

CATECHISM & THEOLOGY

SESSION I, CLASS 4:

Living Tradition and Interpreting the Scriptures



THE INTERRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHURCH, BIBLE & TRADITION

- The Church is like a school
- The Bible is the text book of the Church – required reading
- The Tradition is handout – cannot understand the text book with out the handout – “..the life of the Holy Spirit in the Church...as the Church’s pulsating heart, always radiating life and sustenance to the members of the body, always challenging it to dialogue with the living word of God.” (Fr. Eugen Pentiu, The Old Testament in Eastern Orthodox Tradition)_

Bible and the Tradition are both needed
Which is more important, greater?



Church Tradition is imbued with the Bible - “Scripture within Tradition” (Pentiu).
Gregory of Nyssa: “Let the inspired scripture be our arbiter and the sentence (determination) of truth will be given to those whose dogmas are found to agree with the Divine words.”

Centrality of the Bible it is the last word. We must judge our traditions to see if they are according to the Bible.

THE CHURCH IS THE LIVING COMMUNITY OF FAITH IN WHICH THE BIBLE IS PROPERLY UNDERSTOOD AND INTERPRETED

- The Church – the original context was Israel and the community of faith which was the *Church* - the “called-out” and “assembled” to follow Christ
- The Church is has been formed and informed by the Scripture (Old and New)

“Only within the experience of the Church is the New Testament truly and fully alive...The sacred history of redemption is still going on. It is now the history of the Church that is the Body of Christ. The Spirit Comforter is already abiding in the Church. (Georges Florovsky, Bible, Theology and Faith).”

“The gospel was never a disembodied, floating message that could exist apart from the Church in which it is lived and to which it leads...the gospel from the earliest of times was seen as tradition, indeed the heart of apostolic tradition... (Fr Theodore Stylianopoulos, Scripture and Tradition).”

ST. PAUL IS SAYING THAT THE SCRIPTURES ARE HANDED-OVER, TRADITIONED BY THOSE WHOM GOD REVEALED HIMSELF

¹Now I make known to you, brethren, the Gospel which I preached as good tidings to you, which also you received, and in which also you stand, ²by which also you are being saved, in what word I myself preached as good tidings to you, if you hold fast, unless you believed in vain. ³For I delivered (Traditioned — handed-over) to you in the first place what I also received (Handed-out) , that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ (1 Cor. 1:4)

¹⁵So then, brethren, be standing firm and holding fast the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or by our epistle. [2 Thess. 2:15]



TWO FACTORS TRANSITIONED THE CHURCH FROM THE ORAL PREACHING (KERYGMA) OF THE GOOD-NEWS TO THE FIRST WRITTEN GOSPELS AND EPISTLES

1. The death of the first three apostles – James, Peter and Paul in the 60s



2. The destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple, 70 C.E.

By the 2nd C., St. Ignatius records the emergence of the tri-fold standardization of its structure – deacons and priests under a bishop



THE 4th C DOCUMENT "CONSTITUTIONS OF THE APOSTLES"

The primary function of the Bishop was to interpret the Scriptures, underscoring the harmony between the Gospel, the Prophets, and the Law...after studying them. (Pentiuc)

With the rise of heresies, the Church had to appeal to verifiable episcopal succession of a continuous tradition – both the hierarchy and the laity were the guardians of authentic Apostolic Tradition.

The “people of God” (*the Laos*) are the guardians of piety. If a bishops’ teaching deviates from Church-tradition, the people have the authority to depose him. (Florivsky, Church, Bible, Tradition)

