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One Source of Revelation and Two Currents of the Revelation Transmission and Cognition: the Apological Dimension of Joseph Ratzinger's Theology

Jedno źródło Objawienia a dwa nurty przekazu
i poznania Objawienia.
Apologijny wymiar teologii Josepha Ratzingera

ABSTRACT: The adoption of the personalistic model of Revelation and the rejection of the theory of “two sources” of Revelation at Vatican Council II has not been fully adopted yet. Fundamental theologians have assimilated the content of the Dogmatic Constitution on Revelation, but Catholic apologists refer rather to the misinterpretation of the Council of Trent. They keep reconciling Scripture and Tradition without explicitly referring to the living reality of Revelation as *unus fons* from which the two currents of Revelation flow. The article refers to the legacy of Joseph Ratzinger, whose theology has significantly influenced *Dei verbum*. The statements of the Bavarian theologian are a kind of an interpretative key to the descriptions contained in the documents *Vaticanum Secundum* and *Tridentinum* of the relationship between Revelation on the one hand and Scripture and Tradition on the other. Only an in-depth “theology of Revelation” enables the search for answers to the relationship of the sources for the message and the knowledge of Revelation. The first paragraph criticises the theory of *duplex fons*, the second assesses the possibility of adopting the Catholic variant of the principle of *sola Scriptura*, and the next points out the need to take into account the difference between *ordo essendi* and *ordo cognoscendi*. The conclusion presents meta-questions important to the Catholic apologist. It transpires that it is precisely the ecumenical orientation of Ratzinger's theology that opens it up to the apology of the Catholic position because it allows us to see the real division between the views of Christians. Protestant-Catholic polemics often stems from the entanglement of modern categories, which must be transcended by reference to the history of theology seen in

a longer perspective. It is worthwhile for fundamental theologians and apologists to realise that systematic theology itself has an apologetic dimension.

KEY WORDS: Revelation versus Scripture and Tradition, Joseph Ratzinger's interpretation of *Dei verbum*, the theory of "two sources" (*duplex fons*), criticism of *sola Scriptura*, material sufficiency of Scripture, theology of Revelation, Catholic apology, fundamental theology, Catholic-Protestant polemics, *ordo essendi* and *ordo cognoscendi*

ABSTRAKT: Przyjęcie personalistycznego modelu Objawienia oraz odrzucenie teorii „dwóch źródeł” Objawienia dokonane na Soborze Watykańskim II wciąż domagają się recepcji. Teologowie fundamentalni przyswoili sobie treści Konstytucji dogmatycznej o Objawieniu Bożym, ale apologeti katolicycy odwołują się raczej do źle zinterpretowanego Soboru Trydenckiego. Wciąż próbują uzgadniać Pismo i Tradycję bez wyraźnego odwołania się do żywej rzeczywistości Objawienia jako *unus fons*, z którego wypływają dwa nurty przekazu Objawienia. W artykule odwołano się do spuścizny Josepha Ratzingera, którego teologia znacząco wpłynęła na *Dei verbum*. Wypowiedzi bawarskiego teologa stanowią swego rodzaju klucz interpretacyjny do zaprezentowanego w dokumentach *Vaticanum Secundum* oraz *Tridentinum* opisu związków między Objawieniem z jednej strony a Pismem i Tradycją z drugiej. Dopiero pogłębiona „teologia Objawienia” pozwala na poszukiwanie odpowiedzi na temat związku źródeł przekazu i poznania Objawienia. W paragrafie pierwszym przedstawiono krytykę teorii *duplex fons*, w drugim dokonano oceny możliwości przyjęcia katolickiej odmiany zasady *sola Scriptura*, a w kolejnym wskazano na konieczność wzięcia pod uwagę różnicy między *ordo essendi* a *ordo cognoscendi*. W zakończeniu zostały wyprowadzone metawnioski ważne dla katolickiego apologety. Okazuje się, że właśnie ekumeniczne zorientowanie Ratzingerowskiej teologii otwiera ją na apologię katolickiego stanowiska, pozwala bowiem dotrzeć do rzeczywistych podziałów między poglądami chrześcijan. Polemiki protestancko-katolickie wynikają często z uwikłania w nowożytne kategorie, które trzeba przekroczyć przez odwołanie do historii teologii widzianej w dłuższej perspektywie. Warto, żeby teologowie fundamentalni i apologeti zdawali sobie też sprawę z tego, że teologia systematyczna sama w sobie posiada wymiar apologetyczny.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Objawienie a Pismo i Tradycja, Josepha Ratzingera interpretacja *Dei verbum*, teoria „dwóch źródeł” (*duplex fons*), krytyka *sola Scriptura*, materialna wystarczalność Pisma Świętego, teologia Objawienia, apologia katolicka, teologia fundamentalna, polemiki katolicko-protestanckie, *ordo essendi* a *ordo cognoscendi*

Introduction

The theory of the two sources of Revelation, as Henryk Seweryniak states, “was developed for immediate apologetic needs in the era of the struggle against the Protestant *sola Scriptura* and is rejected today.”¹ The doyen of Polish fundamental theologians follows the teaching of the Second Vatican Council

¹ Cf. H. Seweryniak, *Teologia fundamentalna*, vol. 1, Warsaw 2010, p. 170.

and that of Joseph Ratzinger as he stresses that Revelation is the only source from which Scripture and Tradition, which remain in symbiosis, flow. He distinguishes between the two models: the “informative” one of Revelation and the communicative (self-giving) one of God, emphasizing that although the informative and dialogic (personal) models complement each other, it should be emphasized in the first place that Revelation means the salvific self-giving of God to people.²

Likewise, Gerald O’Collins, who likes to make orderly distinctions, highlights the difference between Tradition and Scripture and points to the chronological and logical prevalence of Revelation in relation to them.³ The fundamental theologian puts self-revelation or self-disclosure of God related to the missions of the Son (Incarnation) and the Holy Spirit (Pentecost) at the forefront, but in distinguishing the two dimensions of Revelation, he insists on the inseparability of personal and propositional perspectives.⁴ According to the Australian scholar, Tradition cannot be identified with the experience of the revealing presence of God, and Revelation with the Bible; the scriptural written witness remains separate from the reality of Revelation.⁵

² Cf. *ibidem*, pp. 149–152, 169–170; Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei verbum*, [in:] *idem, Konstytucje, dekryty, deklaracje. Tekst polski. Nowe tłumaczenie*, Poznań 2002, pp. 350–363, no. 2 and 9 (hereinafter: DV). Different models of Revelation can be reduced to three: epiphanic, instructive-theoretical (propositional) and communicative – cf. R.J. Woźniak, *Różnica i tajemnica. Objawienie jako teologiczne źródło ludzkiej sobości*, Poznań 2012, p. 183 (ALFA and OMEGA, 29). The author acknowledges that the concept of Revelation proposed in *Dei verbum* (no. 2) is the most synthetic; it combines epiphanic and propositional models and transcends them, creatively developing, deepening and filling them – cf. *ibidem*, pp. 188, 193–194.

³ Cf. G. O’Collins, *Inspiration. Towards a Christian Interpretation of Biblical Inspiration*, Oxford 2018, p. 96; *idem, Revelation. Towards a Christian Interpretation of God’s Self-revelation in Jesus Christ*, Oxford 2016, p. 144.

⁴ Cf. G. O’Collins, *Revelation...*, op. cit., pp. 3–16; *idem, Inspiration...*, op. cit., p. 89; *idem, Fundamental Theology*, New York 1981, pp. 72–73; M. Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of Revelation. The Mediation of the Gospel through Church and Scripture*, Grand Rapids 2014, p. 15; M. Skierkowski, *Kategoria doświadczenia w teologii Objawienia Geralda O’Collinsa*, [in:] *Objawienie Boże w interpretacji współczesnych teologów*, B. Kochaniewicz (ed.), Poznań 2010, p. 66.

⁵ Cf. G. O’Collins, *Revelation...*, op. cit., pp. 143–144; *idem, Inspiration...*, op. cit., p. 96; *idem, Rethinking fundamental theology. Toward a New Fundamental Theology*, Oxford 2011, pp. 213–214, 217, 222–223; M. Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine...*, op. cit., p. 17. To present O’Collins’ position I also used: S. Zatrwardnicki, *Ani teologia, ani apologia. Geralda O’Collinsa ujęcie natchnienia biblijnego*, [in:] *Nowa apologia. Czego, wobec kogo i jak bronimy?*, P. Artemiuk (ed.), Płock 2020, pp. 187–194.

Seweryniak's optimistic statement should be nuanced, though. The rejection of the theory of two sources, which was reflected in fundamental theology,⁶ already at the level of apologia or popular demonstrations of Catholic faith, is not at all obvious. Yes, it seems that in these fields there is still a predominance of thinking in terms of reconciling Scripture with Tradition without explicitly referring to the living reality of Revelation as *unus fons*. I will limit myself to two examples.

