivity" of Orthodox theology and held Eastern Orthodox tradition in high esteem, declaring steady conformity of Orthodox tradition with the apostolic and universal teaching of the Church. Their criteria for the theological method in Orthodoxy is rather pneumatic than dogmatic. According to Khomiakov, "neither individuals nor a multitude of individuals within the church preserves a tradition [...] but the Spirit of God which lives in the whole body of the Church" (Khomiakov, 1953:198).

Their theology and conceptual development based on the conviction that the Orthodox Church is the only "pillar and bulwark of truth" (1 Timothy 3:15) may be characterized as neopatristic synthesis or postmodern paleo-orthodoxy. The second group of Orthodox scholars (Berdyayev, Borisov, Chaadayev, Florovsky, Meshcherinov, Meyendorff, Schmemmann, Soloviev, Vedernikov, and Zernov) may be classified as critics of the institutional Russian Orthodox Church whose teachings represent a new trend within Orthodox Tradition with the emphasis on creation of a new Orthodox identity and a genuine revival of Orthodox theology. Their approach to the issue of Church tradition authority has provoked some interesting and critical discussions in the field and is notable for its progressive orientation which can be broadly defined as Orthodox neo-obnovlenchestvo (revivalism) (Lykhosherstov 2013:173).

Fourthly, the modern Orthodox heirs have often made heavy use of the concept of *consensus patrum* to address the obvious fact of ecclesial division in the interpretation of different aspects of ecclesial tradition. Nevertheless, the theological application of this principle in an Orthodox environment often demonstrates separatist-minded hermeneutics. Recently, the whole group of contemporary Orthodox theologians, such as Vassiliadis, Kalaitzidis, and Kasselouri-Hatzivassiliadi, declared that

imitating the old "Protestant" principle of the objective authority of the text, we often simply replace the authority of *sola scriptura* with the authority of the *consensus patrum*. Ultimately, in practice, the authority and the study of the patristic texts – the vast majority of which are essentially interpretive commentaries on the Bible – have acquired greater importance and gravitas than the biblical text itself. Thus, Orthodox theology overlooked the biblical foundations of the Christian faith, the indissoluble bond between the Bible and the Eucharist, the Bible and the Liturgy. (Vassiliadis, Kalaitzidis, and Kasselouri-Hatzivassiliadi 2013:217)

Additionally, these hermeneutical tendencies contribute to some imbalance regarding unity and authority. The predicate of unity in Orthodoxy is based upon the recognition of a completely different approach to the issue of authority. A modern theologian Fairbairn explains that "Eastern Christianity generally does not raise the issue of authority, at least not in the same way as the Western theology does" (Fairbairn 2002:11). In the Protestant approach,

the predicate of unity is independent of these empirical realities and possibilities. It is identical with the dependence of any actual church on the Spiritual Community as its essence in power and structure. This is true of every particular local denomination and the confessional church which is related to the event of the Christ as its foundation. The unity of the church is real in each of them in spite of the fact that all of them are separated from each other. (Tillich 1963:168-69)

The recovery of an apophatic notion of consensus in Orthodox postmodern theology is confronted by the unsettling complexities of both practical theology and hermeneutical methodology. From a theological perspective, this role as a propaedeutic to the truth can no longer suffice for tradition. Some Orthodox clerics even believe that the church's essential unity (consensus) is not to be sought just in the existence of actual traditions. In his work *On Holy Tradition*, Hegumen Peter (Meshcherinov) affirms this conviction:

And here we are confronted with an amazing thing. The Church has no dogmatic theological definition, no exact formula of Holy Tradition. There is no book in the Church entitled "Holy Tradition" in which it would be expounded in individual sections. There is much debate about the Tradition, some believe one thing about the amount of it, others have a different idea, and the content of the Tradition is the matter of religious debates as well; but the Church does not fix exactly what it is. (Meshcherinov 2009:2)

This problem, being typical for other Orthodox sources, was highly criticized by Lossky who admits that "Tradition (Paradosis-Tradition) is one of those terms which, though being too rich in meaning, run the risk of finally having none. [...] If the word "tradition" has suffered the same fate, this has happened all the more easily because even in the language of theology itself this term is sometimes somewhat vague" (Ouspensky & Lossky 1982:11).

Fifthly, the absence of a clear theological consensus regarding the authority structure brings a sense of confusion into Eastern Orthodoxy. The eclectic nature of Orthodox understanding of tradition already facilitated a real danger of unnecessary elevation of oral (unwritten) tradition in Eastern Orthodoxy, which continually nourishes a distinctive "folk theology" where the dead are still ruling the living. In the wake of these collapsing modes of authority, there is, for example, an emerging concern regarding the phenomenon of the veneration of unidentified dead bodies of saints preserved by many Orthodox churches for a visible participation in the Divine Liturgy. Unlike their Byzantine and Western European counterparts, Russians had a decided preference for whole bodies rather than fragments of bone. Many of these saints did not have prehistories. Their claim to sanctity rested entirely upon their ability to work miracles through their relics (Levin 2003:81). Their cults arose out of a single incident, the discovery of an unusual corpse, and the imagination and hopes of Orthodox believers are drawing on Christian traditions of sainthood. These "saints" could demonstrate their spiritual excellence — show themselves to be "friends of God" — in a variety of ways: through leading a pious and ascetic life; building religious communities; administering the church; defending confessional orthodoxy; converting, governing, and defending Christian populations. Indeed, it was their power to work miracles that proved their sanctity in a way their deeds in life could not. Thus, the working of miracles, more than any achievements in life, became *the sine qua non* of sainthood, and the saint's earthly deeds often paled in comparison (Levin 2003:82-83).

Numerous incantations invoked tombs and dead bodies as mediums for the healing of illnesses or, more rarely, causing harm. Dead bodies were not only invoked in the abstract; certain zagovory involved the actual use of corpses. For example, a folk prayer and ritual against the temptation of alcohol called for the exhumation of a corpse, who is addressed directly: "And you, dead person N., so much time you lie there, and you do not drink so much intoxicating [liquor], nor do you eat bread, so may I, servant of God N., not drink

intoxicating drink, not eat, not want, not see, nor see, nor hear, nor think about, until cover of the grave". This text suggests how the corpse effected the cure: its lack of physical urges for food and drink could generate a similar condition in the speaker of the zagovor (Sreznevskii 1913:497-98).

The pursuit of a greater miracle elevated the role of local saints who have a unique stake in the welfare of the community that universal saints might not do. Both premodern and modern Orthodox believers have been actively involved in the process of soliciting miracles from Heaven in terms similar to how they thought their own earthly governments worked: a local "contact"—the saint—who had a position in the ruler's— God's—entourage interceded to obtain a grant of royal favour (Kizenko 2000). It may explain why a holy relic of Matrona, for example, is getting much bigger crowds in Russia these days than the lectures of Orthodox professor Alexey Osipov. Here are the words of Matrona about herself written in *The Life Story of the Blessed Elder Matrona*:

When I die, come to my grave, I will always be there, do not seek anyone else. Do not seek anyone lest you should deceive yourselves. [...] Cling to my heel, you all, and thus you will be saved. Do not draw away from me; take a fast hold of me. [...] Behold, I see a dream: I am standing and watching the Mother enclosing herself in a general's uniform of czarist time. It has a shoulder knot and a striped cross belt. And she is pinning a great many of cognizance to it. So I ask her, "Mother, what are they?" She answers, "These are the regalia - my merits in God's eyes." I ask, "Where are you going dressed like that?". And she replies in a discontented tone, "How do you ask me where! To bow to God of Sabaoth Himself. (Zhdanova 1993:116-120)

Thus, the appearance of new saints' cults in modern Russia postulates a strong binding authority for local parishes as well as a direct praxeological connection between Saints' bodily abstinence, the wholeness of their remains, and their ability to affect physical cures. On the other hand, the scrutiny of Orthodox scholarship indicates the growing rift between the religious sentiments of local laity and minor clergy and those of the educated ecclesiastical elite. Kizenko summarized that "after all, saints' cults can be (and indeed often were) initiated by the church hierarchy; and however fervent the devotion of the laity to certain holy figures, it is the church hierarchy that ultimately decides whether to enshrine individuals for permanent veneration" (Kizenko 2003:105).

Sixthly, the goal of systematic and axiomatic consensus in Eastern Orthodoxy is to determine, in light of its traditional disciplinary matrix, what propositions an acceptable theory needs to explain, and what scientific problems an acceptable theory needs to solve. In relation to a possible consensus with Protestant and finding the "lowest common denominator" between Orthodoxy and evangelicalism, Nassif assumes that consensus regarding "the core principles" of that which constitutes Protestant evangelical identity is possible, however, from the Orthodox perspective, evangelicalism is seen "as deficient in the outworking of those commonly held evangelical principles, particularly in the church's vision of the relation between Scripture and tradition, the sacraments, iconography, spirituality" (Nassif 2004:108), and some other vital areas that are inseparably connected to the Orthodox understanding of the Incarnation and Trinity:

Our differences in evaluating Orthodox-evangelical compatibility appear to center on whether we are willing to keep the smaller and larger circles of faith together, understanding their logical relationships to each other and then, finally, carefully and critically measuring the theological value of those smaller principles of commonly held beliefs as they relate to the larger principles of the church's faith. Those theological issues, logic, and values are what finally constitute the content and kind of compatibility that the Eastern Orthodox and evangelical traditions do, in fact, share in common. If I am right, the next step will be to mutually affirm this commonly held evangelical faith, explore further our known and continuing differences, and then explore ways in which these common beliefs and values can be visibly expressed in our local communities throughout the world without compromising our doctrinal integrity. (Nassif 2004:109)

In this perspective, the Orthodox consensus regarding ecclesial Tradition as authority can be considered as a dynamic and iterative discussion process of ecclesiological reality that brings the participants' opinions as close as possible to the appropriate epistemological and theological solution. It is suggested that some of the undermentioned consensus trends, being necessary ingredients for the correct understanding of the Orthodox approach to the issue of Tradition as authority, still reflect a significant need for theological development and further theoretical articulation.

### **6.3.1 Consensus of Epistemological Authority**

The direct foundation for Orthodox consensus (as a theological teaching) "is the Incarnation of the Word - just as it is for iconography. Since the Word has incarnated Himself, the Word

can be thought and taught - and in the same way the Word can be painted", it has "no other goal than to lead us to the Father, in the Spirit" (Lossky 1978:13). For Lossky, this theological consensus invokes incarnation accomplishment in revelation: "it reveals and it constitutes revelation itself. To think theologically is not to think of this revelation, but to think by means of it" (Lossky 1978:17-18). The main epistemological point of such consensus is based on the approach opposite to that of speculation, inasmuch: theology starts from a fact: revelation. "God has spoken to us finally through His Son" (Heb. 1:2). The philosophy which speculates on God starts, on the contrary, from an idea" (Lossky 1978:18). In this way, Orthodox consensus is so linked to the traditions of the early church that "it proudly identifies itself as the Church of the Seven Councils", with the further intent "on maintaining a direct link with its apostolic and patristic heritage" and "unwavering devotion to the faith of the Ancient Church" (Clendenin 2007:18-19).

### **6.3.2 Consensus of Historical Authority**

In terms of a historical consensus, Orthodox Christianity is the main inheritor of the Byzantine Tradition of Christianity and is still practiced around the world. The two main strands are Greek Orthodox and Russian Orthodox, but there are thriving communities in countries as varied as Egypt (the Copts), Armenia, and Romania, with strong diasporic communities in Western Europe, North America, Australia, and elsewhere (Casiday 2012). Meyendorff suggests that "the historical dependence of contemporary Orthodoxy upon its Byzantine past makes the study of Byzantium inevitable for the proper understanding of Orthodox tradition in all its forms: theology, spirituality, liturgy, canon law and religious art" (Meyendorff 1982:8). For Meyendorff, "it is not Byzantium which "made" Orthodoxy, but rather the opposite: the most valuable and lasting features of Byzantine Christian civilization are rooted in Christian Orthodoxy" (Meyendorff 1982:9).

### **6.3.3 Universal Consensus of Authority in Vincent of Lérins's Dictum**

The Orthodox vision of theological consensus is best summarized and expressed in a famous dictum of Vincent of Lérins "*teneamus quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est*" — ("We must hold what has been believed everywhere, always, and by all"). According to Florovsky, the crucial emphasis was here on the permanence of the



Christian teaching. St. Vincent was actually appealing to the double "ecumenicity" of the Christian faith — in space and in time. Florovsky believes that

it was the same great vision which had inspired St. Irenaeus in his own time: the One Church, expanded and scattered in the whole world, and yet speaking with one voice, holding the same faith everywhere, as it had been handed down by the blessed Apostles and preserved by the succession of witnesses: "*quae est ab apostolis, quae per successionem presbyterorum in ecclesiis custoditur*". (Which is being preserved in the Church from the Apostles through the succession of the presbyters). These two aspects of faith, or rather — the two dimensions, could never be separated from each other. *Universitas* and *antiquitas*, as well as *consensio*, belonged together. (Florovsky 2003a:98)

#### **6.3.4 Consensus of Russian *Sobornost* as Authority**

The principle mark of Russian Orthodox Church is *sobornost* which can be translated as 'communality' or 'conciliarity.' The term *sobornaya*, the adjectival form of *sobornost*, had replaced the word *kafoliteskaya*, 'catholic' in the Church Slavonic version of the Creed of Nicaea-Constantinople shortly after the Russian rejection of the Council of Florence - in order, it would seem, to underline the difference between Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism. In the mid-nineteenth century, the Slavophiles argued that this 'note' of the Church, *sobornost*, constituted in effect the source of the other three, namely: unity, holiness, and apostolicity. Only the *sobornaya tserkva* could be one holy and apostolic (Nichols 1995:116). For Russian Orthodox Church, consensus matters of authority, unity, and primacy revolve around the key idea of *sobornost* which points to communal solidarity, to mutual mystical indwelling in love. It evokes "conciliarity" in the broadest sense of the community of the Church, guided and governed by the Holy Spirit, consulting its deepest mind. It elevates the Church as mystery above the Church as an institution. *Sobornost* has affinities with the Western conciliar tradition's sense of the whole Church as the bearer of truth (Avis 2006:179). The mainstream of this approach was further emphasized in the elaborations of Eucharistic ecclesiology which brings every affirmation about the Church to the appropriation of the Divine Liturgy. Afanasief, the pioneer of this mode, suggests and updates the vision of the *Sobornost* consensus in which every local church, gathered by the bishop, is mystically united with the universal Church and saints in heaven (Nichols 1995:128).

### **6.3.5 Consensus of Eucharistic Authority**

Theological implications of this Orthodox ecclesiological consensus invoked interesting discussions among Orthodox writers and their critics concerning "communion ecclesiology", "eucharistic ecclesiology", "baptismal ecclesiology," and "Trinitarian ecclesiology"— all of which affect the contemporary understanding of the nature of the Church and its authority. In his famous *Being as Communion*, Orthodox Metropolitan of Pergamon John Zizioulas asserts that ecclesiological ontology which came out of the Eucharistic experience of the Church and which guided the Fathers, is the result of an "important philosophical development which would never have been possible without the experience of ecclesial being" (Zizioulas 1985:17). Like many other Orthodox thinkers, he speaks of the economic mission of the Church as being rooted in the Father, since only in this context "communion does not exist by itself: it is the Father who is the "cause" of it" (Zizioulas 1985:17). As a universal aspect of Orthodox consensus, "this meta-historical, eschatological and iconological dimension of the Church is characteristic of the Eastern tradition, which lives and teaches its theology liturgically" (Zizioulas 1985:19).