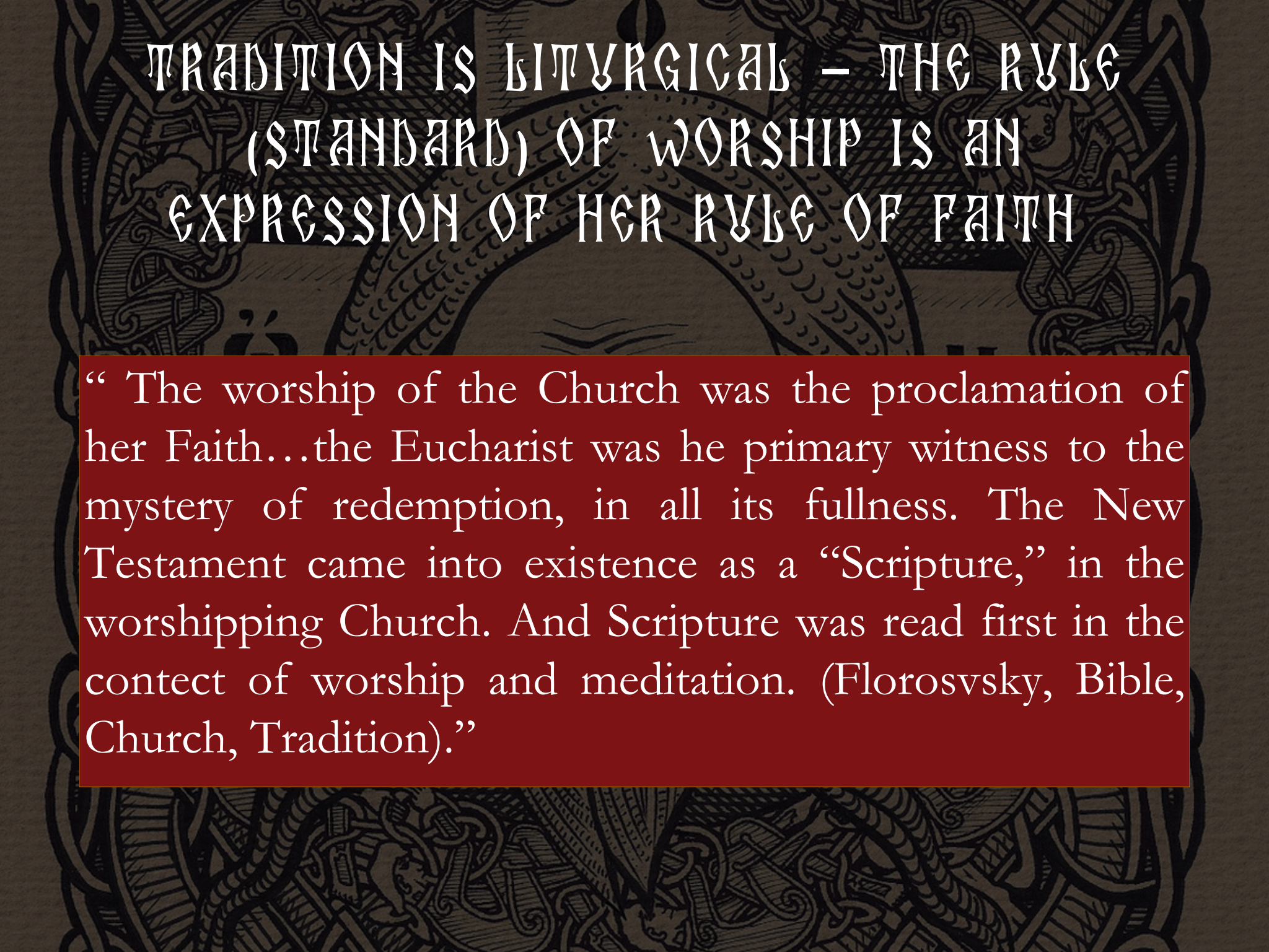
“The task of the interpreter was to disclose the word of the Spirit...and this is simply impossible apart from Apostolic Tradition, kept in the Church. (Florovsky, Church, Bible, Tradition).”

Tradition is a dynamic process still unfolding

“...for believers the Church is *God's kingdom in disguise*, and church tradition, the living experience of this *yet to be unveiled kingdom*.” (Pentiuc)