In his introduction to Catholicism, Thomas Joseph White on the one hand admits that the Bible speaks of God's Revelation, which is probably not identical to it.⁷ On the other hand, however, when he invokes three theological criteria for the interpretation of the inspired books, he states that "God speaks to the Church in the whole of revelation and throughout the whole of revelation."⁸ Here the author identifies Revelation with Scripture and the Tradition that provide access to its understanding. Following Thomas Aquinas, he maintains that Jesus did not write down his teachings so that believers would not confuse the real presence of Christ with the inspired text through which we come into contact with God. One might think that here White transcends the information model towards a personalistic one, and that he differentiates between Revelation and Scripture. Unfortunately, the other sentences raise doubts because it is difficult to read in them the conviction that Revelation is a living reality present in the Church. The Director of the Thomistic Institute sees Tradition and the Magisterium of the Church functionally as the guarantor of a true interpretation of Scripture, and, following Cardinal Newman, as protection from the "wild living intellect of men."⁹ Without Tradition, the Church loses its unity and Christianity is being broken up, and it is impossible to create a set of doctrines and practices to protect the truth of Christ revealed in Scripture and apostolic teaching.¹⁰ White lacks a clear reference to the theology of Revelation as always being greater than Scripture and Tradition, which led him to formu-

⁶ In addition to these examples, see also: G. Mansini, *Fundamental Theology*, Washington 2018, pp. 9–110. The author follows *Dei verbum* and begins with a chapter on Revelation, only to address the issues of Tradition and Scripture in the next two chapters.

⁷ Cf. T.J. White, *Światło Chrystusa. Wprowadzenie do katolicyzmu*, transl. G. Gomola, A. Gomola, Poznań 2019, p. 34.

⁸ Ibidem, p. 36.

⁹ Cf. ibidem, pp. 41–42; J.H. Newman, *Apologia pro vita sua*, transl. S. Gąsiorowski, Warsaw 2009, p. 359. Cf. Newman's: "but a book, after all, cannot make a stand against the wild living intellect of man" – J.H. Newman, C. Kingsley, *Newman's Apologia Pro Vita Sua. The Two Versions of 1864 & 1865, Preceded by Newman's and Kingsley's Pamphlets*, Oxford 1913, p. 337.

¹⁰ Cf. T.J. White, *Światło Chrystusa...*, op. cit., pp. 42–44.

late a shallow concept of the role of Scripture and Tradition and their mutual relationship. The latter appears more like an interpretation of Scripture than a space in which Revelation is carried *hic et nunc*; the gnoseological function of Tradition is thus narrowed down.

James Akin, in turn, in a text on the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, does not deal with Revelation at all; rather, he writes about the “two sources” of Revelation.¹¹ This esteemed apologist refers to the model of two sources, but admits that there are difficulties with it. Firstly, there is a great deal of overlap between the two sources (e.g. the command to baptise and celebrate the Eucharist, recognition of God in Christ), and most of the Christian teaching, before it was written, was given orally. This overlap has led some theologians – Akin here refers to Yves Congar as one of the architects of the Second Vatican Council – to accept some kind of Catholic *sola Scriptura*. This would entail the recognition of the materialistic sufficiency of Scripture, that is, the admission that all the truths necessary for salvation, in one version or another, are contained in the inspired books. The motto *Totum in scriptura, totum in traditione* would make it possible to speak of “two modes” rather than instead of the “two sources” theory.¹² However, the director of apologetics at Catholic Answers¹³ recognises that the *Tridentinum* and *Vaticanum Secundum* decrees allow us both to stick to one view and the other. The “two-mode” model may seem promising for the process of converting Protestants to Catholicism, but it has certain weaknesses: even if one considers that Scripture is materially sufficient, it is no longer formally sufficient; if the holy books contain all the truths necessary for salvation, this does not mean that all the truths of Christian theology can be derived from it. Moreover, it should be remembered that the

¹¹ Cf. J. Akin, *The Complex Relationship between Scripture and Tradition* (1.10.2005), <https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/the-complex-relationship-between-scripture-and-tradition> [access: 28.09.2020].

¹² Cf. *ibidem*. Congar’s position was certainly motivated by his opposition to the post-Tridentine theory of two sources. The theologian saw Revelation as a *single totality* concerning God and man’s proper relationship to Him, and, on this basis, he considered that Revelation must in some sense be fully present in Scripture as the message of that Revelation. He rejected the idea of an orally transmitted Tradition as a separate source of Revelation, other than Scripture, therefore, he wanted to endow Scripture with some sort of sufficiency, but without accepting the Protestant view of Revelation as exclusively contained in the Bible. More or less clearly all the truths of the faith were to be contained, according to the Council’s counselor, in the inspired books, but Scripture can only be properly interpreted in the Church – cf. J. Brotherton, *Revisiting the Sola scriptura Debate. Yves Congar and Joseph Ratzinger on Tradition*, “Pro Ecclesia” (2015), no. 1, pp. 103–104.

¹³ Cf. the organisation’s website: www.catholic.com.

totum – totum point of view is not the official position of the Magisterium, and its practical usefulness does not yet mean that it is true. Akin himself proposes to take account of the more complex relationship between Scripture and Tradition.¹⁴ It is significant, however, that throughout the text, written after all in the context of dialogue and polemics with the Protestant brothers, there is no explanation as to what Revelation itself is; rather, an informative model of Revelation as a set of truths of faith is implicitly assumed here.

If the Council's *Dei verbum* document did not sufficiently impress itself on Catholic theology and apologetics,¹⁵ it would be all the more difficult to detect its influence in the statements of those involved in the pastoral work, people clearly without such intellectual fervour. And since the issue of the bond between Scripture and Tradition will probably appear more and more often, especially in environments that focus on the Word of God (e.g. in the charismatic movement, which is necessarily ecumenically oriented), a proper Catholic understanding of the problem should be urged. In this connection, the theology of Joseph Ratzinger, whose thought significantly influenced the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, will prove worthy of attention. The legacy of Bavarian theology may constitute a kind of interpretative key to the statements of the *Magisterium Ecclesiae*, and thus provide apologia for and present the Catholic understanding of the relationship between Revelation,

¹⁴ Cf. J. Akin, *The Complex Relationship...*, op. cit.

¹⁵ In addition to the examples I have referred to, I will quote one more from the Polish tradition. Marek Piotrowski, the author of many books defending the Catholic faith and the Church, arguing with the Protestant doctrine of *sola Scriptura*, uses logical thinking and shows a contradiction of the principle 'only Scripture' with the Holy Scriptures and the statements of the Fathers of the Church – cf. M. Piotrowski, *Dlaczego ufam Kościołowi*, Szydlowiec–Kraków 2016, pp. 176–206. However, the apologist's arguments lack a clear distinction between Revelation and the means of its transmission and cognition. As a result, next to the true statements, there is a certain confusion: on the one hand, Revelation (God's Word) is created by God's People, who store it to write it down at a later stage (p. 181). The process of writing down is completed by the Apostles in authority (p. 186), so that the Bible is a record of Revelation (p. 203). On the other hand, God's Revelation is identified with what is written (scripture) and not written (speech) (p. 185). The author admits that ultimately it is Jesus Himself that is Revelation (p. 198), but a moment before that he wrote that this Revelation about Christ continues in the community of believers, and that Scripture is one of the forms by means of which Revelation endures (p. 189). The whole of Revelation would be contained in the sense of its content in Scripture and in the sense of its interpretation in Tradition; Scripture and Tradition are the sources of the content of faith (p. 193). The statement of the Council of Trent, to which we will refer later in the text, is interpreted in such a way that Scripture is to contain the whole of faith "in substance," but it is only in the light of Tradition that faith can be fully embraced (p. 177).

Scripture and Tradition.¹⁶ It was clear to the Council's counsellor that it was only by moving away from the polemics about the relationship between Tradition and Scripture towards the very fact of Revelation that it would be possible to emerge from the ecumenical impasse or at least to move the Catholic-Protestant dispute to a more important level where it would be possible to draw the right boundaries between what connects and what is different for both parties.

Polish literature – among others – deals with Ratzinger's understanding of Divine Revelation.¹⁷ Noteworthy is the text by Rafał Pokrywiński, in which there are issues of interest to us. The fundamental theologian presents the position of the Council Counsellor who criticised the working schemes proposed to the Fathers of the *Vaticanum Secundum* which narrowed the notion of Revelation and placed the sources of Revelation before its very occurrence. In Ratzinger's view, it is the speech and action of God, or His self-revealing, that must be considered *unus fons* from which the currents of Scripture and Tradition rise. A contrary approach would be equivalent to placing the cognitive order over the order of existence, which in turn would entail a risk of embracing scripturism.¹⁸ Incidentally, Pokrywiński's otherwise seminal and in-depth article unfortunately ends with a statement: "Accepting Revelation as being prior to Scripture and Tradition therefore puts in order and simplifies the relationship between these factors."¹⁹ It neither simplifies, but provides the background of truth, nor can order become the main objective. Towards the end of his text, the theological viewpoint is superseded by its more functional counterpart. The anteriority of Revelation has been placed at the service of the explication of the bond between Scripture and Tradition. That a personalistic

¹⁶ It can therefore be said that Ratzinger's thought is as important to us as Marcello Cervini's views were to Ratzinger. Since, in the final version of decree passed by the Council of Trent, various kinds of compromises made the main principles less tangible, that is why Ratzinger preferred to use the Cardinal's speeches to capture the pneumatological approach to Tradition of the significant statements of *Tridentinum* – cf. J. Ratzinger, *Wiara w Piśmie i Tradycji. Teologiczna nauka o zasadach. Pierwsza część tomu* (Opera omnia, IX/1), transl. J. Merecki, Lublin 2018, pp. 368–369 (hereinafter: JROO IX/1). Similarly, the constitution *Dei verbum* can be interpreted with regard to Ratzinger's thoughts, thanks to which the theological themes we are interested in will appear more clear.