### **6.3.6 Consensus of Trinitarian Authority**

An integral approach to the Trinitarian aspects of human and divine existence is mirrored in the approach of a Greek Orthodox theologian Harkianakis (1971:116-117). He traces the divergence of ecclesial structure in light of existing gospel, monarchical and collegial paradigms. His quest for authority employs an interpretation of Matthew 16:18: "You are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church." Harkianakis argues that the idea of primacy as such is not in dispute; primacy is pervasive in Orthodoxy. Instead, Harkianakis assumes that if Orthodox theology and ecclesiology are explicitly Trinitarian, if the Holy and Undivided Trinity, both Three and One, then it's a collegial, not monarchical. Therefore, more models of unity and consensus are more appropriate. A similar implication derived from intra-trinitarian relations of Godhead in the economy of salvation, in which Father, Son, and Spirit act in complete harmony (Harkianakis 1971:116-117).

### **6.3.7 Consensus of Pneumatological Authority**

Orthodox theologian Nassif reconnects consensus of Eucharistic ecclesiology to the corresponding authority of the Spirit. He stressed that authority "is most fully understood in

reference to the Church's mystical character," being "inseparably united with the Church understanding of the relation between pneumatology and ecclesiology":

The Church is primarily conceived as a mystical communion of the faithful with God and with each other, on earth and in heaven, through the resurrectional life of Christ in his trinitarian relations. That resurrectional life creates a bond of communion (*koinonia*) between God and believers, patterned after the Trinity, through the eschatological irruption of the Kingdom of God that is "already" fulfilled in the Church but "not yet" consummated. The Church is the newly constituted society of the Covenant elect, the community of the new age, the mystical body of Christ-centered in the proclamation of the Word and celebration of the Eucharist. It is a "mystical community of salvation" more than a sociological reality. (Nassif 2010:41-42)

An integrative implication of such approach affirms that all Christians "are anointed by the same Spirit who anointed Christ" (Nassif 2010:42). It means that on the regional and universal levels, ecclesiastical authority is also relational and interdependent. Just as the bishop is part of the community at the local level (not above but within the community), so he is to be at the regional and universal levels. Thus, apostolic succession is not defined by Nassif as "individualistic", or simply "a succession of persons," but as "a succession of communities to which the individual bishops belong and stand in a relation of unity and communion with one another. Each Eucharistic community succeeds the previous one and is connected to other communities, thus safeguarding continuity with the Church's apostolic origins, faith, and lifestyle" (Nassif 2010:42-43).

### **6.3.8 Personal Consensus of Authority in the Modality of Divine Immanence**

The personal point of consensus for Orthodox theologian Staniloae is related to the global purpose of the world which in all of its dimensions is advancing toward interpersonal communion. In other words, the world participates in subjectivity or personhood by extension. In his theological articulation, Staniloae reiterates St. Maximus' teaching of the *Λογοι* of creation. In simplest terms, the *λογοι* is a modality of divine immanence. Every created reality (or "symbol") is an inseparable manifestation of the associated *logos*. The *λογοι* corresponds to the divine activity through which God creates, sustains and guides all things towards Himself. As the models (goals) of all things, the *λογοι* pre-exist in an eternal, undifferentiated, and unchanging unity in God Himself, the one *Logos*, and become differentiated through creation. In this way, all things are a manifestation of the *Logos* of

God. In Staniloae's interpretation, since the Logos is a personal reality, all things have an aspect of personal communication. The λόγοι have ontological and existential dimensions simultaneously. By "seeking the λόγοι" in things, man communes with the thoughts and loving intentions of God, thereby developing his own spiritual and intellectual powers as well as his person-nature synthesis into the structure of the world (Berger 2003:6-7).

### **6.3.9. Consensus of Neopatristic Authority**

A contemporary notion of consensus was creatively re-emphasized and further developed under the heavy influence of "*Neopatristic Synthesis*" in Greek theological school, which produced volumes of dogmatic theology, very much on the German model, systematic in arrangement. The system was borrowed from German equivalents and so they ultimately traced their lineage back to the *summae* of medieval scholasticism. This approach to Orthodox theology found favour among theologians in Romania and Serbia. The most notable among them were the Romanian Archpriest Dumitru Staniloae (1903–1993) and the Serbian Archimandrite Justin Popovic' (1897–1979). From about the 1960s onwards, this approach manifested itself in Greece. Theologians such as Romanides, Zizioulas, Yannaras, Nellas, Mantzaridis, and the Athonite monk, Archimandrite Vasileios, Abbot of Stavronikita, can be seen as representatives of the neopatristic synthesis. In some cases, one can see the influence of the theologians of the Russian diaspora: Zizioulas wrote a doctoral thesis under Florovsky, while Yannaras spent time in Paris, also writing a doctoral thesis. The most famous and influential of these dogmatic theologies was the one written by Christos Androutsos (1869–1935), and the most recent one by Panayiotis Trembelas (1886–1977) (cited in Louth 2012:13).

Valliere assumes that "the theoretical assumptions of most of this activity were and continue to be Neopatristic" (Valliere 2001:231). In Valliere's approach, "the business of theology is viewed as the recovery of patristic sources and the articulation of the meaning of those sources in a modern idiom". This involves "updating the fathers as opposed to just mechanically repeating their words. But it would be wrong to describe such updating as going 'beyond the fathers' in substantive terms" (Valliere 2001:232). Such theology was rather different in conception from the attempts at refashioning Orthodox theology among the Russian diaspora in the West, for many of the Russians had had a strong sense that the challenge of the diaspora required more than an attempt to preserve the models of the

past (which had been heavily indebted to the West since the reforms of Peter the Great). The most influential movement in the Russian diaspora was what Florovsky (1893–1979) called the "Neopatristic Synthesis" the best exponent of which was Lossky (1903–1958) (cited in Louth 2012:13). In correlation with this approach, Valliere noted that "the Russian school had a different mission". For Valliere, the Russian project

was to develop a theology of engagement with an involvement in the secular world, to offer a sympathetic theological interpretation of secular experience, and thereby to introduce into Orthodox theology a more positive and affirmative relationship between church and world than can be found in the traditional fathers of the Church. It can also be traced in the pronouncements of new generation of Orthodox theologians, such as Behr, who challenged, for example, the appropriation of the patristic texts in contemporary Orthodox theology (especially Zizioulas' Trinitarian ontology), raising the perennial issue in Orthodox theology of patristic interpretation. The work of Hart also does not fit easily into the main currents of contemporary Orthodox theology, especially in his interpretation of divine–human communion in terms of beauty and use of Thomistic notions of analogy (cited in Papanikolao 2011:360). Russian-school theologians coined a term for this project. They called it *cosmodicy*, "the justification of the world", that is to say, a theological defence of changing and changeable secularity to the guardians of changeless truth. The task was made urgent by the emergence of a dynamic secularism in modern times. (Valliere 2001:232)

In Zen'kovskii's interpretation, Russian school theologians called for a fresh assessment of what they termed the problem of the cosmos in Christianity against the acosmic or anti-cosmic tendencies they found in the fathers (Zen'kovskiy 1997:67-84).

### **6.3.10 Consensus on the Authority of Unwritten (Oral) Tradition**

The consensus point of contemporary Orthodox scholarship presents Jesus Tradition as a predominantly oral tradition and conceptualizes the transmission process in oral terms (Alfeyev 1999; Andreopoulos 2011; Bogdashevsky 2004; Bratsiotis 1951; Cavarinos 1992; Gillquist 1992; Hopko 1982; Kuraev 1995; Lossky 1944 and 2004; Meyendorff 1978; Nassif 2004 and 2010; and Osipov 2011). Eastern Orthodox theology literally builds its argumentation upon "belief in the authority of an alleged oral tradition traceable back to the apostles" (Pelican 1991:253). From the Orthodox perspective, biblical texts must be interpreted with the help of historical-grammatical exegesis and the rules of hermeneutics within the context of the church, i.e., in light of that which has been passed down from

generation to generation from the Apostles. The basic assumption here is that not everything our Lord and the Apostles did and said is contained in the written canon (cf. John 21:25). In 2 Thessalonians 2:15, Saint Paul admonished the believers to preserve both written and oral traditions. Both of these understood to be the instructions given by Christ and his apostles (Stamoolis 2004:237). The Orthodox phenomenon of "unwritten tradition" bears a very typical similarity to the opening disquisitions of classic Orthodox treatise, since

the term "Tradition" is used by the Fathers and other ecclesiastical writers in a *broader* sense to indicate the *written* Divine word, namely the Old Testament and the New Testament, and also the *unwritten* Divine word of the Apostolic preaching, which is not written in Holy Scripture, but was preserved in the Church and was written in the Proceedings of the Synods and the books of the God-bearing Fathers. In a *narrower* sense, the term "Tradition" indicates *only the unwritten* Divine word of the Apostolic preaching. (Cavarnos 1992:9-10)

There is also a tendency within Orthodox theology to romanticize the orality of tradition at the expense of a literal paradigm. Bulgakov, for example, points to these oral developments as "monuments" and/or "gifts of traditions" fixed by the Church "*as lex credendi or lex orandi*," which, nevertheless "has not the same clearness and remains a problem for theological knowledge and science" (Bulgakov 1988:30).

### **6.3.11 Consensus Appeal to the Authority of Extra-Scriptural Sources**

The rejection of one source theory of divine revelation facilitated the formation of closed Orthodox identity in which extra-biblical sources is a principle norm of tradition (Cavarnos 1992; Kuraev 1995). Breck stressed the fact that "the Bible is not *sui generis* but that it was born and shaped within the community of faith" (Breck 2001:3). Thus, "the sources of Orthodox ecclesiology are the Holy Scripture, the liturgical text, and practices, the writings of the Fathers of the Church and the decisions of the ecumenical councils" (Kondothra 2008:157). Orthodox extra-biblical sources can be identified as a discourse wholly other to the West: transferred into the sphere of the relation between Scripture and Tradition. The Orthodox approach to the twofold economy attempts to overcome the problem of the 'two sources' of revelation by replacing it with the 'two modes' of transmission: oral preaching of the apostles and of their successors, and writings such as the Scriptures and all other written expressions of the revealed truth of a lesser degree of authority than the Scriptures.

In technical terms, non-scriptural sources of tradition represent in Eastern Orthodoxy primarily a phenomenon of the second orality, that is, a written text known only through an oral performance of the text. In addition to that, there is also a reason to believe that "while treatises against heresy and defences of the faith against Jewish and pagan thought were written down in order to be circulated, among the faithful and perhaps among the gainsayers, much of the positive instruction of the people was confined to oral presentation" (Pelikan 1971:12). The Orthodox approach to the extra-biblical sources affirms the primacy of Tradition over Scripture since the oral transmission of the apostolic teachings preceded the writing of the New Testament books. Further, the adherents of this view affirmed that the Church could dispense with the Scriptures, but she could not exist without Tradition (Lossky 185:144; Negrut 1994:40-41). For Breck, it may liken to "a great river, whose main current is Scripture", but Eastern Orthodoxy sees the relationship between the two "in a way that can be described not as Scripture *or* Tradition, or Scripture *and* Tradition, but Scripture *in* Tradition" (Breck 2001:4).

### **6.3.12 Consensus on Vertical and Horizontal Dimensions of Orthodox Tradition as authority**

Theoretically, the place of the Orthodox Church Tradition as authority in contemporary society is defined by the so-called vertical and horizontal theologies. Whereas vertical theology deals exclusively with dogmatic issues, horizontal theology is concerned with the social aspect of life. The assumption is that all believers belong to the vertical structure of the Orthodox Church, from clergy down to ordinary parishioners (Solomon 1998:105). On the horizontal dimension, however, the believer has "a double citizenship: on the one hand, he belongs to the religious community, but on the other, he is also a part of the political, economic and social community" (Komarov 1991:169). In the Russian Orthodox Church, the higher church dignitaries mostly belong to a group which speaks out for the preservation of the traditional role of the church in society. For them, the concept of God is much more important than human personality (Komarov 1991:51-52). For Eastern Orthodox believers the main source of guidance should be found within the "tradition" of the Church, while Evangelicals are more inclined to the reformation's paradigms "Return to the Gospel" or "Sola Scriptura." The relationship between the Bible and Tradition (vertical and horizontal theologies) is "a living one". The Bible exists within the tradition (in which the seven

ecumenical councils are dominant), not apart from it. Here Orthodoxy occupies the position of the Church of the first centuries, as argued by Lanne, "in which the Bible and tradition (the teaching of the church) were effectively indistinguishable" (Lanne 1971:65). Thus, "Scripture is a primary part of the organic nature of tradition" (Letham 2007:282).

### **6.3.13 Absence of Consensus in Doctrinal and Theological Developments on Ecclesial Authority**

Having examined Orthodox theology in considerable details, some Protestant scholars (Allison 2011; Armstrong 1995; Barnes 1999; Blanchfield 1988; Blaising 2012; Erickson 2001; Evans, 2011; Hobsbawm 1983; Horton 2004; Morey 2007; MacArthur 1995; and Sproul 1997) were able to discover many elements of theological inconsistency and historical discontinuity within this modern Orthodox teaching. A practical example of doctrinal/theological discontinuity in Eastern Orthodox theology of tradition, for instance, was addressed and discussed in the present research in the analysis of a contemporary survey of John Erickson on the development of Orthodox ecclesiology *The Church in Modern Orthodox Thought: Towards a Baptismal Ecclesiology* (2011). In that article, John Erickson offered a significant critique of "eucharistic ecclesiology" so often taken as "perennially normative" in recent approaches of some Orthodox theologians such as Afanasiev and Zizioulas. Erickson demonstrates a distinctive discontinuity of Orthodox Eucharistic ecclesiology, as "a relatively new branch of the theological enterprise," arguing that Orthodox presentations of ecclesiology – just as in Catholic presentations – the sacramental perspective of earlier ages was effectively supplanted by a largely institutional understanding of the Church (Erikson 2011:138). Erikson also claims that the weaknesses of this approach to ecclesiology became more and more obvious in the twentieth century. Too often life within an autocephalous church has been compromised in various ways, equally unfortunate has been the absence of effective structures for maintaining communion (or even communication) between autocephalous churches and the result has been mutual indifference, absence of common activity, and periodic confrontation over such matters as the erection of new autocephalous or autonomous entities. This was the case during the communist ascendancy in Russia and Eastern Europe. For Erickson, a more recent approach to the ecclesiology of Orthodox theologian Schmemmann points out, that "the Church is a sacrament with institutions, not an institution with sacraments".



Nevertheless, claiming "solid historical foundations" and "truly creative re-appropriation of the Tradition", Eucharistic ecclesiology as form of a "return to the sources" idealized a second-century Church order as normative in every detail for all ages and situations, ignoring or glossing over evidence not conforming to that model or have otherwise fallen into anachronism (Erickson 2011:147-148).