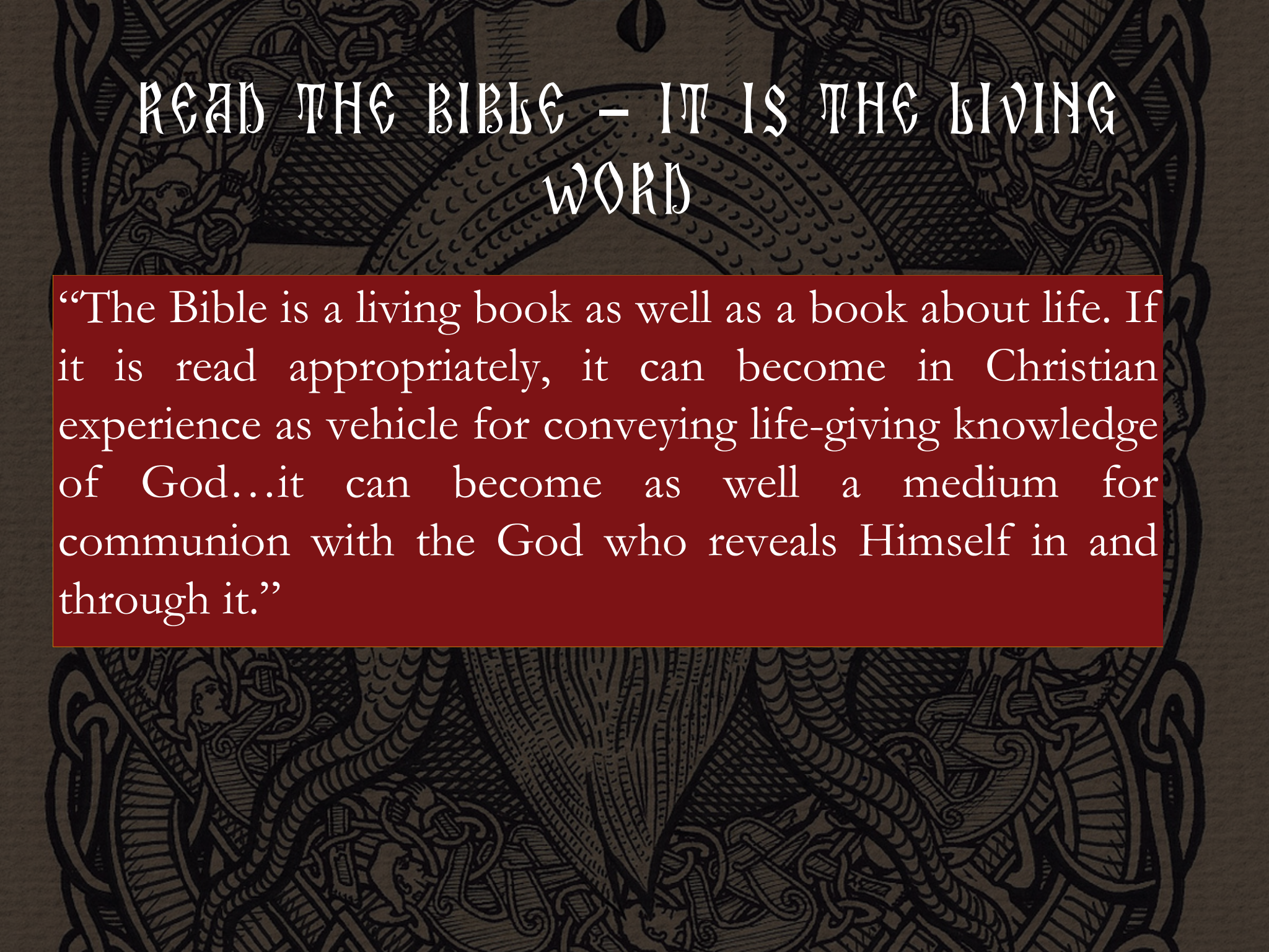
COMPONENTS OF TRADITION: ARE BOTH FORMAL AND CHARISMATIC

- Scriptures (Old and New)
- Liturgy - vestments, altar, incense, candles
- The Sacraments
- Hymnography
- Creeds & Professions of Ecumenical Councils
- Lives of the Saints
- Patristic Writings including biblical commentaries
- Lives, sayings and teachings of desert fathers, ascetics and saints
- Iconography, color, & mosaics
- Architecture
- Ascetic Practices
- Canons



TRADITION IS LITURGICAL – THE RYLE
(STANDARD) OF WORSHIP IS AN
EXPRESSION OF HER RYLE OF FAITH

“ The worship of the Church was the proclamation of her Faith...the Eucharist was the primary witness to the mystery of redemption, in all its fullness. The New Testament came into existence as a “Scripture,” in the worshipping Church. And Scripture was read first in the context of worship and meditation. (Florovsky, Bible, Church, Tradition).”



READ THE BIBLE – IT IS THE LIVING WORD

“The Bible is a living book as well as a book about life. If it is read appropriately, it can become in Christian experience as vehicle for conveying life-giving knowledge of God...it can become as well a medium for communion with the God who reveals Himself in and through it.”

THE PROTESTANT – SCRIPTURE ALONE

¹⁶Every Scripture *is* God-inspired and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which *is* in righteousness, ¹⁷in order that the man of God may be perfect, equipped for every good work. [2 Tim. 3:16,17]

Theopneustos (active) – God-inspiring, God-breathing His breath of Life

Scripture is not like the Koran – ‘dropped down from heaven,’ or ‘The King James version of the Bible is the recorded mind of God’

“This imprisons God, that is somehow encapsulates everything there is to know about God, which impossible because God is an infinite being” (Fr. Eugen Pentiu, The Old Testament in Eastern Orthodox Tradition)