¹⁷ In chronological order: B. Ferdek, *Objawienie w doktrynie kard. Josepha Ratzingera/Benedykta XVI*, "Studia theologiae fundamentalis" 1 (2010), pp. 170–176; S. Zatwardnicki, *Relacja Objawienia do Pisma Świętego według Josepha Ratzingera (Benedykta XVI)*, "Teologia w Polsce" 1 (2014), pp. 99–118; R. Pokrywiński, *Pojęcie Objawienia Bożego według Josepha Ratzingera*, [in:] *Teologia fundamentalna w twórczości Josepha Ratzingera*, K. Kaucha, J. Mastej (eds.), Lublin 2017, pp. 81–102.

¹⁸ Cf. R. Pokrywiński, *Pojęcie Objawienia...*, op. cit., pp. 95, 99.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 100.

turn in the understanding of Revelation was made²⁰ not for the purpose of focusing our attention on the sources of knowledge of Revelation rather than on Revelation itself. The believer must be concerned primarily with the “theology of Revelation,” and in it with the precept of *Deus semper maior!* That is why *Vaticanum Secundum* stresses that Tradition and Scripture come from the same source and are directed towards the same goal.²¹ The practical, pastoral and ecumenical answers can only emerge if one considers the primacy of Revelation as a reality that goes beyond the historical forms of witness and revelation message, and if Revelation itself is understood theologically and its personalistic nature is perceived.

The topics indicated in Pokrywiński’s article will be dealt with in this article, and we will look at all issues from the perspective of the theology of Revelation. The Catholic-Protestant controversy over the understanding of Scripture and Tradition is important in so far as it reflects the search for an adequate response to Revelation. After all, it is about responding to the action taken by God so that the purpose intended by the Creator can be achieved. Our attention will be focused on topics which are important for the Catholic apologist and which have been identified by the statements referred to in the introduction to the article. We will deal with the following issues: the criticism of the theory of two sources of cognition (par. 1), the assessment of the possibility of adopting the Catholic variant of the principle of *sola Scriptura* (par. 2) and the need to take into account the distinction between *ordo essendi* and *ordo cognoscendi* (par. 3). Finally, a summary will be made and meta conclusions will be drawn, with emphasis on those relevant to the apologist’s Catholic understanding of the relationship of Revelation to Scripture and Tradition.

Criticism of the idea of *duplex fons*

The proposals for the concept of “two sources” of Revelation, which was included in the working scheme of *De fontibus revelationis* presented to the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council, were seriously questioned during the conciliar proceedings. The main criticism was levelled at the identification of Revelation with its historical testimonies, which was rightly seen as a descent from the path of Sacred Tradition towards positivism. In the Middle Ages, it was claimed that the two streams of Scripture and Tradition derived from one

²⁰ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 96; DV 2.

²¹ Cf. DV 9.

Revelation. The Council of Trent used the term “source” only in the singular, referring to the Gospel as Christ’s Revelation anticipating and carrying on all historical forms of Tradition. Neither did the First Vatican Council did not venture to speak of plural sources.²²

The phrase “two sources” came into common use after *Tridentinum*, which, in a polemic with Martin Luther’s position, formulated the Catholic conviction that a believer derives his faith from the Church, and not only from Scripture. In response to the Protestant attack on Tradition, the Council of Trent stressed the importance of Tradition as a dimension that appears “alongside” Scripture. In opposition to the Lutheran “Scripture alone,” the Catholic faith assumed the formula of “Scripture and Tradition.” Unfortunately, the *et* tended to be understood as a mechanical conjunction of neighbouring groups of truths of faith derived from Scripture and Tradition. As a result, in post-Tridentine theology, the view of Tradition as the second material source of Revelation has gained much ground (although never a dominant position). In the 19th century this concept was reflected in a phrase about the “two sources” of Revelation.²³

²² Cf. J. Ratzinger, *O nauczaniu II Soboru Watykańskiego. Formułowanie – Przekaz – Interpretacja. Pierwsza część tomu* (Opera omnia, VII/1), transl. W. Szymona, Lublin 2016, pp. 140, 212 (hereinafter: JROO VII/1); J. Ratzinger, *O nauczaniu II Soboru Watykańskiego. Formułowanie – Przekaz – Interpretacja. Druga część tomu* (Opera omnia, VII/2), transl. E. Grzesiuk, Lublin 2016, p. 679 (hereinafter: JROO VII/2); *Breviarium fidei. Wybór doktrynalnych wypowiedzi Kościoła*, I. Bokwa (ed.), prep. by I. Bokwa et al., Poznań 2007, no. 306 and 643 (hereinafter: BF) (DH 1501, 3006). The Fathers of Trent emphasized one source (singular) of salvific truth (the Gospel), which is made available to the Church community in two ways (plural) – cf. R. Moss, *Beyond “Two Source Theory” and “Sola Scriptura.” Ecumenical Perspectives on Scripture and Tradition*, “Acta Theologica” 2 (2015), p. 73. But e.g. Pius XII used the plural – cf. Pius XII, Encyclical *Humani Generis* (1950), [in:] *Breviarium fidei. Wybór doktrynalnych wypowiedzi Kościoła*, S. Głowa, I. Bieda (eds.), Poznań 1998, pp. 45–46 (DH 3886): “Theologians should always reach for the sources of Divine Revelation (*divinae revelationis fontes*), because it is them who should prove how, whether formally and clearly, or under the cover of other statements and facts, what the living Magisterium offers to confess is contained in the Scriptures or in the Divine Tradition. And moreover, in both these sources of revealed doctrine (*doctrinae divinitus revelatae fons*) so rich treasures are hidden that it is impossible to exhaust them.”

²³ Cf. JROO VII/1, pp. 413–415; JROO IX/1, pp. 388–389. Cf. also: the exact wording of the Trento Decree on the *Acceptance of Holy Books and Traditions: hanc veritatem et disciplinam contineri in libris scriptis et sine scripto traditionibus, quae ab ipsis Christi ore ab Apostolis acceptae, aut ab ipsis Apostolis Spiritu Sancto dictante quasi per manus traditae ad nos usque pervenerunt* (DH 1501). Polish translation [in:] BF, no. 306: “this truth and the principles of conduct are found in the written books and unwritten traditions which the Apostles received from Christ himself, or they themselves, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit,

The popular phrase *duplex fons*, as Ratzinger stated, entails a narrow understanding of Revelation, which in turn determines the misunderstanding of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition:

In fact, it is not Scripture and Tradition that is the source of revelation, but revelation – God’s speech self-revealing make up *unus fons* from which both Scripture and Tradition flow. This is the proper – and self-explanatory – way of understanding Tradition, embraced by the Council of Trent. The reversal which Scripture and Tradition – that is to say, the ready and formed forms of revelation – makes the source, and revelation itself – the second most important category, probably occurred in the early stages of historicism, in which the question of sources was asked everywhere, and the Christian lists Scripture and Tradition as sources from which he draws revelation.²⁴

The historical way of thinking has made the idea of the coexistence of two realities, Scripture and Tradition, understood as two sources of propositional assertions,²⁵ a reality that has become established in modern times. Still, to describe Scripture and Tradition as sources necessarily leads to the identification of Revelation with its material principles i.e. the witness to Revelation. This, in turn, entails the risk of becoming entangled in scripturism, in “Scripture alone” identifying the inspired books with Revelation, which would become inevitable if one were to consider that Tradition does not provide additional content to Scripture.²⁶

Of course, escaping the Protestant *sola Scriptura* by showing that Tradition has content that is absent from the Scriptures was not the right way out, which the Second Vatican Council was aware of.²⁷ Ratzinger reduced the difference between Protestant and Catholic thinking to a dichotomy between concepts of breakdown and identity. In reaction to the Protestant reform, which assumed the idea of breakdown taking place supposedly along with the history of the

accepted and passed on from hand to hand until our times.” Cf. also: T. Rowland, *Catholic Theology*, London–Oxford–New York–New Delhi–Sydney 2017, p. 36.

²⁴ JROO VII/1, pp. 140–141. Cf. R. Pokrywiński, *Pojęcie Objawienia...*, op. cit., p. 95.

²⁵ Cf. JROO VII/1, p. 415.

²⁶ Cf. *ibidem*, pp. 141–142. Cf. also: *ibidem*, pp. 95–96.

²⁷ Cf. JROO VII/1, pp. 142–143. It is interesting that “resistance to the thesis that there is a Catholic *sola Scriptura* was created just among exegetes” – cf. JROO VII/2, p. 877. However, in the post-conciliar period, the thesis that Catholics are only bound by what can be proved exegetically prevailed; this view was a further flattening of Geiselman’s thesis, sufficiently difficult to defend, to which we will refer in the further part of this work – cf. JROO VII/1, pp. 548–549.