#### **6.3.14 Hermeneutical Consensus in "Return to the Fathers" Approach**

For most of the twentieth century, the "Return to the Fathers" seems to be the dominant theological paradigm for Orthodox theological education. This theological trend, related to a different renewal movement in the Orthodox world and among the schools of theology, was crystallized at the First Orthodox Theological Conference held in Athens in 1936. At this Conference, Florovsky made a statement that "Orthodox theology's need to 'return to the Fathers' and to be released from its 'Babylonian captivity' to western theology in terms of its language, its presuppositions, and its thinking. Indeed, he would often return to this text with his use of the term 'pseudomorphosis' to describe a long process of Latinization and westernization of Russian theology" (Vassiliadis 2013:214). Valliere asserts that "toward the end of its historical road, in the 1930s, the Russian school was trenchantly criticized for this revisionism and accused of trading the verities of the holy tradition for winds of doctrine wafting from Western philosophy or Romantic poetry or godless pantheism or some other alien source" (Valliere 2001:230). Valliere (2001:230) is also convinced that

the best of these critics, Lossky and Florovsky, were soon to become the chief architects of the so called Neopatristic theology which has dominated Orthodox thinking for the last half-century. These thinkers rejected the proposition that Orthodox theologians should aspire to go beyond the fathers in any substantive sense. Florovsky wrote up his criticisms in a book which to this day remains the grandest portrait of Russian theology ever composed, *The Paths of Russian Theology* (1937). He presented there a history of pre-revolutionary Russian theology as the story of the alienation of the Orthodox mind from its own sources, arguing that theology in Russia was patterned on Western academic traditions, such as Roman Catholic scholasticism or Protestant pietism and moralism, but almost never on "the mind of the fathers. (Valliere 2001:230)

Elaborating further a process of self-correction, some modern Orthodox theologians, like Schmemmann, supplemented Florovsky's approach with a suggestion that "Orthodox theology must keep its patristic foundation, but it must also go 'beyond' the Fathers if it is to

respond to a new situation created by centuries of philosophical development" (Schmemmann 1972:178).

### **6.3.15 Consensus of Exclusivistic Authority**

The modern authority of Church Tradition (*ecclesiastical paradosis*) is based on the assertion that "Orthodoxy is itself the embodiment of the essential Christian tradition in time and space. The Latin term *traditio* ("handing on") and its Greek counterpart *paradosis* both acquired a technical meaning from the New Testament onwards (cf. 1Cor. 11:23)" (McGuckin 2011:599). This claim employs a notion of Eastern Orthodoxy as "the fullness of Christ's truth in continuity with the church of the apostles" (Stylianopoulos 2011:50). The notion of tradition was expanded, and both theological and canonical practices were reserved for the intellectual elite of the Church allowing human creeds and liturgical customs to enjoy the prestige of unimpeachable authority. An essential feature is that "tradition was accepted as an authority, even though it was also flexible or fluid in a given community often for a long time and often modified or adapted to meet the needs of the community" (McDonald 2007:144).

Nevertheless, what we need to remember in our reconstruction of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority is that "the church communities of the New Testament period evolved in various directions. No single type of community was founded. Structures were developed according to the needs of different communities. That limited contact also precluded an established uniformity" (Blanchfield 1988:8). Tilley correctly assumes that certain beliefs and practices deemed "traditional" by the church hierarchy are not found in the previous ages of the church in their present form, "If that which is passed on as a tradition has to be passed on 'unchanged and uncorrupted' over long periods of time, then there are no concrete traditions that will pass the test" (Tilley 2000:27). In the same way, directly or indirectly, Orthodox traditions "have been confronting a problem of ongoing adjustment: how to make sense of a pre-modern legal system in the context and categories of a very different, post-medieval legal culture" (Wagschal 2015:12-13). In addition to that, many disputes in Christian history over Orthodoxy and Heresy were often "an exercise in asserting power: if your version of Christianity ruled the theological roots, then you would gain authority and prestige. Better yet, you would be in a position to trample on your rivals.

That it was one of the enduring motivations behind the invention of heresy and orthodoxy is beyond question, and it continued in perpetuity" (Wright 2011:51).

### **6.3.16 Consensus of Ecumenical Authority**

It would be significant to note that the issue of consensus in Eastern Orthodoxy also implies a room for disagreement. Among those issues that continue to divide the Catholic Church from the Orthodox Church (the two largest Christian bodies in the world), the question of papacy is widely acknowledged (DeVille 2008). For an Orthodox mind, the concept of "universal bishop is scandalous" since "the equality of bishops is not the economy and is not a political matter: it is an ontology. No bishop can be more of a bishop than another" (Avis 2006:180). In 1971, Lanne argued that the primacy of Rome is the main disagreement for a reconstituted unity with the Orthodox Churches. Other differences are not negligible, but the Orthodox regard these as essentially 'papist innovations' which arose from the pretensions of the Rome's authority. Meyendorff critically noted on the issue that "the whole ecclesiological debate between East and West is thus reducible to the issue of whether the faith depends on Peter, or Peter on faith" (Meyendorff 1974:98). In 1995, in search for consensus, Pope John Paul II made a historic and unprecedented step to remove the greatest obstacle to the reconciliation of East and West and issued his famous encyclical letter *Ut Unum Sint*, appealing to every denomination:

As Bishop of Rome I am [...] convinced that I have a particular responsibility in [...] acknowledging the ecumenical aspirations of the majority of the Christian Communities and in heeding the request made of me to find a way of exercising the primacy which, while in no way renouncing what is essential to its mission, is nonetheless open to a new situation. [...] This is an immense task, which we cannot refuse and which I cannot carry out by myself. Could not the real but imperfect communion existing between us persuade Church leaders and their theologians to engage with me in a patient and fraternal dialogue on this subject, a dialogue in which, leaving useless controversies behind, we could listen to one another, keeping before us only the will of Christ for his Church. (John Paul II 1995:95-96)

While many Protestants joyfully accepted the appeal, almost all Orthodox theologians rejected the encyclical letter. Not a single canonical Orthodox Church responded, either through its synod, chief hierarch, or any other official entity. This encyclical — and the writings in general of Pope John Paul II's — are remarkable both for their arguments and also, not insignificantly, for their style: the royal "we" is abandoned; the florid language and exalted titles are vastly scaled back, and one no longer encounters ringing denunciations of

other Christians as "heretics" and "schismatics" whose only task is to "return" to Roman obedience. According to Schmemmann,

The tragedy of Orthodoxy is that from the very beginning of its ecumenical participation, no such common language, no theological 'continuity' existed between her and her Western partners, within, at least, the organized and institutionally structured Ecumenical Movement. There was no real encounter. (Schmemmann 1963:50-51)

In Orthodoxy, synodality (conciliarity) is not a function of the Church, since Orthodox theology seeks an integration of conciliarity and primacy that avoids both ecclesiastical democracy and the autocracy of a super-bishop (McManus 2000:248). Schmemmann regretfully observed that "for the Orthodox Church, a fundamental opposition is that between the East and the West, understood as two spiritual and theological 'trends' or 'worlds' and it is this opposition that, in the Orthodox mind, should determine the initial framework of the ecumenical encounter" (cited in Stamoolis 1986:4). Here Schmemmann's remarks regarding "the initial framework of the ecumenical encounter" unreservedly engage a powerful memory of former Orthodox involvement in ecumenism and an interfaith dialogue, charitable work, and the defence of Orthodox Christian traditions. This interdenominational co-operation decisively changed the image of Orthodoxy in the twentieth century. In a brief historical sketch *Tradition as Impulse for Renewal and Witness: Introducing Orthodox Missiology in the IRM (2013)*, Papathanasiou reminds that in 1934, a Russian lay theologian Nicolas Zernov (1898-1980), gave a systematic introduction to Eastern Christianity. The Orthodox emphasis on the resurrection and the cosmic understanding of salvation were highlighted while the real focus was on Zernov's attempt to deepen western and eastern Christians' acquaintance with each other's traditions. The next published text on mission and ecumenism was presented in 1942 by Lev Gillet (1893-1980), a French convert to Orthodoxy, who proposed a new understanding of mission as a dialogue, and not simply as a one-sided movement towards the other. A great turning point for Orthodox missionary revival was establishing in 1961 a pan-Orthodox missionary centre, called *Porefthentes*, or "Go Ye". This centre was a catalyst for awakening missionary consciousness in the Orthodox Churches, for producing a missiological theory and for participating ecumenically. The same year, an article by Anastasios Yannoulatos, the first director of *Porefthentes*, who became later a well-known (Greek) Orthodox missiologist,

was published to call upon other Orthodox believers to realize a missionary nature of their Church and to reflect upon the wealth of its missionary heritage (Papathanasiou 2013:161-163).

At the most crucial time in the ecumenical movement in beginning of the 1970, when critical dissonances in the missiological debate were becoming sharper and the urgency of a holistic articulation of mission was increasingly evident, the WCC encouraged the Orthodox churches to become more active in this discussion and to articulate their position in an ecumenical framework. Consequently, since the WCC's world mission conference on "Salvation Today" (Bangkok 1972-73). Orthodox theologians from both Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches have met on several occasions to reflect on the elements of a missiological typology of the Orthodox churches. This proposed typology corresponds to the history of their own mission and especially to the constant tradition in which worship and liturgy are an essential factor of proclaiming and confessing Christ (Bria 1996:7). According to Bria, the Orthodox have chosen their way of understanding and undertaking mission (Bria 2013:53). As they celebrate the liturgy, they are equipping, nourishing and sending missionaries outside. It is important to recognize this in ecumenical missiology which should foster a continuous process of mutual correction among many diverse missionary traditions, methodologies and strategies. Thus, every true tradition is also a true mission, because it implies a creative encounter between gospel and culture in a way it was attested by WCC's 1980 world mission conference in Melbourne:

We are aware of different emphases but believe there is a growing ecumenical consensus. [...] We would seek to value the spoken word as having a sacramental quality, for in preaching we ask the Spirit to take our crude words and thoughts and make them effective and loving to touch the hearts of our hearers. We would seek to receive the Eucharist as God's word which speaks freshly each day of sacrifice and victory. We believe that as our churches hold together these two aspects of Christian sharing, we may avoid both the excessive intellectualism of some preaching traditions and the excessive ritualism of some who have focused entirely on the Eucharist. (Ostathios 1980: 203-04)

Unfortunately, these transformations do not reflect the present situation in Russia. In recent years, the dominant mode of Eastern Orthodox responses to globality has been self-protective and communitarian (rather than self-adjusting and individualistic) (Makrides 2005; McGuigan 1999; and Papageorgiou 2000). Agadjanian and Rousselet (2005) insist

that most of the studies would clearly suggest that this is a plausible generalization. Keeping the unbroken Tradition has been an apprehensive goal par excellence for many religious movements, authors, and activists of the Eastern Orthodox cultural religiouscape. Knox assumes that

although the Church had rivals in schismatic Orthodox groups, other traditional faiths, and in Western and, to a lesser extent, Asian denominations, the Orthodox Church benefited from the new freedoms more than any other faith. The Moscow Patriarchate reclaimed Orthodoxy's pre-revolutionary position at the centre of Russia's religious life. Indeed, the Patriarchate directed considerable effort toward securing a heightened influence in the pluralist religious sphere. (Knox 2005:2)

By and large, the faith itself and the whole symbolic order associated with and supported by it have been used to preserve or even enhance a sense of "proud difference" that remains rooted in Tradition. For the Orthodox cultural universe, this Tradition often weaves several symbolic referents into a single genre of identity, whereby Church, ethnicity, and nationality become signifiers of a single collective entity. Over the last several centuries, the dominant role of Eastern Orthodox Tradition has been overdetermined by this creative use of tradition. Consequently, to this day, Orthodoxy's stance within the new global taxonomy has been shaped by its continuous adherence to the historical legacy of early Christianity (Agadjanian and Rousselet 2005:9).

Another challenge posed by the regulative interlocutors on the subject of tradition has to do with Orthodox affirmation that "Russia is not just an idea. It is a specific country, with a particular place on the globe, a majority language and culture, and a very concrete history" (Bushkovitch 2012:xv). After the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, Orthodoxy not only lost its privileges and position as the official religion, but also found itself banned and anathematized by a militantly atheistic state. Marxism and historical materialism superseded Orthodoxy as a new official doctrine. The Orthodox Patriarchate enjoyed a brief restoration in 1917 but was abandoned and persecuted in the early Soviet period, only to be re-established as an appeal to Russian patriotism by Joseph Stalin during the Second World War (Evtuhov 1991; Kivelson 2003; and Nichols 1985).

The great paradox of Russia's post-Soviet religious renaissance was the transition of the Moscow Patriarchate from a suppressed institution, directed and regulated by an atheist regime, to an institution which directs considerable efforts to suppressing other religious bodies by discouraging religious pluralism and enjoying state-sanctioned privileges in a secular country (Knox 2005; Parthe 1997). Recent studies highlight that many Russians and even non-Orthodox members of Russian community exploit imperial institutions on many occasions for the promotion of their identities and interests. Linz and Stepan (1996:38), for example, identify autocracy as a political system with limited pluralism, and thus mobilisation is not prevalent. The government is lead by a small group, which is exercising power within ill-defined formal limits but with predictable norms. It is also important to note that there are no checks and balances. The polity is biased in favour of the leadership.

This contrasted sharply with Church life outside the Patriarchate's official structures. Orthodoxy as a belief system fostered a movement for the *Perestroika* (restructuring) of Church life in order to make the faith more accessible and relevant to post-Soviet realities, but the heavy western influence of the early 1990s proved to be short-lived.

By 1995, an altogether different and quite complicated social and cultural atmosphere was quickly sweeping through Russia, and with its appearance a growing chorus of voices called for legislation more in keeping with the country's longstanding traditions. The calls for reform fomented discord between traditionalist prelates, clergy and laity and reformist clergy and laity. (Basil 2005:153)

The conservative reaction of Orthodox hierarchy demonstrated an intention to establish a more powerful authority for the Orthodox Church as a moral and patriotic standard of Russian life. The resurgence of Russia in world affairs has created tensions within the tolerance agenda in Western Europe. The Orthodox concept of "canonical territory" has become a controversial topic, especially between the ROC and the Ecumenical Patriarchate (EP) of Constantinople (Payne 2010:2). Thus, from the weak position of a faith tolerated by an atheist regime, the Orthodox Church secured an influential and prominent position in post-communist Russia, leaving behind the former high ethic of interdenominational dialogs.

It is observed that Orthodox theology, appealing to the tradition of Eastern exegesis (despite existing variations in interpretation models and patristic terminology) is profoundly influenced by ecumenical ecclesiology, even to the extent of shaping certain models of unity (theological, patristic or communal consensus) that have been proposed by the observed conciliarity trends. The present study, therefore, builds its conclusions on a relatively consolidated consensus in Orthodox theology regarding specific Orthodox perspectives on authority, conciliarity and its mission to the world. It attempts to develop a further consensus on binding values and basic moral attitudes of modern Orthodox Church Tradition as authority.