Church, the Catholic counter-reformation swung a pendulum in the other direction and attempted to prove the identity of the Church of the present with the Church of the Apostles, thereby ruling out the historical dimension of Christianity. As a result of this process, the multi-elementality of Tradition has been reduced or even distorted into the idea of a *paradosis agraphos*, that is to say, a single Tradition passed on orally next to Scripture, a Tradition that is said to have remained unchanged since apostolic time.²⁸

However, this idea of unrecorded Apostolic Traditions is neither constitutive for the understanding of Traditions nor justified by contemporary historical research.²⁹ Historical research has even shown the falseness of the idea of the supposedly existing single truths of faith from the very beginning, transmitted orally and independently of Scripture by Tradition dating back to the Twelve.³⁰ “There is not a single sentence which, on the one hand, is not in the Scriptures and, on the other hand, whose existence could be traced with some historical probability back to the age of the Apostles.” The Council’s expert, therefore, drew a pithy conclusion, so typical of the young theologian: “If this is so – and it is so – then Tradition cannot be defined as the material transmission of unwritten sentences.”³¹

There is also a theological argument. The Fathers of the Church did not understand *paradosis* as single sentences passed down apart from Scripture; rather, they understood Tradition as Scripture assimilated by the Church moved

²⁸ Cf. JROO IX/1, p. 495. If the Reformation drew its legitimacy from the idea of a breakdown, then in turn the Catholic Church felt obliged to show its identity with the Church of the Apostles. For both sides the attitude to Tradition was decisive – critical in the case of Protestants and approving among Catholics. When historical approach prevailed on one side, on the other side it was predominantly ahistorical. In the post-Tridentine concept of identity, the history of dogmas was not possible, while on the Protestant side development was understood as a breakdown. The principle of *sola Scriptura* on the negative side required the recognition that everything that appeared later than Scripture was a distortion. In turn, the view of the collapse in history entailed the need to accept the fact that authoritative Christianity should be sought outside history. Paradoxically, then, both sides affirmed an ahistorical understanding of what is Christian – cf. JROO IX/1, pp. 495–497.

²⁹ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 388.

³⁰ Cf. JROO VII/1, pp. 128, 143–145, 293–294, 415–416. Ratzinger mentions here some examples that were previously treated as arguments for a Tradition understood as a mechanical message dating back to the origins of the Church and which are considered unsustainable today: the number of seven sacraments; infant baptism; the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary; the bodily ascension of the Mother of God – cf. JROO VII/1, pp. 144–145; JROO IX/1, p. 389. Not even the canon was transmitted orally by the last Apostle – cf. JROO VII/1, p. 144; JROO IX/1, p. 387.

³¹ Cf. JROO VII/1, p. 145.

spiritually. Similarly, medieval theologians (e.g. St Bonaventure, St Thomas) did not consider Tradition as its own material principle existing alongside Scripture, which would require equating Revelation with material principles, which in turn would go counter to scholastics; in the Middle Ages, Scripture and Tradition were called *fons scientiae*, but not *fons revelationis*.³² Hence Ratzinger as a *peritus* postulated a change in the submitted scheme of *De fontibus revelationis*: “In the name of Tradition, one cannot condemn as the erroneous largest and most honourable part of Tradition.”³³

Commenting on the Council Fathers’ struggle for the Constitution on Revelation, the German theologian considered one of the most important actions to be precisely the rejection of the assertions of the *duplex fons* of Revelation. According to the Council’s expert, the immediate focus on Scripture and Tradition tightened the field of vision to the positive data but at the cost of completely ignoring Revelation itself. Conversely, it was only by moving away from Revelation as the reality of which the Scriptures speak, and therefore from Revelation as the whole of God’s speaking and acting towards man, that a suitable framework of understanding could be established, into which the message of Revelation could then be written.³⁴ The emphasis on Revelation as a single source from which Scripture and Tradition derive as its witness, and therefore the historical forms of its message, allows us, in the language of the young professor of theology, to breathe more air of faith than of historicism.³⁵ It is not Scripture and Tradition, therefore, that are the sources, but the previous Revelation is “the source from which Scripture and Tradition flow as two streams of one Revelation.”³⁶

³² Cf. *ibidem*, pp. 141, 145–146. Cf. also: A. Pidel, *Christi Opera Proficiunt. Ratzinger’s Neo-Bonaventurian Model of Social Inspiration*, “Nova et Vetera” English Edition 3 (2015), p. 694; E. de Gaál, *The Theologian Joseph Ratzinger at Vatican II. His Theological Vision and Role*, “Lateranum” 3 (2012), p. 525; R. Pokrywiński, *Pojęcie Objawienia...*, *op. cit.*, p. 100. Ratzinger considered Bonaventure and Thomas Aquinas to be the two most important theologians of the 13th century – cf. J. Ratzinger, *Rozumienie objawienia i teologia historii według Bonawentury. Rozprawa habilitacyjna i studia nad Bonawenturą* (Opera omnia, II), transl. J. Merecki, Lublin 2014, p. 620 (hereinafter: JROO II), p. 620.

³³ JROO VII/1, p. 147.

³⁴ Cf. JROO VII/2, p. 652; JROO IX/1, p. 356; J. Wicks, *Vatican II on Revelation. From Behind the Scenes*, “Theological Studies” 71 (2010), p. 642.

³⁵ JROO VII/1, p. 141.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 127. Cf. DV 9: *Sacra Traditio ergo et Sacra Scriptura arcte inter se connectuntur atque communicant. Nam ambae, ex eadem divina scaturigine promanantes, in unum quodammodo coalescunt et in eundem finem tendunt*. As one can see, the word ‘scaturigine’ is used in the Constitution to avoid a dispute between a singularistic and pluralistic understanding of the term *fons* – cf. JROO IX/1, p. 679. Cf. also: F. Martin, *Revelation*

The constitutional arrangement is silent on the anteriority of Revelation – a Revelation that is always greater than its material witness – and it is this anteriority that averted the threat of scripturism.³⁷ The primary role of Revelation over the forms of its manifestations brought Catholics and Protestants together, while the Fathers’ emphasis on the Council’s inseparable unity and the interpenetration of Scripture and Tradition revealed discrepancies. It has to be said that, despite the Ecumenical leaning towards the Second Vatican Council and the primacy of Sacred Scripture (which alone *is* the word of God) over Tradition, what is ultimately at stake is “the real difference between the two positions, on which the Church is divided into Catholic and Protestant.”³⁸

In the Catholic sense, the dogmatised truths are the Church’s new knowledge in the Holy Spirit of what already belonged to Revelation, which could only be shown by Tradition viewed as a process of spiritual assimilation and development of the mystery of Christ.³⁹ Historical observations destroyed the previous understanding of Tradition, and at the same time, on the ruins of a statically and mechanically understood Tradition, it was possible to build a new understanding of it;⁴⁰ for it turned out that:

Tradition is seen in its dynamic nature as a lively development of a given truth once, without which it is impossible to preserve its beginnings at all. We no longer understand tradition as a closed treasury of individual truths, but as a living force through which one truth is preserved and developed in the course of history. This makes its indispensability clearer than ever before.⁴¹

and Understanding Scripture. Reflections on the Teaching of Joseph Ratzinger, Pope Benedict XVI, “Nova et Vetera” English Edition 1 (2015), p. 269.

³⁷ Cf. JROO VII/1, pp. 142–143.

³⁸ JROO VII/2, p. 680.

³⁹ Cf. JROO VII/1, p. 145.

⁴⁰ According to the Council’s counsellor, for some of the Council Fathers, Tradition appeared to be “an autonomous treasury of the apostolic message, existing independently of the Scriptures.” For them, questioning this treasury amounted to rejecting Tradition, in which they saw “the spectre of heresy hovering over St Peter’s Cathedral,” or opening the door to Protestantism – cf. JROO VII/1, p. 417.

⁴¹ Ibidem, p. 294; cf. M. McCaughey, *Through the Lens of the Pure in Heart: Ratzinger’s Theological Approach and the Interpretation of Revelation*, “*Annales Theologici*” 32 (2018), p. 127; J. Brotherton, *Revisiting...*, op. cit., p. 107: „These are not truths intentionally transmitted apart from Scripture, as if secret, but they belong to the category of those hidden in the mystery of Christ, which the Spirit explicates or raises to the level of ecclesial consciousness as the bride of Christ develops and encounters the world.” Gerhard Ludwig Müller talks about Tradition as a principle of Catholic theology. The principle of Tradition seeks, in an ever-new dynamic, a connection to the beginning certified in Scripture, and also seeks

Benedict XVI spoke more than four decades later in a similar spirit to the above words from a paper delivered in 1963. In one of his general audiences, he evoked an image of Tradition as a living river connecting to the source, in which the source is always present. Tradition, when understood in the theological sense, is not:

a simple material message of what was initially given to the apostles, but the effective presence of the Lord Jesus, Crucified and Risen, who guides and accompanies in the Spirit the community he has gathered. (...) Thanks to Tradition, whose guarantee is the ministry of the apostles and their successors, the water of life that has flown out of the side of Christ and his saving Blood reach people of all times. (...) Tradition is not a message of things or words, it is not a collection of inanimate things. Tradition is a living river that connects us to the source; a living river in which the source is always present. It is a great river that leads us to the port of eternity.⁴²

Historical and exegetical research has, in turn, highlighted another issue: the dependence of Scripture on Tradition, which does not exist without it. As such, Scripture is an expression of what had previously been orally proclaimed and passed on, not in a mechanical manner of writing, but as a result of a certain spiritual process taking place within Tradition.⁴³ In the course of research it has become clear that:

the unity of the People of God as the bearer of God's only revelation – cf. G.L. Müller, *Tradycja jako zasada katolickiej teologii*, "Teologia w Polsce" 2 (2018), p. 15.