#### **6.4 The Confluence of Scripture and Tradition Authorities in Modern Scholarship**

One of the basic problems confronting theologians today is to be able to distinguish clearly between the faithful voice of God's Revelation and mere human traditions which only express the former imperfectly or, as is often the case, are the contrary to it or obscure it. Many people are eager to receive the Gospel in its original purity and to know the Church as its divine Founder intended it to be, but are not eager to become involved in the interminable medieval quarrels about traditions which have resulted in the disunity of Christendom (Meyendorff 1960:ix). This problem of theological incongruence between two entities "Scripture" and "Tradition" remains insoluble as long as it is not expanded to understanding that "we are in process of moving too far from the time of the apostles to be able to watch over the purity of tradition, without a superior written authority" (Cullmann 1953:44). Tilley has recently made a comprehensive study to demonstrate that certain beliefs and practices deemed "traditional" by the church hierarchy are not found in the previous ages of the church in their present form or have no precedent at all. "If that which is passed on as a tradition has to be passed on 'unchanged and uncorrupted' over long periods of time, then there are no concrete traditions that will pass the test" (Tilley 2000:27). Thus, we came to the point where we are to inquire, "Does the voice of Orthodox Church Tradition express the same historical authenticity of Apostolic Church as well as theological truthfulness of Church Fathers?"



#### 6.4.1 Authority of Scripture and Tradition in the Patristic Legacy

A modern system of traditional ecclesial authority within the Orthodox Church through catechesis, theology, and the accepted exercise of power proclaims its divine origin which should be accepted by all believers in faith. The content of Orthodox Tradition which is proclaimed by the Church in the liturgy as the rule of faith guarantees the preservation of the structure from generation to generation. Orthodox theologian Bushkovitch (2012:10) assumes that many differences between the eastern and western churches arose in matters that are hard to pin down and included differences of culture and attitudes rather than dogma and basic belief. The notion of the church building and the liturgy as the meeting points of the divine and human worlds, of spirit and matter, was and is central to Orthodox life and devotion. Preaching and the minute examination of behaviour in sermons and in the confessional were not central, even if practiced to some extent. With some variation, this formula was accepted in Orthodox East as one of the basic points of *consensus patrum* regarding authority. Florovsky, for example, defines the "normativity" of the patristic legacy by emphasizing that, "the Church is apostolic indeed, but the Church is also patristic" (Florovsky 1972:107).

The problem of confluence of Scripture and Tradition in the observed range of consensus authority issues within Eastern orthodoxy deals primarily with contradictions between different types of authorities (scriptural and traditional), which was always a major concern of the patristic authors and a favourite point of attack on the part of the "unbelievers". This problem, for example, prompted Augustine to resolve these alleged contradictions in an exemplary way in *De Consensus Evangelistarum* (A.D.388) Augustine argued that agreement and harmonization are the order of the day here, since there must not be any contradictions in a book having divine authority, neither within the book itself nor in comparison to extra-biblical truths. He insisted that this *auctoritas* is reflected after Christ's divine authority in the continuation thereof *par excellence* in the "*auctoritas scripturae*" (cited in Leinsle 2010:23).

Lütcke argued that, according to Augustine, agreement and harmonization are the order of the day here, since there must not be any contradictions in a book having divine authority, neither within the book itself nor in comparison to extra-biblical truths. If ratio is at the service of biblical *auctoritas* as a matter of principle, then the Church's teaching authority in

the service of the truth also appears as an "external hermeneutic principle" and "guardian of true exegesis" (Lütcke 1968:144). Consequently, for people today, the Church's authority is a sufficient cause to believe the authority of Scripture, as Augustine put it in his famous saying: "*Ego vero evangelio non crederem, nisi me catholicae ecclesiae commoveret auctoritas*" ("Indeed, I would not believe the Gospel if the authority of the Catholic Church did not move me to do so") (Lütcke 1968:166–76; Leinsle 2010:23). Justifying this authority of the Church, the ratio auctoritatis attempts to prove that acceptance of the authority and obedience to it is an act of reason or at least a reasonable activity. Augustine sums up this program of theological investigation in the alternative: proof of the truth of the contents of the faith or proof of the authoritative position of the one who demands that we believe this content.

Despite this basically harmonizing tendency, it must not be overlooked that ratio has a critical potential as well, which in certain circumstances can endanger the position of the auctoritas. Therefore, theology is always an adventure of critical reason in the presence of the claim of divine, biblical and ecclesiastical authority (Leinsle 2010). In the words of Orthodox theologian Golitzin, "The Church is nothing more nor less than Israel in the altered circumstances of the Messiah's death, resurrection, and the eschatological outpouring of his Spirit" (Golitzin (2001:1). Thus, the Orthodox approach affirms the primacy of Tradition over the Scripture, since "the oral transmission of the Apostles preaching preceded its written recording in the canon of the New Testament. It will be even said: the Church could dispense with the Scripture, but could not exist without the Tradition" (Ouspensky and Lossky 1982:12).

Nevertheless, when the Eastern Orthodoxy uses the stereotyped language of Tradition, the modern scholarship resists the influence of preconceptions about a collective and cross-generational nature of oral tradition. Bauckham (2006:36) argues that the model of personal transmission was abandoned by twentieth-century Gospels scholarship in favour of collective and anonymous transmission, impacting Catholic-Orthodox forms of critics. Based on two Josephus's accounts of the *Jewish War*, Bauckham makes a strong appeal that Josephus calls his written record "tradition", thus, "Tradition (paradosis) here has no implication of transmission through many intermediaries. It refers rather to Josephus's largely firsthand testimony to what happened, well within the memory of those to whom he

gave presentation copies of the book, set down in writing as a record that others could now read" (Bauckham 2006:37).

The Papias's emphasis on the "living voices" in his *Exposition of the Logia (109 AD)* implies that the significance of oral tradition for the proto-Christian community was in decreasing the distance from the personal testimony of the apostles (eyewitnesses) themselves. A key implication of Papias's example is that he did not consider the Gospel (Apostolic) traditions as having by this date long vanished in a living connection with the eyewitnesses who originated them. Whether these eye-witnesses were still living would not matter if the oral traditions were essentially independent of them. Papias assumes that the value of oral traditions depends on their derivation from still living witnesses who are still themselves repeating their testimony. Therefore, "the need to account for the source became urgent as soon as no ancient author felt distanced by time to [*sic*] the events of interest" (Byrskog 2000:252).

In focusing a particular attention on the communal character of the early transmission of "Jesus' Tradition", the Orthodox Church over-emphasizes the control factor that was exercised by the primitive Christian community. Fundamental to the Orthodox consensus was an affirmation of the authority of tradition as that which had been believed "everywhere, always, by all" [ubique, semper, ab omnibus]. The criteria for what constituted the orthodox tradition were "universality, antiquity, and consensus". The first definition of Orthodox Catholic Tradition was suggested in the work of Vincent of Lerins, writing under the pseudonym "Peregrinus". As a statement of catholic authority, Vincent's rule was thoroughly Augustinian; it also summarized, better than Eastern Christian writers themselves had done, a canon of church teaching which, formally at any rate, the Greeks shared with the Latins (cited in Pelikan 1971:333). A review of the historical evidence from this period (partially presented in the previous chapters of the research), however, reveals that Vincent's perspective was a bit polemical, since during its first two and a half centuries, Christianity comprised a number of competing theologies, or better, a number of competing Christian groups advocating a variety of theologies. There was as yet no established "orthodoxy", that is no basic theological system acknowledged by the majority of church leaders and laity" (Ehrman 2011:4-33), including Valentinian Gnostics, Donatists in North Africa, Arian Lombards in Italy, Nestorians in Persia, and Monophysites in Egypt, Syria, and

Armenia who did not share in this consensus, being excluded from the fellowship of the Orthodox Church (Pelikan 1971:332).

The issue of authority ascribed to oral tradition becomes a major encounter of Eastern Orthodoxy with the Protestant West during the last two centuries, occurring almost exclusively in the realm of Russian Orthodox theology and traditional Orthodox theology and spirituality, based on a personal relation with the world and a Eucharistic-liturgical utilization of the world (Yannaras 1971:137-138). However, in opposition to this view, Dunn argues that "the idea that we can get back to an objective historical reality, which we can wholly separate and disentangle from the disciples' memories and then use as a check and control over the way the tradition was developed during the oral and earliest written transmission, is simply unrealistic" (Dunn 2003:131). For narratives about Jesus never began with Jesus; at best they began with eyewitnesses. From the first we are confronted not so much with Jesus but with how he was perceived. And the same is actually true of the sayings tradition: at best, what we have are the teachings of Jesus as they impacted on the individuals who stored them in their memories and began the process of oral transmission (Dunn 2003:131). An immediate complication was that by misunderstanding the significance of certain declarations of the Fathers of the second century, we are too accustomed to contrast rule of faith and canon, as if the former constituted a continuous tradition of the Church, alongside the writings of the apostles. In fact, the definitive fixing of the apostolic rule of faith corresponded exactly to the same need of codifying the apostolic tradition as did the canonization of the apostolic writings (Cullmann 1966:94). Williams explains that,

from the days of the patristic Church and for most of the Middle Ages, the Tradition and Scripture formed not two but one mutually inclusive authority"... Tradition was not from outside the faith, but was regarded as the essential teaching or purport of the Bible. So, Tertullian maintained, the Tradition had been kept "as a sacred deposit in the churches of the apostles..." Doctrinal historians have referred to this symbiotic-like relationship between Scripture and the Tradition as "co-inherence" (or "coincidence"), since the content of the church's confessional tradition co-inherited with the content of Scripture. (Williams 2002:107)

Some Christians (like Catholics or Eastern Orthodox) have held the view that the Church preserved an unwritten tradition which had apostolic authority comparable to the canonical

books assigned to the apostles and their followers. However, the exact content of that 'tradition' is, to say the least, unclear, and when we see the type of material which appeared in the later so-called apocryphal gospels, it seems highly unlikely that any considerable body of tradition was transmitted (Craig 1951). Investigating closely how proto-orthodox Church community developed Christian traditions in relation to Scripture and other principle doctrines found in Church Fathers' writings, modern scholarship admits the fact, that "the existence of unwritten apostolic tradition is therefore a certainty" (Congar 1964:35). Some Protestant scholars even believe that the principle Sola Scriptura was never intended to cast tradition aside in the task of interpretation and theological construction, contrary to some predominant evangelical perception of this principle (Bacote 2004; Williams 2005). However, "an apostolic and ancient tradition" did not mean that everything "ancient" was therefore automatically "apostolic". French Catholic theologian George Tavard believes that tradition formation was not an infallible process of delivering the true doctrine of the church. Since the transmission of faith is at all levels tied up with time, language, and culture, there is always change, and change is inherently imperfect (Hagen 1994:287-311).

The appropriation of hermeneutical solution in Christological method from the Protestant point of view assumes that the dilemma of two sources of revelation with equal authority (Scripture and Oral Tradition) has not only a bibliocentric, but predominantly a Christocentric solution. Ultimately, any authority is claimed for Christ alone (Matt. 28:18). The true foundation of our faith is not the Bible, but Jesus Christ. "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11). The Bible is a unique story of the progressive self-disclosure of God in crucial events for mankind. It is the story of redemptive activity of God culminating in Jesus Christ. For that reason, we as his disciples can not ignore Christ's attitude toward oral tradition of elders (Lykshostov 2013:164).

Our Lord and Savior, being sent in the beginning of his ministry "only to the lost sheep of Israel" (Matt. 15:24), nonetheless refused to associate himself with any political or religious group of that time in Judea. The ruling spiritual aristocracy was irritated that his disciples "were unschooled, ordinary men" (Acts 4:13). The Son of Man did not become the son of man's tradition. Moreover, having declared himself "the Lord of the Sabbath" (Luke 6:5), Christ indicated that the oral tradition from now is not of sacred, but of ministerial nature.

His criticism of "merely human rules" (Matt.15:9) had a clear goal of protecting God's commandment from distortions of human religiosity. A well-articulated example is given in the gospel of Mark (7:13), where the negative connotation of the phrase "thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition..." is strengthened by the adjective "τη μωρα"- "your foolish tradition" in most Latin and Syriac manuscripts (Talbert 1985:41). In addition to that, Jesus said "Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). He never said, "tradition cannot be broken". Protestant opposition to Orthodox approach of Tradition authority is in clear notion that patristic tradition was not a new set of beliefs and practices added to Scripture, as if it were a separate and second revelatory source. Cullmann is correct to claim that,

by the very fact of laying down the principle of a canon, the Church recognized that from that moment tradition was no longer a criterion of truth. She has drawn a line under the apostolic tradition... Laying down a canon is equivalent to agreeing that from now on our ecclesiastical tradition needs to be controlled. (Cullmann 1953:44)

The attempt of Orthodox apologists to derive extra-scriptural traditions directly from the Apostolic Tradition and Apostolic "Rule of Faith" does not consider the scrutiny of historical and documentary evidence. Florovsky explains that, "There was no conciliar theory in the ancient church, no elaborate theology of the councils, and even no fixed canonical regulations" (Florovsky 2003b:116). The appeal of Church Fathers to unwritten tradition of apostolic origin "was actually an appeal to the faith of the church, to her *sensus catholicus*, to the φρονήμα εκκλησιαστικον (ecclesiastical mind)" (Florovsky 2003a:111). The whole group of prominent scholars, including Dörries, Jungmann, Amand, hold the view that "the unwritten tradition in rites and symbols did not add anything significant to the content of the scriptural faith; it only put this faith in focus" (Dörries 1956:19-120). A similar implication is given by Turner was very precise in his conclusion about the 'Rule of Faith':

when Christians spoke of the 'Rule of Faith' as Apostolic, they did not mean that the Apostles had met and formulated it. What they meant was that the profession of belief which every catechumen recited before his baptism did embody in summary form the faith which the Apostles had taught and had committed to their disciples to teach after them. This profession was the same everywhere, although the actual phrasing could vary from place to place. (Turner 1918:101-2)

The Orthodox self-awareness as Nicene "Orthodoxy" shaped itself into a distinctive church tradition only after many centuries of theological disputes and inner development. According to Pelikan (1977:6), only "by the seventh century, what we have called 'catholic orthodoxy in the East' bore its own doctrinal identity" (Pelikan 1977:6). Schmemmann (1979:98) explains that a negative key feature of the development was the desire of Eastern Christendom to preserve the Greek nature of the Church, rather than the universal Church of the earlier period. In addition to that,

for most of the early history of Christianity, there were at least two acknowledged sides to the tradition: (1) the apologetic-polemical, which sought to depict the tradition as linear and unchanging against heretical claims of divine revelation, and (2) the inter-ecclesial, which admitted the existence of a certain fringe or "loose ends" concerning what the church teaches. (Williams 2005:22-23)

Related to this is another characteristic of early Christian beliefs, which is missed often in the modern theological discussion about orthodoxy and heresy,

In the patristic mind, tradition and scripture were comprehended in reciprocal terms. While Scripture had primacy of place for the fathers, they did not believe that Scripture could or should function in the lives of believers apart from the church's teaching and language of worship (i.e. tradition). Scripture was the authoritative anchor of tradition's content, and tradition stood as the primary interpreter of Scripture (Williams 2005:93).

Oden also asserts that, "preaching at the end of the first millennium focused primarily on the text of Scripture..." (Oden 2002:xi). Church Tradition did not prelude or dominate the primacy of scriptural authority. Cyril of Jerusalem taught that "the most important doctrines were collected from the whole Scripture to make up a single exposition of the faith" (cited in Yarnold 2000:113). His criteria for the verification of truth is almost identical to the methods of Evangelical theology, "One must not teach even minor points without reference to the sacred Scripture or be led astray lightly by persuasive and elaborate arguments. Do not simply take my word when I tell you these things, unless you are given proof for my teaching from Holy Scripture" (cited in Yarnold 2000:103). What is important is not that it was first of all transmitted orally, but the conviction that its text was fixed — just like that of the canonical books of the New Testament — by the apostles. According to the conviction of the Church of the second century it is not a question of a secret or implicit tradition, but of

a text already fixed in the period of the apostles, as were their writings (Cullmann 1966:94-96).

The whole point of Irenaeus's teaching, for example, was the assertion that Scripture and Church's unwritten tradition are identical in content. Written formulation of the apostolic teaching (εγγραφως παραδιδοναι) comprised the same truth, which tradition conveyed in the canon (Kelly 1968:38-40). This dichotomized model of revelation has expounded to a further presupposition that God's Word was in some way insufficient in content and subject to the authority of the Church (which gave birth to the Scriptures). The acceptance of the Nicene and Chalcedon creeds put more emphasis on faithful transmission of the tradition (Christ bestowed and the apostles/bishops proclaimed), claiming that anyone who deviated from it could not count as a Christian. Oliver suggests that the polemical nature of many Orthodox creeds is likewise evident:

For hundreds of years Christians believed that the twelve apostles were the authors of the widely known creed that bears their name. According to an ancient theory, the twelve composed the creed with each apostle adding a clause to form the whole. Today practically all scholars understand this theory of apostolic composition to be legendary. Nevertheless, many continue to think of the creed as apostolic in nature because its basic teachings are agreeable to the theological formulations of the apostolic age (Oliver 2001:366).

Nevertheless, the dogmatic concept of the apostle and of the apostolic authority has drastically over-simplified the real situation in the primitive period and given it a coherence it did not in fact possess (Von Campenhausen 1969:14). Thus, it would be plausible to recognize that the authority was incarnated in many different ways in the primitive Church. Some Pauline communities (like Corinth) were giving preference to a charismatic structure, while church in Jerusalem — to a synagogal (council of priest) structure. The communities of the pastoral letters had structures centered around the apostolic delegates with their presbyterate, thereby reducing the participation of all baptized Christians who, for Paul, were each bearers of the Spirit. The form mattered little since authority meant service. Ecclesial authority that is based on this tradition must be founded upon the equality of brother and sister (Gal 3:26-29: you are one in Christ; Matt 23:8: you are all brothers), in a fraternity that is opposed to qualifications such as teacher, father, and so forth (Matt 23:8-



9), and in service that is devoid of all domination and pretension to having the final word (Mark 10:42-45; Luke 22:25-27; John 13:14).

In this way the historical form of the pastoral letters predominated: a minister with powers who received it through the laying hands ordinance authorized various orders and ecclesial hierarchy in the Church. This is the root — especially in those cases where the spirituality of service was lacking — for the focus that would one day result in discrimination among the faith community to such an extent that the ordained kept all power in the Church for themselves. This is certainly against the basic intention of fraternity present in Jesus's message. The centralized form of power prevailed in both Catholic West and Orthodox East. The diversity of ecclesial forms of authority in the New Testament was lost, although in the beginning, authority was congenial before it was monarchical (Boff 1985:45).

In apostolic times, many charisms and ministries were part of the teaching process. All were also part of the listening and response of faith. Already in patristic times, tensions existed among prophets, pastors and teachers. By the third century, the charism of prophecy was being downplayed and teachers were usually subordinated to bishops. However, since many of the principal theologians were bishops, juridical authority and intellectual competence usually resided in the same person. Although bishops lost power to political rulers during the Middle Ages, following the Protestant Reformation, the juridical and clerical nature of the magisterium was once again emphasized. After Trent, the Church seemed to be divided among those who taught (*ecclesia docens*) and those who learned (*ecclesia discens*) (McBrien 1981:69).

#### **6.4.2 Theoretical Insufficiency of Authority Concept in Eastern Orthodoxy**

The theological treatment of authority subject in modern scholarship is always polemical in character. It has already been stressed that there is a theoretical insufficiency of authority concept in Eastern Orthodoxy. Eastern Orthodox churches make this appeal to the authority of tradition explicit. For them, the Church Great Tradition (as distinct from particular traditions of folk piety) is the grand source and norm (Olson 2008:45). Lossky asserts that "Prophet and Tradition, in fact, show us the real meaning of the Scriptures. And the duality of Law-Prophets already expresses *aliquo modo* the defining action of the Logos and the life-giving action of the Spirit" (Lossky 1978:89). Protestants instead consider many

Orthodox and Catholic beliefs and practices not directly supported by Scripture as, at best, optional and often wrong. Scripture for them is the sole, supreme source and norm of all Christian belief and practice, and tradition is to be judged by it. This insufficient attention to the issue of authority in Eastern Orthodoxy is noticed by many Orthodox theologians. For example, Evdokimov admits that

the apparent disorder of Orthodoxy which even reaches a state that creates the impression of anarchy [...] and the possibility for every theologian to create his own school is very accurate! There is no formal criterion for the Ecumenical Councils; however, the Council exists and direct our lives. [...] We would not feel free anymore, as though we were at home with God, if everything in the church were regimented" (Evdokimov 2002:64-65).

In Schmemmann's interpretation the Orthodox appeal to antiquity or the Fathers does not provide clear theological precision because theology in Eastern Orthodoxy "is above all explanation, [it is] the search for words appropriate to the nature of God (*θεο-πρεπής Λογοί*), i.e. for a system of concepts corresponding as much as possible to the faith and experience of the Church (Schmemmann 1966:14). It applies not only to ecclesial structures, interactions, and praxiology but also to the very foundation of Orthodox theology. For example, in his fundamental work *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, Pomazansky gives the following definition of Tradition:

We find this sacred ancient Tradition a) in the most ancient record of the Church, the Canons of the Holy Apostles; b) in the Symbols of Faith of the ancient local churches; c) in the ancient Liturgies, in the rite of Baptism, and in other ancient prayers; d) in the ancient Acts of the Christian Martyrs... e) in the ancient records of the history of the church, especially in the book of Eusebius Pamphili, Bishop of Caesarea, where are gathered many ancient traditions of rite and dogma – in particular, there is given the canon of the sacred books of the Old and New Testaments; f) in the works of the ancient Fathers and teachers of the Church; g) and, finally, in the very spirit of the Church's life, in the preservation of faithfulness to all her foundations which come from the Holy Apostles. (Pomazansky 2005:38-39)

Arseniev admits, that "the Eastern Church recognizes no formal juridical authority. For her Christ, the apostles, the Church councils are not 'authority'. There is no question here of authority, but of an infinite stream of the life of grace, which has its source in Christ and with which each individual is borne along as a drop or as a ripple" (Arseniev 1979:60). Thus, "the authority in the Orthodox tradition can best be understood not in legal or external

categories, but in relation to the Church's corporate understanding of reality, all of which participate in divine life" (Nassif 2010:37). An immediate theological implication of such approach is that the Church cannot avoid divisions. No matter how much ecumenical efforts may accomplish in reuniting actual churches, new divisions will always arise because of the ambiguities of Orthodox tradition (Cary 2010:2).

In his book *Living Tradition*, Meyendorff writes that "this lack in Orthodox Ecclesiology of a clearly defined, precise, and permanent criterion of Truth besides God himself, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, is certainly one of the major contrasts between Orthodoxy and all classical Western Ecclesiologies" (Meyendorff 1978:20). Another problem is that "Orthodoxy is not monolithic. It would be dishonest, and a disservice to history and posterity, to pretend otherwise" (Casiday 2012: xviii). The *locus* of authority in Eastern Orthodoxy has an obvious restrictive accent. Morey correctly indicates, "it is hard for Evangelical Christians to understand the Orthodox doctrine" because "it is a mystical experience more than a theological construct" (Morey 2007:70).

There is a sharp contrast to the Orthodox way of knowing God. In contrast to the Western way of thinking, the Orthodox ontology precedes epistemology. For Lossky, for example, the "authentic gnosis" is discovered by silence, not by logical demonstration or theological discourse. Thus, "real knowledge of God is experiential" (Papanikolaou 2006:9-13). Florovsky (2003:119) was also convinced that the only criterion of Truth in Orthodoxy is Christ. Fairbairn (2002) and Shlenkin later came to the conclusion

that all particular cases of Tradition (Fathers, Councils, etc.) are neither Tradition, nor authority, but *manifestations, expressions of life*. Therefore, the emphases between Eastern and Western ways of theologizing are explained by the formula: *authority versus life*. Nonetheless, it is important here to focus on and attentively evaluate certain "manifestations" of Tradition in Orthodoxy. We will consider the place of the Ecumenical Councils in the dogmatic theology of Orthodox Church and point to some problems that may explain the unwillingness of Orthodox historians to draw proper attention to the notion of authority. (Shlenkin 2008:183)

Orthodox historiography (followed by Orthodox theology) also demonstrates in many cases a scientific ignorance and even reluctance towards the most formative (transformative) facts and objective aspects of Christian history, solidifying a pattern of "ahistorical approach"

towards many dogmatic and liturgical articulations, which have not always been equally critical of their own tradition. Muscovite ecclesiastical authorities, for instance, expended a considerable amount of intellectual energy of the Church to create and promote an autocratic ideology of state power, expressing their ideas in images and architecture as well as in texts. Impacted by this ideology, the Muscovite Orthodox Church made good relations with the ruling princes as a basic policy. The moral base of authority makes obedience a morally good act (McKenzie 1966). If authority loses its moral base, obedience ceases to be morally good. Tradition in these senses indicates accepted ways of doing things, conventions sanctioned by old usage (Morrison 1969).

It would be significant to note in the authority discourse that the very emergence of Orthodox Patriarchate in Moscow occurred at a time when Constantinople patriarchate was in a vulnerable state of utter disorder, being on the verge of an institutional breakdown and inevitable resubmission to the sultan. On the other hand, having experienced a period of prominent territorial growth and power consolidation in the XV and XVI centuries, Muscovite rulers emulated Byzantine imperial model according to which Orthodox Church was inseparably tied and placed under the stewardship of the secular authorities. The autocracy of the Muscovite sovereigns in their struggle for the establishment of state hegemony (*edinoderzhavie*) facilitated strong exclusivist tendencies in the Eastern Orthodox theological approach, which resulted in the Third Rome agenda.

In addition to that, the creation of the Patriarchate of Moscow involved many canonical irregularities and obstacles, including coercive negotiations and bargaining, open intimidation and even 11-months oppressive detention of Constantinople Patriarch Jeremiah II who was held in Moscow much longer than he desired, against his will. From an Orthodox conciliar point of view, the entire procedure of a patriarchate installation in Moscow was uncanonical, since the patriarchate was created without convocation of a pan-Orthodox synod of three other patriarchates (Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem), there was no real election among candidates and the very sacramental integrity of the patriarchal ordination in Moscow had been violated. Therefore, “the elevation of the metropolitan of Moscow was not an act of patriarchal authority, but one of patriarchal submission” (Gudziak 1992:300).

It explains, to some extent, why some theological elaborations in Orthodox theology in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries emerged from the counterfeit historiographical compilations (like Filofey's work on Moscow as a Third Rome). However, the very idea of it was largely "overstated" (Letham 2007:131). It may explain why there is such a gulf between Orthodox self-identification and active worship. Although Orthodox adherence is widespread, active worship is an exception rather than the norm (Knox 2005:7). In addition to that, Orthodox Church teaches that the turn to faith is fundamentally an issue of turning to truth. Because one can come to faith only through the church, access to truth is necessarily ecclesial (Volf 1998:52). Nevertheless, the book of Revelation and the apostolic rebukes of believers in the epistles decisively dichotomized "received orthodoxy" with "faith and actions working together" (James 2:22).

In opposition to this approach, Horton makes a strong point arguing that mere repetition of doctrinal formulas of the past offers no guarantee that the "living tradition" of the Christian faith is being adequately or accurately transmitted. He points out that "New Testament epistles, even more than the Old Testament prophets, reveal just how quickly churches planted by the apostles themselves could be weakened by error: "I marvel that you are turning away *so soon* from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another" (Gal 1:6 NKJV). The Orthodoxy's appeal to a direct line of the apostles is definitely "no grater ground for confidence than that which the Galatian churches could have claimed. Yet they were wrong. It is on the basis of the apostle's own rebukes that we know they were wrong, and their lofty place in the history of the church could not save them from the apostles' anathema" (Horton 2004:142).

#### **6.4.3 Orthodox Church Tradition in the Approach of Evangelical Theology**

Orthodox Church Tradition, as a theological category, is undeniably diverse. It is no longer sufficient for Orthodox Church to declare adherence to the authority of tradition without a proper revision of its heritage. The theological discrepancies between Eastern Orthodox and Protestant approaches can be better explained through the critical methods of Evangelical theology in order to uncover the historical and objective meaning of Scripture and Tradition interrelationship (Lykhoshestov 2013:178). There is no doubt that Scripture comes to us in a package with a corresponding historical tradition. The two are distinct, however. What was of utmost importance to Calvin and the Reformers was to show

that Scripture did not receive its authority from the Tradition. Horton argues in this regard that

If a church succumbs to the temptation of reducing the other to itself, this violence is destructive of its very identity and legitimacy. The 'summons' element is retained only if the word-canon is external not only to the individual but to the church, that is, if the church, instead of finding her decisions and actions 'rubberstamped,' finds herself scrutinized, unsettled, disturbed — that is to say addressed. (Horton 2002:218)

This is why Luther said that "the Gospel must be defended in every generation" (cited in Sproul 2012:1). As a theologian, he saw the core of the problem in the following way, "Our opponents skipped faith altogether and taught human traditions and works not commanded by God but invented by them without and against the Word of God; these they have not only put on a par with the Word of God but have raised far above it" (Luther 1958-74:52). Therefore, it is more plausible to admit that the words of Jesus constituted (in a technical sense) the Church. He did not call disciples from their nets. He called them out of their religion. He called people by his Spirit through the preaching of the apostles. These "*ekklesia*" gathered together because they first heard a word from the Divine. They did not gather themselves and form a constitution from texts. The texts were prior to the community because the Person was prior to texts (Wireman 2012:330). Owen concurs in reminding us that:

Surely men will not say, that the Scripture hath its power to command in the name of God from any thing but itself. And it is, indeed, a contradiction for men to say that they give authority to the Scriptures. [...] The reason why they give authority unto it is the formal reason of all its authority, which it hath antecedently to their charter and concession of power. (Owen 1988:308)

Our discussion has shown that the gospel of Jesus Christ is always at risk of distortion. It became distorted in the centuries leading up to the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. Philipp Melanchthon, and later John Wesley introduced a revised concept of "*adiaphora*" ("*things indifferent*") to distinguish between the essentials of Christianity and, on the other hand, matters which Scripture neither commands nor forbids, neutral issues to be decided by each local church as long as they do not impede or obscure the gospel (cited in Thorsen 1990:159-162). In addition to that, John Wesley insisted that "*Sola Scriptura*" is to be interpreted as "primarily" rather than "solely" or "exclusively" (cited in Williams

2005:97). In classical Evangelicalism, the Bible is the source of revealed truth, and the Spirit is the instrument by which this truth is known (Bloesch 1994:19). The revelation of the Bible is "fully divine in its origin, and yet it comes to us by means of fully human agents" (Bacote, Migualez, and Okholm 2004:7).