⁴² Benedict XVI, General Audience *Komunia w czasie – Tradycja* (26.04.2006), https://opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/W/WP/benedykt_xvi/audiencje/ag_26042006.html [access: 24.09.2020]. Cf. L. Feingold, *Faith Comes from What is Heard. An Introduction to Fundamental Theology*, Steubenville 2016, pp. 215–217. This metaphor is often referred to by Pope Francis – cf. e.g. Francis, Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis gaudium* on ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties, 4; idem, Video Message of His Holiness Pope Francis to Participants in an International Theological Congress Held at the Pontifical Catholic University of Argentina (1–3.09.2015), https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/messages/pont-messages/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150903_videomessaggio-teologia-buenos-aires.html [access: 24.09.2020]; idem, *Discorso alla Comunità della Pontificia Università Gregoriana e ai Consociati del Pontificio Istituto Biblico e del Pontificio Istituto Orientale* (10.04.2014), https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2014/april/documents/papa-francesco_20140410_universita-consortium-gregorianaum.html [access: 24.09.2020].

⁴³ Cf. JROO VII/1, p. 416.

(...) the oldest community did not pass on the words and deeds of the Lord as closed archival categories. Guided by the conviction that the Lord is not dead, that he is not a category belonging to the archives of the past, but that through the Holy Spirit he lives in the Church as the Risen One, the Church explains and, at the same time, develops in a new way, according to the situation, the good received. Tradition appears here not as a mechanical message, but as a dynamic process or, to put it another way, it is in Scripture itself that there is a communicative development that is justified by the Church's power of interpretation; Tradition is not just an external conditionality, but an internal principle of Scripture.⁴⁴

On the basis of the origins of the canon, Ratzinger draws the conclusion that Tradition exceeds Scripture materially. The same authority of the Church first established the *regula fidei*, a kind of canon, which then served to establish the canon of the inspired books. This means that the binding claims of the Church, formulated on the basis of the authority of the interpreter given to the Church, become an objectified Tradition and retain their meaning according to the claim of the text. Of course, this does not invalidate the importance of Scripture because there is a *relatio unilateralis* between secondary interpretation, or dogma, and Scripture. Although Scripture is interpreted from the perspective of dogma, dogma, in turn, as an objectified Tradition, a dogma included in the need to make Scripture present, demands an interpretation reaching back to the source.⁴⁵

No to the Catholic *sola Scriptura*

The second doubt of the Council Fathers against the notion of two sources concerned the idea of *partim – partim* that might be concealed in it. The mechanical division of Revelation into two “vessels” of Scripture and Tradition was linked to this particular vision of Revelation: as a set of truths and statements that can be divided into parts. Naturally, in this sense, Revelation could not be an organic unity, always present only as a whole.⁴⁶ If *Vaticanum Secundum*

⁴⁴ Ibidem, p. 416.

⁴⁵ JROO IX/1, p. 387. In his considerations on the *editio typica of the Catechism*, Ratzinger claims that a characteristic feature of the Tradition is the fact that “Tradition does not place itself before the Bible and (...) above it, but places the Bible on a lampstand (cf. Mt 5:15)” – JROO IX/2, p. 931.

⁴⁶ Cf. JROO VII/2, p. 679. Ratzinger considered the catechism of St Kanizius to be the source of the post-Tridentine *partim scriptura – partim traditio*, or two equivalent material

had opted for “two sources,” the Magisterium would have recognised one of the dubious interpretations of *Tridentinum*. This 16th-century Council deliberately refrained from clarifying the relationship between Scripture and Tradition, let alone canonise the concept of *partim – partim*, that is to say, the understanding of Tradition as an additional and independent source of revealed content in relation to Scripture; yes, the field for further discussion was left open.⁴⁷

Ratzinger classified the 19th and 20th century Marian dogmas and the attempt to reinterpret the *Decree on the Acceptance of Holy Books and Traditions* of the 16th-century Council made by Josef Rupert Geiselmann and drawing on the thought of Edmond Ortigues, as one of the two directions that correct the interpretation of Tradition as a material source. The work of the Tübingen dogmatist and at the same time the Council’s advisor, trying to overcome one-sided counter-reformation positions, influenced the debates of *Vaticanum Secundum*, and there are many polemical references⁴⁸ to Geiselmann’s theses in the Bavarian theologian’s legacy. In a series of publications and in his 1959 completed work, which was published three years later, Geiselmann interprets the Tridentine Decree in opposition to a widespread interpretation that breaks down the truths revealed to Scripture and Tradition as two sources of Revelation. According to the theologian, the *Tridentinum* Fathers deliberately gave up defining the relationship between Scripture and Tradition in order to avoid the thought that separates the truth into two sources (*partim – partim*), and this

principles. According to Ratzinger, the history of dogma and the historical approach to the meaning of Scripture have crossed out the possibility of explaining the relationship between Revelation, Scripture and Tradition using previous categories. Hence Ratzinger postulated the retreat from the modern treaty on Tradition to a time earlier than the Protestant-Catholic polemics – cf. JROO II, p. 619 (with footnote 1).

⁴⁷ Cf. JROO VII/1, pp. 127–128, 143–144.

⁴⁸ Cf. JROO IX/1, pp. 353, 389, 406, 447. The mildest criticism is presented in the review of Geiselmann’s thesis entitled *Die Heilige Schrift und die Tradition* – cf. *ibidem*, pp. 406–410. There is even a sentence, which is contradicted by Ratzinger’s other statements, that Geiselmann’s fundamental conclusion could be agreed with. The only problem would be the very formulation of the initial question, based on too much intellectualisation and materialisation of Revelation – cf. *ibidem*, p. 407. In any case, despite his critical reservations, Ratzinger appreciated the contribution of the “great theologian of Tübingen” – cf. *ibidem*, p. 487. Cf. also the following statement: “Geiselmann’s great achievement was that he breathed new life into the question of the essence of Tradition, giving it historical and factual depth, which made the discussion of Tradition the most significant theological debate of the post-war period; this can be put on a par with the debate on the teaching on mysteries of pre-war times. In this sense, Geiselmann’s research – no matter how we assess the specific issues – remains a milestone in the history of 20th century theology, and at the same time an expression of ‘open Catholicism,’ which deserves gratitude” – *ibidem*, p. 410.

lack of clear definition would in turn allow for the possibility of accepting the material sufficiency of Scripture. Different, of course, from the formal principle of Scripture (unacceptable to Catholics), the material sufficiency of Scripture would mean that Scripture transmits Revelation sufficiently, and therefore that it is possible also for Catholics to accept the materially understood principle of *sola Scriptura*.⁴⁹

Indeed, Geiselman opts for the thesis of the material completeness of the Scripture and therefore proposes a concept that is competitive with the Tridentine *partim scriptura – partim traditio*, namely: *totum in sacra scriptura – totum in traditione*. The Tübingen professor understood it precisely as an organic interpenetration of Scripture and Tradition in unity – rather than the automatic coexistence of two “vessels” of Revelation mechanically divided into Scripture and the Tradition.⁵⁰ Joshua R. Brotherton explains that Scripture in this sense would at least implicitly contain all the salvific truths of Revelation, but only through the Tradition that is the key to interpretation would all of them be seen.⁵¹ Geiselman’s position was that, as Ratzinger explains, “Tradition is nothing but the living presence of Scripture, it is not a material addition to

⁴⁹ Cf. *ibidem*, pp. 354, 389, 406. In another place, however, Ratzinger claims that Geiselman went even further in demonstrating the possibility of reconciling a Catholic principle with the Protestant *sola Scriptura* – since Catholic doctrine derives all its contents from Scripture, and therefore as a material principle is complete, the Bible could then also be considered as a formal principle – cf. JROO VII/1, p. 547.

⁵⁰ Cf. JROO VII/2, p. 679; J.R. Geiselman, *Die Heilige Schrift und die Tradition. Zu den neueren Kontroversen über das Verhältnis der Heiligen Schrift zu den nichtgeschriebenen Traditionen*, Freiburg 1962 (*Quaestiones Disputatae*, 18), p. 282. More specifically, Geiselman believed that the Scripture is sufficient in terms of the content of faith; Tradition would only have an interpretive function. In this respect, the formula *totum in sacra scriptura et iterum totum de traditione* would apply. The Scripture, on the other hand, would require a substantive supplement in matters of *mores and consuetudines* of the Church, so the principle of *partim in sacra scriptura, partim in sine scripto traditionibus* would apply in this respect – cf. JROO IX/1, p. 407. However, Cardinal Cervini from the Council of Trent saw this matter differently, according to which “that More which is the living Church in the face of the written word did not and does not simply refer to *vita instituenda* or, as he expressed it in this context, to *ceremonialia*, but to *essentialia fidei*, which only in Tradition are expressed in full. As we can see, here too, the dominant interest is not in the historicising notion of a transmission that goes back to the beginning, but rather in the idea that the fact of Tradition, which is primarily influenced by the Council’s practice of the Church, is also fundamental for *fides*, for the faith taught, and not just for living devotion, for *ceremonialia*” – *ibidem*, p. 379.

⁵¹ Cf. J. Brotherton, *Revisiting...*, op. cit., p. 104.

Scripture, but is merely a translation of Scripture into the living present of the Church. It therefore exists, like Scripture, in its entirety at all times.”⁵²

Ratzinger accurately pointed up Geiselmann’s error from both historical and factual positions. First of all, Geiselmann overestimated: the change from *partim – partim* to *et* and the lack of pressure from Trent on the existence of unwritten Apostolic Traditions; this is because the dogmatist absolutizes the issue of the material sufficiency of Scripture – which is important for 20th century theology but secondary four centuries earlier – and through this ahistoricism redirects research into the wrong track and narrows the initial problem, and even more: in the initial thesis he already sets out the basic solution to the issue, which in fact goes beyond the gist of Trent’s discussions. Secondly, because none of the Catholic dogmas can be derived from *sola Scriptura*, the postulated “scripture sufficiency” is so broadly understood that it loses its meaning. And finally, thirdly and most importantly, the focus of interest on the material principle obscures the more important question: how to construe what Scripture really means? In other words, who is the right subject and *tradent* of Scripture to interpret it? It is the relationship between Scripture and the Church that the Catholic “formal principle” speaks of. For reformers, “Scripture alone” was a formal principle, the application of which in turn affected the understanding of the principle of the material completeness of Scripture. Catholics recognised the hermeneutical key to Scripture in the faith of the Church, and the Reformation’s idea spoke of the critical independence of Scripture from the Church, which in turn made it necessary to seek the hermeneutics of Scripture outside the faith of the Church.⁵³

⁵² JROO IX/1, p. 447.

⁵³ Cf. JROO VII/1, pp. 547–548; JROO IX/1, pp. 354–355, 368, 389–390, 410; Benedict XVI, Exhortation of *Verbum Domini* (30.09.2010), Vatican City 2010, no. 29 (hereinafter: VD). Cf. also: JROO VII/2, p. 680: “Protestant *sola scriptura* is less interested in the material origins of statements on faith, and more in the judicial function of Scripture towards the Church.” Geiselmann emphasised that the Fathers of the Council of Trent rejected the first scheme which spoke about the truth of the Gospel contained partly in written books and partly in unwritten traditions. In the accepted text, the expression *partim – partim* was replaced by *et* – cf. M. Schmaus, *Wiara Kościoła*, vol. 1: *Objawienie – inicjatywa Boża oczekująca odpowiedzi człowieka: wiary*, transl. J. Zaremba, Gdańsk-Oliwa 1989, p. 148. The Fathers of Trent replaced *partim in libris scriptis, partim in sine scripto traditionibus* with the expression *in libris scriptis et sine scripto traditionibus*, but Geiselmann overestimated this change made in the final decree in relation to the initial draft – JROO IX/1, p. Brotherton is of the opinion that Geiselmann made not so much an ecumenical *interpretation* but an *interpolation* of the Decree of the Council of Trent – cf. J. Brotherton, *Revisiting...*, op. cit., pp. 671–672.

Consider this distinction, often cited by Ratzinger, between material and formal principles.⁵⁴ Until the Council of Trent, the Church was aware that the concepts of Revelation and Scripture did not coincide. Revelation, of course, is not just Scripture, it cannot be objectified in it. Scripture is the material principle of Revelation and demands interpretation. Scholastics distinguished between the material principle of Scripture and the formal principle of “revelation,” so that in their case the only material principle of faith (the material *sola Scriptura*) could be seen in Scripture without resorting to the material oral Tradition. In turn, the subsequent identification of Revelation with its material principle entailed the recognition of the material fullness of Revelation in material principles. This mistake in objectivising the notion of Revelation has been made both by Protestant biblicism and post-Tridentine theology which tried to defend the fact that Revelation cannot be reduced to Scripture by resorting to a material interpretation of Tradition. It was only when Revelation was distinguished from the material witness and factors of knowledge of Revelation that a new starting point could be made,⁵⁵ “then it became clear that revelation itself is

⁵⁴ It is worth adding that Ratzinger distinguished between the idea of the material sufficiency of Scripture and the idea of Scripture as the only material principle of Revelation; the latter option would involve the identification of Revelation with a material principle, while the former would require the recognition of a superior category of Revelation always greater than Scripture – cf. JROO VII/1, p. 147.

⁵⁵ Cf. JROO II, pp. 634–635. Here it is necessary to make a clarification on the difference between today’s concept of Revelation and the medieval understanding of “revelation:” “The pre-Thomistic scholastic did not have a word which would cover the whole content range of our today’s notion of ‘revelation,’ as we do not have any word whose sense would coincide with the sense of the then word *revelatio*” – cf. *ibidem*, p. 633. Not so much was said about “revelation,” but about “revelations,” about the unveiling of what so far has remained covered. This interpretation of *revelatio* by St Bonaventure could take three meanings: (I) to reveal the future; (II) to discover the “mystical” sense of Sacred Scripture (spiritual understanding of the inspired books); (III) to constitute an unimaginative unveiling of the Divine reality in the mystical exaltation – cf. *ibidem*, pp. 450–451. In any case the Seraphic Doctor did not call the Sacred Scripture “revelation,” because for him *revelatio* was only a definite understanding of Scripture – cf. *ibidem*, p. 455. Fisichella maintains that it had its justification in a harmony between Scripture and the life of the Church (Tradition), so deep that these realities were considered *inseparable* – cf. R. Fisichella, *Dei Verbum Audiens et Proclamans. On Scripture and Tradition as Source of the Word of God*, “Communio” 1 (2001), p. 95. In the theology of the 13th century, “revelation” referred, on the one hand, to the inexpressible act in which God communicates himself to his creatures and, on the other hand, to the act in which man accepts this divine communication and through which it becomes Revelation” – JROO IX/2, p. 831. The material *sola scriptura* could have been common to all scholastic theology, because alongside Scripture as a material principle there was also a formal principle – the interpretive scripture *auctoritas ecclesiae*

always something more than the written witness; that it is something alive that embraces and develops Scripture.”⁵⁶

In Catholic terms, the Church’s Magisterium appears to be the criterion of the Word, its guardian and guarantor of correct interpretation. Protestant understanding reverses this relationship and makes the Word the criterion of the office. The self-existing Word becomes a measure of office, existing above it as a separate reality. “Perhaps it is this reversal of the relationship between the word and the office,” Ratzinger goes on to comment, “that the difference in the concept of the Church in Catholics and reformers coincides with the difference in the concept of Tradition.” The rejected office is replaced by a different criterion for the word, in this case it is “reduction of the word to self-interpreting Scripture,” the only authentic form of the word from now on, which does not tolerate “the independent element of ‘Tradition.’”⁵⁷ For Catholics, it is Tradition that is the formal principle because the Word has been handed down to the Church and is not a separate independent reality.⁵⁸

Brotherton notes that for Ratzinger the “matter form” scheme used by the theory of material sufficiency is not the right structure to understand the complex relationship between the two components of one divine revelation in Christ.⁵⁹ The question of the possible sufficiency of Scripture is secondary or even superficial to the fundamental and deeper problem which is the relationship of the authority of the Church to the authority of Scripture. Therefore, according to the German theologian, the question of the presence of the revealed word among believers must be explored. In other words, we ought to move from the positive sources of the knowledge of Revelation, i.e. Scripture and Tradition, to Revelation itself, which is the inner source from which they

or *Romani pontificis* – cf. JROO II, p. 627 (together with note 29). Still the reformers realised that Scripture was not a Revelation itself, but its material principle. It was only the dispute between the Post-Tridentine Catholic theology and Protestant orthodoxy that erased the previous conviction. It was only in the twentieth century that it became alive in Protestant theology thanks to Karl Barth and Emil Brunner – cf. JROO IX/1, p. 356.

⁵⁶ JROO VII/1, p. 142.

⁵⁷ JROO IX/1, p. 351 (quotations and paraphrase). Cf. VD 47; DV 10; G.L. Müller, *Tradycja jako zasada...*, op. cit., pp. 14–15.

⁵⁸ Cf. JROO IX/1, p. 352. The interpretation of inspired books requires reading in harmony with the whole Scripture and the faith of the Church over the centuries. Although the Church is subordinate to Scripture and serves it, it is the Church, the faith contained in the Creed and the Tradition handed down by the Church Fathers that are always present alongside Scripture. That is why the Lutheran teaching ‘only Scripture’ should be rejected – cf. P.B. Sarto, *Mysł teologiczna Josepha Ratzingera*, “Teologia w Polsce” 2 (2013), p. 27.