In classical Protestant approach, Scripture is "the normative source by which all other sources of theology must be evaluated and tested" (Dunning 1988:76). The primary canon for theology consists not of four coordinate sources, but of one primary source (Scripture) and three secondary or subordinate sources (tradition, reason, experience) (Dunning 1988:76). Woodbridge suggests that "the Bible does contain 'errors'; nevertheless it gives faithful, or 'infallible', perspective on salvation" (Woodbridge 1982:14). For the mainstream of Protestant theology, "Holy Scripture has a preeminent status as the word of God, committed to writing in an unalterable manner. There are no historically verifiable apostolic traditions that are not attested in some way by Scripture" (Skillrud, Stafford, and Martensen 1995:49). Tradition is not "the art of passing on the Gospel" (Tavard 1959:1), but rather "the gift of remaining true to the gospel through continued struggle against the power of sin, death and the devil" (Bloesch 1994:160). Because the Bible is a main authoritative source for theology, the neo-evangelical approach represented by Barth, Ockenoza, Turretin, Hodge, Warfield, Henry and Woodbridge interprets the Bible primarily as a personal revelation from God emphasizing verbal inspiration, biblical inerrancy and a literalistic hermeneutic. Barth expressed this approach by declaring that: "Scripture is in the hands but not in the power of the Church" (Barth 2004:682).

Among contemporary Evangelical theologians who focused in greater depth on the origin, content and theological developments of Eastern Orthodox Church Tradition, we can name Bloesch, Bray, Clendenin, Hill, Fairbairn, Morey, Negrov, Negrut, Noll, Stamoolis, Oden, Olson, Osborne, and Volf. Their main theological trend regarding the Orthodox Church Tradition was to reveal a true meaning of the phenomenon in relation to the predominant expression of the tradition in Eastern Orthodoxy as well as to set forth a new theology, principles, and methods of interpretation of this religious Tradition as a part of a coherent and meaningful whole. Morey is convinced that the differences that divide Evangelicals from the Orthodox are not minor. Another major difference between the Orthodox East and the Latin West is that the Orthodox do not look to reason and science as a primary source

of Truth. Both trends "have different and contradictory epistemologies. While the East followed Plato inward into mysticism, the West followed Aristotle outward into rationalism (Morey 2008:2-5). To prove this point, Morey provides a considerable list of some of the differences between Evangelical Christianity and Eastern Orthodoxy:

1) Different views of Greek philosophy, particularly Plato. The New Testament writers, the Apostolic Fathers, and the Reformers rejected pagan philosophy, while Orthodoxy embraced it; 2) Different epistemologies on how we know if something is true or false. Orthodoxy's negative Natural theology versus the revealed theology of the Bible; 3) Different hermeneutics in the way we should interpret the Bible. Orthodoxy is mystical and intuitive in its understanding of the Bible, while biblical Christianity follows the principles of historical, grammatical exegesis. Different views on the origin, nature, inspiration, canon, and authority of the Bible. The Orthodox do not have the same books in their Bible as found in the Catholic or Protestant Bibles; 4) Different views on the origin, nature, and inspiration of "the Greek Septuagint." The Orthodox claim that it is more inspired than the original Hebrew text; 5) Different views on the authority of the church, its "Fathers", councils, creeds, and leaders. In addition to that, the Orthodox use circular reasoning. Something is true because the Church says so. There is no higher authority than the Church. This is true because the Church says so. (Morey 2008:31-33)

Another group of evangelical scholars (Grenz, Bonhoeffer, Boettner, Buchan, McCormack, and Dayton) is engaged in what Grenz calls the "theological history of the evangelical trajectory". They tend to see the Bible as a final "norming norm" (Bacote, Migualez, and Okholm 2004:8). According to Bonhoeffer, "The norm of the Word of God in Scripture is the Word of God itself, and what we possess, reason, conscience, experience, are the materials to which this norm seeks to be applied" (Bonhoeffer 1965:314).

A range of theological viewpoints is presented within the Evangelical approach concerning Eastern Orthodox Tradition. Some theologians (Clendenin, Fairbairn, Oden, and Olson) hold a generally positive view of Orthodox Tradition, which is "not a set of authoritative texts, but a life that sustains and guides the sacramental organism called the Church" (Fairbairn 2002:33), while other evangelical scholars criticize Orthodox Church tradition for (1) the unclear differentiation between historical and normative authority of the Scripture (Bloesch 1994), (2) being a mixture of questionable mysticism with somewhat strange philosophy (Nichols 1995), (3) a redundant exaltation of traditionalism and patristic theology (Houdmann 2009), (4) hermeneutical misinterpretations and neglect of critical biblical



studies (Negrov 2008), (5) blending apostolic and ecclesiastical forms of tradition (Negrut 1998), (6) isolation tendency and absence from recent theological developments (Morey 2008), and (7) conservatism and a static understanding of the concept of Orthodox Tradition (Dulles 2006). The ongoing inter-denominational discussion on the research issue reveals that "despite triumphalistic claims of Orthodox apologists that they embody the true apostolic faith, in reality, there is a cluster of conflicting traditions, theologies, and ecclesiastical structures" (Negrut 1998:12). Protestants may disagree on details, but the main principle remains the same, "Scripture constitutes the written standard of sacred revelation, but tradition – broadly expressed in liturgy, creed, preaching, polity, and interpretation – serves as scripture's divinely ordained natural context, apart from which the text can be neither efficacious nor comprehensible" (Huff 2010:5). Boettner summarizes the Protestant viewpoint in this way,

We do not reject all tradition, but rather make judicious use of it in so far as it accords with Scripture and is founded on truth. We should, for instance, treat with respect and study with care the confessions and council pronouncements. [...] But we do not give any church the right to formulate new doctrine or make decisions contrary to the teaching of Scripture. Protestants keep these standards strictly subordinate to Scripture, and in that they are ever ready to re-examine them for that purpose. In other words, they insist that in the life of the church Scripture is primary and the denominational standards are subordinate or secondary. Thus, they use their traditions with one controlling caution: they continually ask if this or that aspect of their belief and practice is true to the Bible. They subject every statement of tradition to that test, and they are willing to change any element that fails to meet that test. (Boettner 1962:75-6)

The theological controversy presented in the Protestant approach toward Orthodox Church Tradition as authority identifies some critical issues (historical, hermeneutical, ecclesial, Christological, and theological misconceptions in Eastern Orthodoxy), which require a further theoretical analysis.

#### **6.4.4 Conclusion**

An appeal to consensus is one of the most ancient appeals in the Christian history. The "appeal for peace and concord," for instance, widely discussed and used fourteen times in the First Epistle of Clement. In order to provide a fair account of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority in post-modern conceptualization, a new approach to conciliar consensus and theological synthesis that approximates to its polyvalence and complexity was discussed in

the last chapter of the research. The present study recognizes the problem of consensus in Eastern Orthodoxy with regard to the authority of tradition as an "ongoing concern" (Casiday 2012: xviii) and "the long-term perspective" (Letham 2007:291), i.e. ongoing search for correct theological paradigm and patristic advancement. As a result, any attempt to simplify the subject of the ecclesial authority or to identify Orthodox Tradition as a simple object for disengaged commentary is regarded in the research as inadequate.

In line with this conclusion, the last chapter is focused on the broader level of ecclesial authority and involves sorting different consensus sub-themes into potential themes for future theological consideration. The main problem discussed is whether the present structure of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority can directly claim its divine origin or whether it stems from the later insertions of theological and liturgical developments. The discussion also engages the major representative sub-themes of contemporary Orthodox and Evangelical theological consensus with the respective recognition that the gap between ecclesial theory and praxis in terms of the authority of tradition is a challenge to all who try it to interpret. It also explores a conceptual typology for Orthodox and Evangelical, integrating historical orthodoxy and practices within a congregational context to avoid a short-sighted interpretation, traditional self-affirmation, and human deficiencies in the area of authority.

It is observed that a primary criterion for "measuring" authentic orthodoxy was not just a particular ecclesial tradition of Eastern Orthodox Church, but a real continuity with an apostolic message in the gospel. The twelve passed on what they had seen and heard. Therefore, the New Testament is neither an addendum to nor a replacement of the Bible, but rather an apostolic witness to the hour when the Word of God became flesh. Since then, the authority of New Testament derives its commission from the apostles' authority. The theological imperative of Christological approach demands to differentiate between the sacred "exousia" of Jesus Christ and its latter historical embodiments in the form of variable and even contradictory traditions. The codification of the Apostolic Tradition in a written canon became the most important act in Christian history, putting forward New Testament Scriptures as the superior norm of all tradition. Thus, it is confirmed that, by subordinating all subsequent tradition to the canon, the Church once and for all saved its apostolic basis which discarded all impure and deformed sources of information. It enabled Christ's followers and disciples to hear, thanks to this Canon, continually afresh and throughout all

the centuries to come to the authentic word of the apostles, a privilege which no oral tradition could have assured them.

It is outlined how the Eastern Orthodox Tradition within the Greek-Byzantine orbit of fellowship became a peculiar historical event in the respective period of time, although it demonstrated neither universal spiritual unity nor unique organic entity. A useful way of explaining this phenomenon involves a theory which describes the Orthodox Church as an organization governed and constrained by the institutional framework of its own tradition, comprising formal and informal rules, that is itself durable yet malleable. Historical scholarship increasingly recognises a disturbing paradox lying at the heart of its area of inquiry: on the one hand, the Orthodox Tradition at the beginning of the second millennium was in remarkable state of flux, since "at no point in its history has the religion constituted a monolith" (Ehrman 2001:3). On the other hands, this tradition demonstrated a steady "historical continuity" (Congar 1964:114) through the time that flows past.

It is emphasized that all Christian denominations in constant search for consensus need a more relentless inquiry into one another's ecclesiological heritage, asking embarrassing but honest questions of one another. The new approach of the methodology of reconciliation in conjunction with cooperative didactics of possible consensus is introduced in the research to lead the Church out of the confessional caves. It is suggested that many Orthodox writers of both pre- and post-Byzantine periods were theologically naïve to admit that the sum of Byzantine ecclesiastical traditions is equal to the Tradition. Tradition personified in Jesus Christ is greater than our grasp of him in a prideful attempt to idolize our own respective traditions. Therefore, the Orthodox claim of Third Rome *eschaton* would be excessively presumptuous for any household of faith. Protestant theology, in contrast, demonstrates a more realistic viewpoint claiming that the authority is the power that has been legitimated by the consent of followers, not by coercion or force (Barnard 1968; Meyer & Scott 1983; and Negrut 1994). Tradition, religion and social contracts are often the sources of legitimate authority, which in formal organizations, such as the Church, delegate a certain degree of authority to a leader. Thus, their respective authority coincides with the legitimate power and prestige, which are initially conveyed through cultural expectations but must be reinforced through the consensual validation of followers (Boff 1985; Fisek & Norman 1998).

The current trajectory of the research is opposed to a long dominant approach in Russian/Soviet historiography (*gosudarstvennaia shkola*), inspired by the glorious myth of past autocratic achievements of the Muscovite State, partly because many Russian institutions systematically not only corrupted the truth with official propaganda, but also concealed rich legacies of historical documents and papers, making them difficult targets of research. It is noted that re-conceptualization of imperial Russian history and the dissolution of the Soviet Union is accompanied by a reversal of evaluations of imperial Russia legacy. Multiple identity factors, like Slavic history and demography, micro-history, discourse analysis, semiotics, new institutionalism, and history of ideas affect the conservation, transmission and even the content of what is kept and passed on in Byzantine (Orthodox) Tradition in various ways shaping different Slavic Orthodox identities (Russian and Ukrainian).

The Evangelical movement and theology in the Commonwealth of Independent States have undertaken incredible Reformation efforts to restore the Early Church experience of people responding to the One Teacher (Jesus Christ) and the one primitive community of faith (Apostolic Church). It was observed that there was no infallible Orthodox tradition co-equal to the Scripture in its authority for faith. It appears to be methodologically impossible to establish whether heresy was a later deviation from the original pure doctrines based on Eastern Orthodox approach. The ecclesiastical tradition undoubtedly played for early Christians an important role as a guide to the proper interpretation of Scripture, but Protestant, Orthodox, and Catholic theologians still hold to the view that it is their version of Christian Orthodoxy which should be equated with the teaching of the Early Church. The obvious corollary is that Orthodox methodology intentionally sacrificed the final authority of Scripture using, reacting, and synthesizing the variety of theological opinions to prove its own agenda on canonical and ecclesial authority.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **SUMMARY OF CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF STUDY**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

In the 1960s, Hans Küng had a private visit from a Catholic cardinal. The cardinal stayed over the weekend, and the question of worship arose. In order to avoid public attention, the two men quickly agreed not to go to the local church. Küng suggested a domestic liturgy. They could sit together at the table and celebrate the Eucharist there. The cardinal was confused and asked uncertainly: "Just like that? Just like that?" Küng asked in reply: "Did Jesus do more?" And the cardinal sat down at the dining table (Jens and Kuschel 1997:22-23). The astonishing anomaly of this liturgical asymmetry between traditionally ahistorical and biblically grounded framework of Church Tradition illustrates preconditions for the research of authority as a relational category to reach a new theological progress in both identifying the related elements of such authority and developing a critical reflection of the authority models of Orthodox Church Tradition which was received from the past.

Questions of authority, rooted in a particular tradition, have always been important in Christianity. The research aim has been to explore, analyze and synthesize the impact of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority on the identity and theology of Evangelical Christians in modern Russia and Ukraine. The study topics were examined from both Eastern European and North American Evangelical perspectives. The research assumes that it is not the Orthodox Tradition itself, but the "authority" of the tradition that lies at the center of the issues separating today Slavic Evangelicals from Eastern Orthodox concept of their respective ecclesial tradition. The key theological problem that emerges here is the validity and the authority of Orthodox traditions for Evangelical Christians who live and serve the Lord in the predominantly Orthodox setting.

Within such a frame of thought, the first three research questions helped focus the study and explored patterns of Orthodox Church Tradition as a human practice and rule-governed activity (behavior). Firstly, what are the essential matters of Orthodox Church Tradition? Are they coercive (oppressive) or power-enabling (inspiring) in nature? Secondly, in what similar and different ways is the Orthodox Church Tradition truly authoritative for Slavic

Evangelical and Orthodox Christians in modern Russia and Ukraine, considering a unique diachronic mode (the Orthodox notion) of episteme in the expression of complex, static-dynamic relations between theological gnosis, historical eschata and religious praxis? The third question, which re-appropriates and incorporates the Orthodox teaching and practices in historical, congregational and hermeneutical contexts, and is related to the inquiry that confronted the early church, is: "Whether tradition was creative or subordinate? Does church tradition simply reaffirm the revelation given in Scripture, or does it contribute new light not found in Scripture? Is tradition dependent on what Scripture records or is it independent in the sense that it can define a new truth? Or are Scripture and Tradition interdependent in the sense that neither has efficacy apart from the other?" (Bloesch 1994:143).

Since "the criteria for what constituted the Orthodox Tradition were universality, antiquity and consensus" (Pelikan 1971:333), the dissertation analyzed three main elements (dimensions) of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority - epistemological universality, historically proved antiquity (developmental process), and a theological consensus within ancient and contemporary Orthodox Tradition as a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. It was noted in the research that Orthodox Tradition, being a dynamic and ever-evolving reality, has been based on authoritative beliefs and values built upon plausible and feasible foundations, but even they are not canonically final. In order to address this issue, an analytical, historical and critical study of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority was undertaken and a conceptual framework for Evangelical theology and Christians in Russia and Ukraine for re-appropriating Eastern Orthodox theology and practices in Evangelical setting and context was developed. The scope of the thesis was necessarily limited, with the research focussing on certain attributes and exercises of authority by Orthodox Church in Russia and Ukraine rather than on general concepts of authority. The research was configured to avoid a traditional scheme of theorizing about the issue of tradition authority (confession-minded vision of the problem - incomplete definition of authority - analysis of the phenomenon - hypothesis formulation - conclusion), and to concentrate, instead, on theoretical discussions on the construction of theological, hermeneutical, historical, nation-building, and identity-forming aspects of the impact of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority.