⁵⁹ Cf. J. Brotherton, *Revisiting...*, op. cit., pp. 671–672.

flow. Without reaching out to Revelation as the living word of God present in the community of believers, the meaning of Scripture and Tradition cannot be understood. "The question of 'Scripture and Tradition' remains unresolved if we do not extend it to the question of 'Revelation and Tradition,' thus including the larger context to which it belongs."⁶⁰ Already this incompatibility between Revelation and Scripture as part of a larger reality proves that there can be no Catholic *sola Scriptura*, even if Scripture is to be the only material source. From a Christian point of view, only the reality of Christ occurring in Revelation can be sufficient, and not its material implications which can also exist after Scripture.⁶¹

Geiselman overlooked the fact that for the Council of Trent the relationship between Revelation and Tradition (interpreted pneumatologically) was decisive, and that the concept of Revelation was not understood as materially as it was later understood in modern times. Revelation, completed in accordance with its material principle, is still present in its living and effective reality. What happened "once" (Greek: *efapax*), it has happened "once for all" (cf. Heb 7:27; 9:12; 10:10) and therefore remains present at all times of the Church.⁶²

"The subsequent historicization and materialisation of the concept of Revelation is already evident in the debates at the Council of Trent, but is not yet a reality, although it must be said that the Council's compromises played a decisive role in its subsequent dissemination."⁶³ At the Council of the 20th century, on the other hand, this complex theological vision of *Tridentinum*, which in neo-scholastic theology has been reduced to a shallow level,⁶⁴ was reconstructed and deepened by means of a personal approach to *revelatio* and the formulation of the idea of unity and organic interpenetration of Scripture and Tradition. In this sense, in the teaching of *Vaticanum Secundum*, one can see both the departure from the erroneous beliefs which emerged in theology after the Council of Trent, and the further development of the true teaching

⁶⁰ JROO IX/1, p. 355 (quotation and preceding paraphrase).

⁶¹ Cf. *ibidem*, pp. 357, 359–360. Cf. also: L. Boeve, *Revelation, Scripture and Tradition. Lessons from Vatican II's Constitution Dei verbum for Contemporary Theology*, "International Journal of Systematic Theology" 4 (2011), pp. 416–433; B. Ferdek, *Objawienie...*, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

⁶² Cf. JROO IX/1, pp. 381–382; *Efapax*, [in:] R. Popowski, *Wielki słownik grecko-polski Nowego Testamentu. Wydanie z pełną lokalizacją greckich haseł, kluczem polsko-greckim oraz indeksem form czasownikowych*, Warsaw 1995, pp. 247–248; B. Ferdek, *Objawienie...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 174–175.

⁶³ JROO IX/1, p. 382.

⁶⁴ Cf. JROO VII/2, p. 679.

of *Tridentinum*. This, of course, is also of great importance for the cause of ecumenism.⁶⁵

Ordo essendi before *ordo cognoscendi*

Ratzinger has repeatedly stressed that at the root of the view of the two sources of Revelation lies the confusion of two orders: existence and cognition.⁶⁶ For example, in the explanatory memorandum to the proposal for changes to the constitutional working scheme he wrote about this as follows:

In the generally accepted way of talking about Scripture and Tradition as *fontes revelationis*, there is an insufficient distinction in the background between *ordo essendi* and *cognoscendi*, which may have a dangerous impact on the understanding of the underlying problem. In the *ordo essendi*, from which one must first depart, the source of revelation is not Scripture or Tradition, but vice versa: revelation is the previous source from which Scripture and Tradition flow as two streams of one Revelation, that is to say, revelation is an overarching category, a single source – as the pre-Tridentine theology and *Tridentinum* itself said.⁶⁷

The scheme, which was thoroughly criticised, began with a cognitive order. However, before we can say anything about Scripture and Tradition, we should first, according to the conciliar expert, refer to the overarching reality of Revelation, to which both categories are subordinate.⁶⁸ The reversal of this order took place in a phase of historicism asking for sources and answering in the order of knowledge: indeed, Scripture and Tradition are the source of the knowledge of Revelation for Christians. As a result of modern positivism focused on the sources of human cognition, the theological concept of the source was somehow replaced with the historical understanding of the sources.⁶⁹ However – and here lies the problem and at the same time the solution to

⁶⁵ Cf. R. Moss, *Beyond “Two Source Theory” and “Sola Scripturam,”* op. cit., p. 73.

⁶⁶ In addition to the references cited below, cf., for example, the following statements: JROO VII/1, pp. 132, 136.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 127.

⁶⁸ Cf. *ibidem*, pp. 127, 211–212. Ratzinger called it a “fatal mistake” to start a document with Scripture and Tradition without first saying something about Revelation itself – cf. *ibidem*, p. 212. By the way, these comments were taken into account, as evidenced by the structure of *Dei verbum*.

⁶⁹ Cf. JROO VII/2, p. 679.

the controversy – Scripture and Tradition are not in themselves the source of Revelation; yes, it is only Revelation that becomes the source of Scripture and Tradition.⁷⁰ “Revelation is not a reality in second place to that of Scripture and Tradition, but is the speech and action of God Himself, which anticipates all the historical expressions of that speech; it is a source that is fed by Scripture and Tradition.”⁷¹

The actual result of the reflections made so far could be: The relationship between the two categories, Scripture and Tradition, should only be understood by subordinating the two to the third category, which is, in fact, the first, that is to say, the revelation itself, which anticipates and transcends its positive witness. Scripture and Tradition are the cognitive and material principles of revelation, not revelation itself.⁷²

It is only from the perspective of a subject, such as a believer doing theology, that Scripture and Tradition are allowed to be referred to as sources that do not, however, represent the order of reality, but the access of a Christian to it.⁷³ It is only on this gnoseological level that it is possible to adopt a formulation about the duality of sources – a *peritus* explained Cardinal Frings’s stance inspired by the thought of his advisor – because it is from Scripture and Tradition that a believer learns what Revelation is.⁷⁴ The previously criticised scripturalism (Catholic *sola Scriptura*) and the escape from it in the direction of the “plus” of Tradition – are based precisely on the positivist “confusion of the order of being with the order of cognition and on the absolutisation of the perspective of the subject.”⁷⁵ Such a change could only be made at the cost of not understanding what Revelation is and not remembering that the true subject of Revelation remains Christ through his Body – the Church.⁷⁶ Conversely, accepting the premise of Revelation makes it possible to address the relationship between the sources of his knowledge. How do Scripture and Tradition relate to each

⁷⁰ Cf. JROO VII/1, pp. 140–141; VII/2, p. 679.

⁷¹ JROO VII/1, p. 141.

⁷² Ibidem, pp. 142–143. Scripture *contains* and *is* the Word of God as an inspired witness to Revelation, that is, the Word of God in Scripture appears in the form of a “witness of the witness” – cf. L. Scheffczyk, *Sacred Scripture. God’s Word and the Church’s Word*, “Communio” 1 (2001), pp. 39–40.

⁷³ Cf. JROO VII/1, p. 141; R. Pokrywiński, *Pojęcie Objawienia...*, op. cit., p. 95.

⁷⁴ Cf. JROO VII/1, p. 548.

⁷⁵ JROO VII/1, p. 142.

⁷⁶ Cf. ibidem, p. 549.

other? In his commentary on the *Dei verbum* Constitution, Ratzinger viewed the function of Tradition in the formal-gnoseological layer. Let us first quote the relevant number of the constitution:

Hence there exists a close connection and communication between sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end. For Sacred Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit, while sacred tradition takes the word of God entrusted by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and hands it on to their successors in its full purity, so that led by the light of the Spirit of truth, they may in proclaiming it preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known. Consequently it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. Therefore both sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence.⁷⁷

The fathers of the Council, Ratzinger continues, have emphasised, as part of the indication of the unity of Scripture and Tradition, that only “Scripture *is* the word of God, perpetuated by writing.” Tradition, on the other hand, is described “only in a functional way (...) – Tradition conveys but *is not* the Word of God.” In this way, the theologian is convinced that the dominance of Scripture has been clearly marked, while the task of Tradition is to preserve, explain and spread the word of God. Thus Tradition “is not productive, but ‘conservative,’ subordinate to an overriding purpose.”⁷⁸ Then in *Dei verbum* there is an addendum, formulated at the request of some of the Fathers, which again echoes the dispute over the material fullness of Scripture: the Church draws her confidence in the matters revealed not only from Scripture. This cannot be questioned in any way, “for not every Catholic is grounded in Scripture and no one will deny it.” The most important thing, also from an ecumenical point of view, is to see the function of Tradition “in gaining certainty, and therefore in the formal-gnoseological layer, and indeed it should be the proper plane on which to find the meaning of Tradition.”⁷⁹

Ratzinger is talking here about double criteria: The Magisterium is not the second authority besides Scripture, but internally it belongs to Scripture,

⁷⁷ DV 9. Cf. VD 47; T. Rowland, *Catholic Theology...*, op. cit., p. 36.

⁷⁸ JROO VII/2, p. 683.