## 7.2 A Constructive Summary of Findings

In line with the aforementioned presuppositions, a more realistic and feasible approach was chosen and implemented in the research to investigate some theological traits, historical inclinations and identity-forming dynamic of the authority impact of Orthodox Tradition in a humble search for an appropriate model of traditional ecclesial authority, which has become a dominant focus in the existing tension between Protestant theology and the institutional Russian Orthodox Church in the Commonwealth of Independent States. In order to identify a consistent theological pattern in the Orthodox concept of authority and address the issue from different perspectives, a broad-based, yet in-depth analysis of various constitutive criteria by which the legitimacy of Orthodox Tradition claims to authority can be evaluated was carried out, as summarized in Chapter 2. This analysis concentrated on the Orthodox approach to Gnosis and Episteme, Synchronic and Diachronic levels of authority (Divine Charisma versus Ecclesial Office and Tradition and traditions issues), authority of tradition in theory and action (Orthodoxy and Orthopraxy), Orthodox Conservative Substance and Protestant Corrective Principle, Divine Darkness and Scriptural Affirmation (Apophysis and Cataphasis), Ontological Models of Authority (Autonomy, Heteronomy, Theonomy).

The development of the chapter has culminated in claims that there is no pure Protestant or Orthodox "theory of knowledge." It relativized the veracity of Eastern Orthodox theology, which is believed today by the Orthodox rather existentially, as they interact within the framework of one and only "living tradition." This Tradition is assumed to be the highest ground for authority in the Orthodox Church, including Unwritten (Oral) Tradition, Scripture, Writings of the Church Fathers, Great Councils, Canonical law, liturgy, etc. From the Eastern Christian view, theology, as we use the term today, is an "intellectual contour of the revealed truth, a 'noetic' testimony to it" (Florovsky 1979:17-18), resulting from man's communion with God through faith. The Eastern Orthodox epistemology constitutes not so much a rival methodology to the Protestant approach, but, rather, a methodology that aims at a different goal – deification via mystical gnosis.

The main proponents of the post-conservative Eastern Orthodox theological method, analyzed in the first chapter, returns the researcher to the original point of inquiry: "What do we take as our 'first theology'?" After a thorough examination of the epistemological role of Tradition in the authority of the Orthodox Church, the underlying assumption of this

research was that the existence of a distinct methodological discrepancy between contemporary scholarly descriptions of a theological phenomenon termed “early Christian tradition” and Eastern Orthodox, notion/ecclesial interpretation of “Orthodox Tradition”, goes beyond actual history, human comprehension and teachings of the Holy Scripture (Eph.3:19; Phil.4:7).

The burden discussed in the third chapter relates to the problematic application of distal and proximal authorities in epistemic backtracking of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority in an epistemological attempt to articulate and hold two dimensions of a balanced biblical interpretation in full integrity and unity. It is noted that the phenomenological notion of distal authority in Christian faith relates to more general effects and the outer expression of the multifaceted nature of church Tradition as authority, while the proximal authority of a specific ecclesial tradition can be located nearer to the center of a particular Christian community or circumstances in which people find themselves. As a form of epistemological testimony, a praxiological inquiry dealt with in the research is the question of the circumstances in which we trust other people’s assertions, attributing to them a respective epistemic authority and relying on a regulative function of theological epistemology which is expressed by Apostle Paul in First Corinthians 4:6 as following, “Do not go beyond what is written”. The true origin of Orthodoxy is found in the course of dogmatic controversies over heresies that followed the Constantine Peace. It is affirmed that the Orthodox self-awareness as Nicene “orthodoxy” shaped itself into a distinctive church tradition only after many centuries of theological disputes and inner development.

In order to further distinguish between biblical and propositional notions of the truth, and to deconstruct traditional concepts of orthodoxy and heresy in the early church, as described in the third chapter, some key qualities of the Classical View of Orthodox Tradition which facilitate formative influences of apostolic and patristic eras along with the ecclesiastical discourse on authority and power were considered. This analysis of the modern responses to the Classical Theory of orthodoxy and heresy typically revolves around three sets of concepts (inquiries): (1) the concept of truth in the Early Church; (2) diversity and primacy of Orthodoxy in primitive Christianity; and (3) continuity and discontinuity issues within Eastern Orthodoxy (orthodox homeostasis). This recognition of the contextual (historical) dimension of truth led to a shift in the initial plausibility of orthodoxy and heresy in early



Christianity, since the entire school of exegesis, that of form criticism (*Formgeschichte*), began as a dispute about the identification and correct sequence of strata in the inquiry about diversity, primacy, and homogeneity in primitive Christianity. Providing corresponding overviews on positive and negative responses to Bauer-Ehrman proposal, an important research suggestion was made – namely, that the classical notion of orthodoxy pre-eminence and diversity is valid in a measure. Apart from what different scholars could reconstruct, the balance of stability-continuity and informality-flexibility in their theoretical advancements was lost. Baur-Ehrman typology of diversity has misled followers by claiming that there were various versions (layers) of orthodoxy, which were not related to the unity of apostolic kerygma and gospels as indispensable beliefs. On the other hand, the Eastern Orthodox approach has overemphasized stability of early orthodoxy up to a complete merger of oral tradition with the late community tradition.

The hermeneutical debate of Orthodox post-foundationalism is discussed in chapter four, employing a brief case study of St. Basil's Treatise De Spiritu Sancto (On the Holy Spirit) in an analysis of George Florovsky's book *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox view* (1972:85-89). St. Basil's work *On the Holy Spirit* established a new paradigm of the Eastern Orthodox identity in an anti-nomos discourse (articulation) on the authority of oral tradition, indicating how the ecclesial tradition was transmitted in an orally structured society and how the New Testament authority of the canon functioned. It was observed that the consensus point of the contemporary Orthodox scholarship presents Jesus tradition as a predominantly oral tradition and conceptualizes a transmission process in oral terms. In technical terms, unwritten (oral) tradition represents in Eastern Orthodoxy phenomena of the second orality, that is, a written text known only through oral performance of the text. Florovsky entered the discussion on the authority of an unwritten tradition, providing an analogous account of what is constitutive of Eastern Orthodoxy. He claimed that St. Basil intended to employ the criteria that had already been in common use and was in close agreement with the ancient Orthodox concept of tradition. Florovsky (1972:85) actually revised the Orthodox vision of ecclesial tradition as a second authority by saying that St. Basil "was very far from" introducing "here a double authority", which created further difficulties for the Eastern Orthodox approach in the post-apostolic era to think without a recourse to a strictly binary model of Scripture and Tradition identity, while even "the infant

Church itself was able to distinguish between apostolic tradition and ecclesiastical traditions, clearly subordinating the latter to the former” (Cullmann 1966:87).

Reconstructing a historical framework of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority in order to establish the origin of autocratic Orthodox Tradition in Muscovite Russia was discussed in Chapter Five. It was affirmed that the controversial problem of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority, being a problem of historical self-identification, demonstrates a powerful sense of common Slavic history, vividly encapsulated in the Russian expression "*sviaz' vremeni*," i.e. the "tie of ages." In order to understand the predominance of a particular organizational form of authority (autocephaly) amongst the Eastern Orthodox churches, geo-political and socio-historical contexts of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority were investigated in four historical chapters of the research, considering their connection with their respective developmental trajectories as well as modern reassertion of local, religious, or ethnonational identities of Eastern Slavs. The value and provision of monastic and ecclesiastical patrimony in the form of real estate accepted by the Orthodox Church as a great advantage under the new feudal system was also critically discussed. This analysis indicated that kinship was not the only source of legitimacy. Conceived in this way as a social-historical phenomenon, the Russian autocracy had evolved over time, starting with the Christianization of Kievan Rus' when the Orthodox Church began to preach the idea of sanctity of princely power. According to the autocratic Orthodox concept, God protected the Christian prince and granted him the authority, which was recognized by the universal Emperor of all Christians. A claim was made that Russian Orthodoxy became a cultural mirror capturing all destructive elements of a "habitual post-Byzantine matrix" in which spiritual power went hand in hand with the power of the Russian imperium (the state).

The primary purpose of the research summarized in Chapter Five was to explore the formation of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority in Kievan Rus and in the Muscovite state in relation to the origin of the idea of autocratic sovereignty, which emerged as a central principle of authority of the Grand Princes of Moscow in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. At this historical point, the autocratic amalgamation of the Great Russian Princes (1452-1613) served, among other things, as an instrument of legitimation of political and spiritual dominance. The ethnonational discourse of autocratic legitimacy shows that Tatars and Mongols played an immense role in the evolution and development

of Russia from a political, social and economic perspective. It is difficult to underestimate in this regard a thousand-year-long legacy of Orthodox Christian thought that laid foundations for moral and spiritual values and worldviews in Russia. It is asserted that many Russian theorists (both theologians and historians), inspired by the Byzantine legacy (political advancements) and Peter's achievements, creatively elaborated the mythologeme about Moscow as the Third Rome, anchoring a legitimacy of Rurik's and Romanov's lines to Roman-Byzantium models of autocracy. Nevertheless, a more detailed examination of the same subject deals with a valid criticism and the failure of the contemporary Orthodox theology to explain the bias of the "Third Rome" concept in the light of a modern historical research. The Eastern Orthodoxy identity as a collective phenomenon of Orthodox mentality in the Muscovite (Russian) Autocratic State is also deconstructed and questioned in the fifth chapter of the research. It is hypothesized that, in many respects, Muscovite autocracy exhibits an entirely new quality. Yaney singles out two features of the Muscovite political entity that have delineated it from other institutional forms. One is "the institution of autocracy; the other is the collective willingness of Russians to admit outsiders to full membership in their social (political) structures" (Yaney 1992:1). In the discussion in Chapter 5, it is established that the construction of Russian national identities started in the post-Byzantine period when the Patriarchate of Constantinople confronted dichotomy between a traditional politico-ecclesiastical ideology and radically altered geopolitical circumstances. After the fall of Byzantium, the situation in the Patriarchate of Constantinople became chronically critical. The late-sixteenth-century Greek Orthodox Church was a threatened ecclesial community and an ecclesiastical structure in distress. The loss of the protection from the Byzantine emperor had a profound effect on the identity of the Orthodox Church. Some efforts to resolve concrete problems, such as ecclesiastical discipline, clerical corruption and ignorance, fiscal insolvency, and general institutional weakness, were continuously confounded by the corollaries of servility and captivity: opportunism and factionalism.

On a phenomenological level, a new theoretical discourse of Orthodox Tradition as an instrument of power legitimation and territorial dominance (expansion) is explored in the same Chapter Five. Since territory is so inextricably linked to the national identity of Russians that it cannot be separated, the study further examines this "territorial" notion of pan-Orthodoxy, which is constructed on the insights of superiority associated with the entire

philosophical system of Orthodox legitimization of territorial expansionism and "land" patriotism. It is concluded that, if we interpret the Russian national identity as a purely discursive construct which contains specifically developed national identity narratives (like territory (land), national pride, Orthodox faith, ect.), the process of national identification is promoted by the emphasis on "territorial superiority" and "national uniqueness". This idiosyncratic character of Russian authoritarianism should come as no surprise since audiences in Russia are ready to accept ideological pronouncements without question, tending, instead, to simplify, exaggerate, and misunderstand the dangerous content of the new Russian pseudo-messianic hegemony or territorial expansionism. The end of the Chapter Five offers an alternative vision of Slavic history in the approach of the prominent Russian ethnologist and anthropologist Lev Gumilev, who described the genesis and evolution of different ethnic groups via the concept of "passionarity". The discussion that follows provides a summary of the Eurasianist concepts, which have been shaped by a diverse set of impacts, influences, and specific concerns, and have taken many different guises and modulations to the extent that it is more accurate to speak today about multiple Eurasianisms rather than to refer to a single cohesive Eurasianist canon.

Selected matters of the Eastern Orthodox consensus regarding Church Tradition as authority are examined in the sixth chapter. This analysis is focused on the broader level of ecclesial authority and involves sorting different consensus sub-themes into potential themes for future theological considerations. The main problem discussed here is whether the present structure of Orthodox Churches Tradition as authority can directly claim its divine origin or whether it stems from the later insertions of theological and liturgical developments. The discussion also engages major representative sub-themes of the contemporary Orthodox and Evangelical theological consensus with the respective recognition that a gap between ecclesial theory and praxis in terms of the authority of tradition is a challenge to all who try to interpret it. It also explores a conceptual typology for the Orthodox and Evangelicals, integrating historical orthodoxy and practices within a congregational context to avoid short-sighted interpretation, traditional self-affirmation, and human deficiencies in the area of authority. The theological imperative of Christological approach demands to differentiate between the sacred "exousia" of Jesus Christ and its latter historical embodiments in the form of variable and even contradictory traditions.

### 7.3 Historical Implications of the Study

The research descriptively emphasizes that historical preconditions of Eastern Orthodox worldview on the problem of ecclesial authority of Tradition reflect the whole complexity of interrelatedness between biblical doctrines (*gnosis*), theological methods (*episteme*), church practices (*praxis*) and a respective logical progression – from the Hellenic history of Byzantine Church to the modern Eastern Orthodoxy in a global age. The development of the New Testament canon in the first four centuries AD demonstrates that apostles authorized a proper theology of the primitive church. The qualitative uniqueness of that revelation was that “the Church itself recognized an essential difference between the tradition before and the tradition after the establishment of the canon” (Cullmann 1966:87). Initially, there was no real separation between scripture and tradition in the early Church. The tradition of that period was related not only to the process of transmission of God’s message but also was the very content of that message. It was also a time when the apostolic witness held the highest authority for the church. The main function of the primitive church and tradition at this stage was to preserve and transmit the apostolic witness in full “integrity and totality,” both for “an authoritative interpretation of the Old Testament and for the message concerning Christ and his teaching” (Hascup 1992:20).

In response to the Gnostics’ claims to have a secret truth handed down to them from the apostles themselves, the early Church developed a dual concept of authority based upon the apostolic witness (canon) and apostolic succession (tradition). By the end of the second century, some fundamental changes were introduced to the Christian concept of authority. The concept of the ecclesial authority of the ministerial office was gradually linked not only to a community but also to a professional hierarchy in the New Testament – the priesthood. The temptation to extend the apostolate beyond the apostle generation put bishops forward on the historical stage as a new authority and “apostolic heirs,” who received their teaching and to some extent their office. Irenaeus (130-202 AD) further articulated the relation between the bishops’ role as protectors of faith and their authority as Kingdom’s key-keepers and the succession of tradition, linking such authority to the teaching office of the Church and the apostolic tradition transmitted and preserved in the anointed succession of the faithful. Clement of Alexandria (150-215 AD), a respectful theologian and a head of the Catechetical school in Alexandria, also delineated authority in the succession of the apostolic message, while Origen (184-254 AD) found authority in the whole church and

especially its teachers, who worked together in accordance with the apostolic witness, preserved in scripture.

In the research, it is also hypothesized that the early church needed a way to assert its authority and Tertullian's formula "*primum*" is the "*verum*" was effectively employed to justify centralized ecclesial authority. In the light of new evidence regarding the organizational structure, no definite patterns of authority (vertical or horizontal) can be found within a primitive church to delineate official rights and duties of the hierarchy. Various theological attempts to attribute a special primacy over the Twelve to Peter were unconvincing. Initially, the apostolic unity was not a unity of an organized church, but, rather, the unity of their witness (vocation) to Christ. Thus, the transformation of the Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy into a power structure was not the confirmation of authority, but an indication of its perversion. The autocratic (authoritarian) model of authority is foreign to every line of the New Testament in which authority is mentioned. As Christianity began to separate from its Jewish heritage and visible ecclesiastical power structures gradually evolved, all kind of questions and disputes arose regarding religious authority. At this stage "the development of authority among the ancient churches was not uniform" (Stagaman 1999:40). The early Church realized its growing need in a further institutionalized organization, therefore, inherited power patterns "inevitable took social and political models from the surrounding world in which to incarnate their authority from God and Christ" (Boff 1985:40). Through the centuries, particularly after Constantine, when centralized ecclesial authorities became tightly intertwined with the imperial power of the state, Christianity encountered and attempted to resolve the same theological issue: how to identify and approve the existing models of authority in present ecclesiastical structures, which directly claim their divine origin. Blanchfield (1988:262) argues in this regard, that, "for centuries, popes and kings struggled for supremacy, temporal and spiritual. The ecclesial authority of the Middle Ages, using the model of the feudal system, was far removed from the diakonia of Jesus. Both Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism cemented its power toward absolutization".

The adoption of typological and allegorical exegesis facilitated the church acceptance of both Old and New Testaments as the authoritative foundation for new Christian faith. Based on the patristic elaboration and famous Augustine's theological statement "Ego vero

evangelio non crederem, nisi me catholicae ecclesiae commoveret auctoritas” (*C. ep. Manich 5,6.*) - “I would not believe the Gospel, unless the authority of the Catholic Church moved me”, both Catholic and Orthodox Churches had attempted to work out in their respective dogmatic theologies a plausible synthesis of the authority of Scripture, Tradition, Spirit, and Church. A theological framework of such intense scope, creativity, and polemic saw the Church as the superior locus of authority, founded upon the sacred hierarchy and magisterial power. According to this model of authority, the Church acted fundamentally through Middle Ages as *mater et magistra* (mother and teacher). Orthodox Patriarch Sophronius of Jerusalem correctly summarized this approach in his *Synodical Epistle* (PG 87:3149-52): “An apostolic and ancient tradition has prevailed in the holy churches throughout the world, so that those who are inducted into the hierarchy sincerely refer everything they think and believe to those who have held the hierarchy before them”.

This Orthodox assumption about a “living” connection between an apostolic and later ecclesial tradition was tested and disproved by the present research. The theological inability of the church hierarchy to draw a clear line between “an apostolic and ancient tradition” led to the absolutizing of visible institutions of the Church in such a way that “it tends to substitute itself for Jesus Christ or to understand itself as his equal” (Boff 1985:84). In response to his theological opponents, who opposed to liturgical incorporation of many unwritten traditions, Basil the Great admitted the coexistent validity of unwritten traditions in the liturgical life of the church as derived from the source of the unwritten teaching of apostles. This validity invoked an unjustified elevation of the ecclesiastical notion of the unwritten authority of tradition in addition to the truth confessed by the fathers and formulated in the Orthodox creeds. Thus, the authority of Church Tradition was successfully introduced by the interpretative faculty of the Church to create new traditions in addition to the first witness-text data (apostolic deposit of faith), acting as a historical force directly linked by the Orthodox to the collective memory of the community. This interpretation facilitated a further confusion and even a theological crisis in the understanding of authority in the medieval Orthodox Church since such authority was taught and exercised with the same imprecision and even ambiguity it had earlier.

As the Orthodox Church moved beyond the patristic age, it still wrestled with the question of the religious authority of tradition, but the councils became a primary channel for the

authentic tradition. It is emphasized in the research that the emergence of Orthodox Patriarchate in Moscow occurred during the time when Constantinople patriarchate was in a vulnerable state of utter disorder, being on the verge of an institutional breakdown and inevitable resubmission to the sultan. On the other hand, having experienced a period of prominent territorial growth and power consolidation in the XV and XVI centuries, Muscovite rulers emulated the Byzantine imperial model, according to which the Orthodox Church was inseparably tied and placed under the stewardship of secular authorities. The autocracy of the Muscovite sovereigns in their struggle for the establishment of state hegemony (*edinoderzhavie*) facilitated exclusivist tendencies in the Eastern Orthodox theological approach, which resulted in the Third Rome agenda. This single example demonstrates how easily Orthodox rulers and ecclesiastical authorities could delegitimize numerous constraints of their Orthodox Tradition for the sake of a new historical-eschatological entity called the “Third Rome” Christian Empire. The creation of the Patriarchate of Moscow involved many canonical irregularities and obstacles, including coercive negotiations and bargaining, open intimidation and even an eleven-month oppressive detention of Constantinople Patriarch Jeremiah II, who was held in Moscow much longer than he desired, against his will. From an Orthodox conciliar point of view, the entire procedure of a patriarchate installation in Moscow was uncanonical, since the patriarchate was created without convocation of a pan-Orthodox synod of three other patriarchates (Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem), there was no real election among the candidates, and the very sacramental integrity of the patriarch ordination in Moscow had been violated. Therefore, “the elevation of the metropolitan of Moscow was not an act of patriarchal authority, but one of patriarchal submission” (Gudziak 1992:300). At the very moment of its emergence, the Russian Orthodox Church violated not only its ancient traditions but also a more fundamental relation between history and eschata, losing its ontological space and collapsing under the authoritarian power of the state.

#### **7.4 Theological Implications of the Study**

The preceding analysis of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority can, with a high degree of plausibility, claim that scripture-versus-tradition conflict is still vital and present amongst Evangelical Christians in Russia and Ukraine. The threefold deconstruction undertaken in his thesis (universality, antiquity, and consensus) presents a different spectrum of



responses thematized and considered within a contemporary notion of Orthodox Tradition. Theoretical conclusions of the research may be applicable and generalizable to any church structure or para-Christian organization in which dogmatic statements, mutual vision, team service and spiritual empowerment of followers shape respective group norms and serve as guiding principles for religious practices or innovations.

Firstly, it assumes regarding the alleged universality principle, that the crisis of the authentic base of religious authority of Orthodox Church Tradition is a part of the much larger crisis in the post-Soviet industrialized society, which reflects very specific theological attitudes, national traits, and developments. Remaining largely a peripheral denomination with respect to the main body of Christendom, the Orthodox Church has, through the centuries, been satisfied with a very limited theology of tradition and mentality of community insiders, where only the clerics could not speak of their gifts nor of anointing, but, rather, with Church Fathers creeds and Councils formulations. The contemporary Orthodox Church is often identified with rigid ecclesiastical structures and nationalistic agenda, being the very opposite of eclectically all-embracing vision of the first century Apostolic Church. Although accepting a limited pluralism under new post-Soviet laws, Moscow Patriarchate requires a substantial imperial uniformity. Its vehicles of the tradition for Russian hierarchy in Orthodox Church do not appreciate the gifts of individuals since the culture of a respectful dialogue is not a priority.

Secondly, the descriptive analysis of the historical exploration of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority does not take a sufficient account of the legitimate antiquity of Orthodox tradition (Predanie-Paradosis concept) regarding its norm-generating and faith-keeping authority, which protects Orthodox believers from heresy and western liberalism. The Orthodox emphasis on the historical continuity is rooted today not in the eternal authority of the gospel and its teaching, but, rather, in the authoritative logic of dominance, a self-protective ethnonationalism of sacred “canonical territories” and in the narrow logic of geopolitical advance of the *Russkiy Mir* (Russian World) ideology. As a result of these inclinations, Eastern Orthodoxy confronted the neo-liberal globality and individualism, aiming to restore a traditional monopoly of the Orthodox Church Tradition as a conservative social force capable of preserving the sacred content of the Orthodox faith and practices.

Thirdly, the theoretical discourse of the consensus within Orthodox Church Tradition demonstrates that at the heart of all discussions regarding authority of tradition described in the research lies a dichotomous nature of ongoing conflicts: scripture versus tradition, structure versus liminality, office versus charisma, institutions versus pilgrim people of faith, hegemonism versus a culture of dialogue, oppression versus persuasion, etc. The presumption of truth within theological premises of Orthodox Church Tradition does not render the authoritative domain of the aforementioned tradition immune to questioning. A new dialectic of consensus requires a new paradigm shift from an oppressive to an enabling concept of authority based on a gospel foundation. If religious leaders of ancient Israel in the Old Testament exercised their spiritual authority in the name of Yahweh, Who was the ultimate source of all power, Jesus Christ, contrary to popular assumptions of his days, spoke strongly to His disciples concerning a new pattern of authority, which intended to be a mutual loving service, rather than oppressive submission: “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant” (Matthew 20:25-26 NIV). He offered his followers not a hierarchical position, but a towel: “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45 NIV).

Fourthly, an uneasy tension of the theory-praxis relationship reflects the very core of the entire theological enterprise of the thesis. The discussions presented in the dissertation involve investigations of relations of Scripture and Tradition, orthodoxy and orthopraxy, the apostolic witness and the ecclesial liturgical creativity, Christian ecumenical universalism and the particularity of Church traditions, the origin of forms and the reflexly interrelated diversity of orientation between the Orthodox Conservative Substance and the Protestant Corrective Principle. The primacy of Protestant faith-love approach asserts that a genuine Christianity is only extrinsically related to the traditional praxis typology, being essentially non-identical with it, while Eastern Orthodoxy envisions the importance of the praxis primacy in the religious life of its followers. The critical correlation of the issue in the research emphasizes that both types of religious approaches seek to sublimate the relational primacy models by developing its unique theological-apologetic constructs of theory-praxis categories and articulating a respective theory-grounded or a praxis-grounded mediation. The most pressing praxiological task for Eastern Orthodoxy is the necessity to explain the

coexistence of canon within the canon (tightly focused canonical regulations with wide-ranging ecclesial diversity in unity). Once the Orthodox canonical corpus becomes a recognized religious collection, distinctive sanctions and divine authority are invoked up to the direct claims of apostolic authorship. Such operational recognition might have served in Orthodox setting to bear a consistent testimony to the unifying scriptural centre, but the Orthodox theology instead broadened out and exalted late Byzantine intra-canon formulations in terms, that sometimes were opposite to the primitive, fundamental Christianity. Upon closer examination, the study argues that the authentic theological orthodoxy can be identified only in relation to the earliest teachings of the Church, based on gospel materials and apostolic *kerygma* (scriptural orthodoxy). The primary criterion for the authentic Orthodoxy was not a particular ecclesial tradition, but, rather, a continuity with an apostolic message in the gospel. There was no infallible Orthodox tradition co-equal to the Scripture in its authority for faith. It appears to be methodologically impossible to establish whether heresy was a later deviation from the original pure doctrines, based on the Eastern Orthodox approach. Ecclesiastical traditions undoubtedly played for early Christians an important role as a guide to the proper interpretation of Scripture, but Protestant, Orthodox, and Catholic theologians still hold to the view that it is their version of Christian Orthodoxy that should be equated with the teaching of the Early Church.

## **7.5 Methodological Implications of the Study**

The research emphasizes that the modern theology must free itself from the firm grip of an artificial methodological affirmation and a sceptical paradigm that presumes the gospel to be insufficient in every particular case or saying unless an ecclesial tradition supplements them or provides independent verification. Christian theology is not a mystical act of reasoning or mere ascension to the divine truth. A theologian must personally know the Christ of the Scriptures (Matthew 11:27; Philippians 3:10 NIV). The above-mentioned Gnostics knew the facts and stories about Jesus, but a full implication of his ministry and achievements was beyond their marginalized and nuanced understanding. In the same way, it does appear theologically incongruous that the Orthodox Church, having such an intense emphasis and a detailed teaching on the angelic hierarchy, refuses to differentiate on a practical level the hierarchical authority of Scripture and Tradition or even subdues Scripture to the authority of ecclesiastical tradition what causes a massive authority de-

emphasis and an ongoing theological crisis in their polemical confrontation with other Christian denominations.

On the other hand, the corpus of gospel evidence presented in the research convincingly indicates that the authority of apostles served as first-hand testimony and “the entirely appropriate means of access to the historical reality of Jesus” (Bauckham 2006:5). Apostolic authority existed in time and space before the church recognized and approved their writings. The authority of Scriptures as apostolic writings should not depend upon the attesting activity of the community, for, as Apostle Paul says: “but even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God’s curse!” (Galatians 1:8 NIV). Moreover, the Scriptures stood over the community, because these eye-witness testimonies are unique in terms of God’s sovereign election of apostles and irreducible by nature, providing us with insider information from the involved participants. Consequently, Scripture is prior to the Church and Tradition, being the only supreme authority for life and doctrine for the community.

A theologically valid assessment of Orthodox Church Tradition as authority should also include necessary moments of human failure and methodological limits since any theology that constitutes itself into a system can be faulty or even dangerous. There is no adequate way to compress Christianity into one superior form of tradition. Thus, the degree of Orthodox commitment to their Tradition should consider the risk involved in God’s economy of prudence. Lossky explains that “theology as sophia is connected at once to gnosis and to episteme. It reasons but seeks always to go beyond concepts” (Lossky 1978:15). From the Evangelical methodological approach, a sound epistemological quest, therefore, supposes that divine knowledge is given to us not by the natural birth within a particular ecclesial tradition, but by faith in the living experience of communion with Logos, Who manifests and reveals Himself to our participatory adherence. Only faith as a personal illumination and participation invokes our spiritual faculties of knowing, which adapts one’s thought to divine revelation, inspired by the presence in us of the Holy Spirit. Thus, a proper theology has no meaning outside of faith.

A false tradition that speculates on God starts not on a fact of revelation (scriptural knowledge) and ontological relationship with God (initiated by personal repentance and

conversion), but, rather, from an abstract idea postulated as a mythological invention or an intellectual statement. Orthodox writers of both pre- and post-Petrine periods were theologically and methodologically naïve to admit that the sum of Byzantine ecclesiastical tradition is equal to the Tradition. Tradition personified in Jesus Christ is greater than our grasp of Him in a prideful attempt to idolize one's respective past. Therefore, an Orthodox claim of Third Rome eschaton would be excessively presumptuous for any household of faith. Consequently, the fact that the New Testament canon incorporates a plurality of different theologies, doctrinal positions, and models, even contradictory ones (like the Epistle to the Romans versus the Epistle of James) must be taken seriously by Eastern Orthodoxy. Reading four different gospels as eyewitness testimony equal in their apostolic authenticity and authority differs significantly from Orthodox attempts to reconstruct and promote an ecclesial exclusivity of their traditions. None of four gospels were given an exclusive superior status in relation to others. No tradition can, therefore, assume the exclusive right of teaching in the Church. The Spirit of God is given to all, providing for each member of the Body an acute opportunity to become a witness to the truth.

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