⁷⁹ Ibidem, p. 684.

which is its measure; and it is always about Scripture read in the light of the Church's creed. The task of *viva vox* is, in turn, to safeguard the unambiguity (*perspicuitas*) of Scripture and to keep it free from human manipulation.⁸⁰ It is therefore a matter of safeguarding both the one-off event of the Incarnation, as evidenced by Scripture, and the constant activity of the Holy Spirit in the Church; Christology and pneumatology are treated here inseparably. Therefore, as Ratzinger notes, on the one hand there is a limit to the letter of Scripture as the guardian of the *sarx* of the Logos, and on the other hand there is the action of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Church as an expression of the received Revelation. Its presence in preaching presupposes that the preaching itself must be an interpretation.⁸¹ Thus, "Tradition is by its very nature an interpretation, it never exists alone, but it exists as an explication, as an interpretation 'according to Scripture.'⁸² This interpretation is made in the fullness of the authority received by the Church from Christ and in all her existence (faith, life, worship), and is not merely the result of exegesis studies which could also be achieved independently of the Church. The Church's proclamation "as a 'Tradition' must ultimately remain an interpretation 'according to the Scriptures,' she must feel bound to the Scriptures and bound by the Scriptures."⁸³

Summary and conclusions

Ratzinger criticised the concept of "two sources" because of the identification of Revelation with its historical witness (material principles). Focus on Scripture and Tradition poses the risk of narrowing the field of vision to the positive data, at the expense of overlooking the reality of Revelation. In order to avoid the error of historicism which reverses the order and makes Scripture and Tradition the source of Revelation, he referred to an earlier Tradition, which became known at the Council of Trent. It is not Scripture and Tradition that is a *duplex fons*, but the previous Revelation is *unus fons*, from which two streams of one

⁸⁰ Cf. JROO IX/1, pp. 175, 332.

⁸¹ Cf. *ibidem*, pp. 365.

⁸² *Ibidem*, pp. 365–366. Cf. M. Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine...*, op. cit., p. 164, footnote 73.

⁸³ JROO IX/1, p. 366 (quote and paraphrase). Cf. D. Farkasfalvy, *Inspiration & Interpretation. A Theological Introduction to Sacred Scripture*, Washington 2010, p. 119: "Though this is not to say that the early Church would have introduced at any point in time what became known later as the Protestant principle of 'sola scriptura,' but beginning in the second century, Scripture began to gain primacy in the Church's apologetic tools and was preponderantly used to prove the apostolic origin of a doctrinal position."

Revelation flow. *Tridentinum* can be a caesura in so far as the Council Fathers, in response to the Protestant attack on Tradition, had to articulate a belief in the Scripture and Tradition that marked the Catholic faith. This opened the door to such an interpretation of the preposition *et*, which suggested a view of Tradition as the second source of Revelation. The Council of Trent itself had not yet seen Revelation as materially as modernity does; yes, the connection between Revelation and Tradition understood pneumatologically (Revelation as a living and effective reality present in the time of the Church) remained fundamental for the Council Fathers. It was only later theology that went in the direction of materialising the concept of Revelation, with the result that Scripture and Tradition were seen as two sources of propositional assertions. It seems that referring to the theory of “two sources” today (the case of Catholic apologists) necessarily carries the risk of adopting precisely the informative model of Revelation – instead of emphasising the model of self-giving (self-communication).

It is significant that, in contrast to the principle of *sola Scriptura*, the Catholic side tried to resort to the “plus” of the Tradition supposedly orally transmitted since apostolic time (the idea of *paradosis agrafos*). In both views one could see two sides of the same coin, in which the concepts of breakdown and identity were reflected, characterising Protestant and Catholic positions respectively. The conciliar expert advised here reference to the Fathers of the Church or medieval theologians, thus reaching back to the time of undivided Christianity. If scholastics distinguished the material principle of Scripture from the formal principle of *revelatio*, then the subsequent identification of Revelation with the material principle led to a material objectification of Revelation, to which both Protestant biblicism and post-Tridentine theology were subjected. It is only by re-establishing the earlier vision that Revelation as a reality transcends Scripture in the direction of both the God who reveals himself and the man who receives Revelation⁸⁴ that a new starting point can be found in the polemics between Christians of different denominations.

The assumption of the primacy of Revelation over the forms of its manifestation is an ecumenical opportunity because it helps to put an end to an unnecessary dispute; Tradition is not an additional source of the truths of faith, “alongside” Scripture. On the other hand, looking at the primacy of Revelation allows us to trace the real source of the discrepancies between the two positions. The Catholic belief in the interpenetration of Scripture and Tradition corresponds to the vision of Revelation, which, if it is to be accepted,

⁸⁴ Cf. JROO IX/1, pp. 357, 361; B. Ferdek, *Objawienie...*, op. cit., pp. 170–176.

demands precisely Tradition understood not mechanically but dynamically. It is a process of spiritual assimilation “once” (= “once for all”) of a given mystery of Christ; it is not a tradition of a kind of treasury of individual truths of faith, but rather a living river connecting to the source, without which it is impossible to preserve the beginnings. Historical and exegetic research has shown that Scripture itself was not written mechanically but is the result of a spiritual process that is carried out in Tradition and justified by the Church’s power of interpretation.

The Bavarian theologian rejected both the *partim – partim* idea and Geiselmann’s proposed concept of *totum – totum*. The first of these was the mechanical division of Revelation into two sets of divisive truths of faith. In this sense, Revelation did not constitute a single organic whole; rather, it was reduced to propositional statements. In turn, the alternative proposed by the Tübingen dogmatist, which was intended to allow for the material sufficiency of Scripture (and, behind it, the materially understood principle of *sola Scriptura*), was also burdened with numerous imperfections. Of these, the absolutisation of this important issue in 20th century theology, which provoked a misinterpretation of the statements of the Council of Trent, seems to be significant. A clear indication appears here for apology and ecumenism: the position of the two contested Christian denominations must not be reconciled at all costs, and even more so, the always more comprehensive Catholic beliefs (here: Scripture and Tradition) must not be reduced to a necessarily selective Protestant position (“Scripture alone”).

An important division lies in the different understanding of the “formal principle” – for Protestants it is *sola Scriptura*, and for Catholics it is the faith of the Church that is the key to interpretation. Protestants make the criterion of office out of the Word, while Catholics see the guardian of the Word and the guarantor of correct interpretation in the Church’s Magisterium. Ratzinger therefore proposed to go down to a deeper level and ask about the vision of Revelation, and on that basis only ask about the relationship between Scripture and the Church (the authority of the Scriptures and the authority of the Church). The realisation that Scripture is only a part of the greater reality of Revelation makes us think that it is not possible to have a Catholic *sola Scriptura*, even if Scripture were to be the only material source of Revelation. It is in this very statement about Scripture as witness that is always something more than Revelation that a field for reflection on the meaning of Tradition as the presence of the living Word of God in the Church opens up. In Catholic terms, Tradition is a formal principle because the Word has been transmitted to the Church and is not an independent reality. The “sufficiency of Scripture”

advocated by Geiselman, to which the Catholic apologists are still trying to refer, is, in Ratzinger's view, losing its importance because it should be too broadly understood if it is to justify all Catholic dogmas. According to the principle that the best defence is attack, a Catholic apologist can reduce the debate to the question of whether something less than the reality of Christ itself can be sufficient for a Christian. The problem of materialistic explications is secondary to this fundamental issue.

An important hint for the apologist is also the Ratzinger's distinction between two orders: existence and cognition. It is precisely the failure to take into account the difference between *ordo essendi* and *ordo cognoscendi* that has given rise to the views on the "two sources" of Revelation. As it is, *fons scientiae* is something other than *fons revelationis*, so it is necessary to distinguish the theological understanding of Revelation from the human sources of cognition. Scripture and Tradition are not Revelation itself, but its cognitive and material principles. Only from the perspective of the believer reflecting on Revelation, only from the gnoseological point of view, Scripture and Tradition can be called sources; always bearing in mind that Scripture and Tradition flow from and direct towards the one source of Revelation, and the subject of that Revelation is Christ through the Church-Body. Yes, Scripture is the Word of God inspired by the Holy Spirit, and Tradition conveys but is not that Word; the Bavarian theologian here speaks of the formal-gnoseological function of Tradition as an interpretation "according to Scripture." This statement must be well understood: it is not about an exegetic interpretation of Sacred Scripture by Tradition, but about Tradition understood as, let us make no bones about it, the kingdom of the Word of God, which can only be preserved, explained and disseminated in the whole of ecclesiastical life (faith, life, worship).

To conclude: it is true that Ratzinger's concept of Revelation is relevant to ecumenism,⁸⁵ but it is precisely this ecumenical orientation of his theology that paradoxically opens it up to the apology of the Catholic position. One could even be tempted to say that only an in-depth theology practised in the spirit of ecumenical sensitivity makes it possible to discover the apological dimension because it reaches a real division between the views of Christians. This conclusion can also be extended: it is only dogmatic theology that enables fundamental theology to be practised, and systematic reflection itself also appears to have an apological dimension. In our case, everything begins with the "theology of Revelation," and the explanation of the relationship between Scripture and Tradition must always be considered precisely from the perspective of the goal

⁸⁵ Cf. B. Ferdek, *Objawienie...*, op. cit., p. 180.

of the self-giving of the Triune God. And one more thing: Protestant-Catholic polemics often result from perceptions formed by modern terms, which attitude ought to be overcome by reference to the history of theology seen in the long term (Catholicism of the Church).

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