

THE CONCEPT OF BIBLICAL INSPIRATION

When the President of your Society graciously asked me to read a paper on the topic of biblical inspiration, he proposed that I review and assess the significant contributions made to it in contemporary research, and that I suggest some areas in which work might profitably be done in the future. Accordingly, I shall simply devote the time at our disposal to these two points.

With regard to the first, I believe that many new insights have been provided during the last decade by the studies of Pierre Benoit,¹ Joseph Coppens,² Karl Rahner,³ and Bernhard Brinkmann;⁴ and I shall attempt to present their work in summary form. As regards further possible theological speculation, I wish to amplify a suggestion made recently by my colleague, the Reverend R. A. F. MacKenzie. "Since the theory of instrumental causality has been so usefully developed, and has done so much to clarify—up to a point—the divine-human collaboration in this mysterious and wonderful work, what is needed next is fuller investigation of the efficient and final causalities, which went to produce an OT or NT book."⁵ You will have observed that, since the days of Franzelin and Lagrange,⁶ treatises on inspiration have tended to emphasize the

¹ Paul Synave-Pierre Benoit, *La Prophétie*, Éditions de la Revue des Jeunes, Paris-Tournai-Rome, 1947. Benoit has a shorter essay on inspiration in Robert-Tricot, *Initiation Biblique*,³ Paris, 1954, 6-45; for further modifications of his theory, cf. "Note complémentaire sur l'inspiration," *Revue Biblique* 63 (1956) 416-422.

² Joseph Coppens criticized Benoit's presentation in a review of *Initiation Biblique*: cf. *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 31 (1955) 671-673; also "Chronica," *ETL* 32 (1956) 715-716. He gives a fuller account of his own views in "L'inspiration et l'inerrance bibliques," *ETL* 33 (1957) 36-57.

³ Karl Rahner, "Über die Schriftinspiration," *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 78 (1956) 127-168.

⁴ Bernhard Brinkmann, "Inspiration und Kanonizität der Heiligen Schrift in ihrem Verhältnis zur Kirche," *Scholastik* 33 (1958) 208-233.

⁵ R. A. F. MacKenzie, "Some Problems in the Field of Inspiration," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 20 (1958) 8.

⁶ J. B. Franzelin, *Tractatus de divina Traditione et Scriptura*,³ Rome, 1882; cf. G. Courtade, "J. B. Franzelin: les formules que le magistère de l'Église lui a empruntées," *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 40 (1952) 317-325. M. J. Lagrange, "L'inspiration des Livres saints," *Revue Biblique* 5 (1896)

human aspects of the Bible and the activity of the sacred authors. It is perhaps more opportune nowadays to turn our attention to God's function as efficient-exemplar Cause of the Bible and ask ourselves just why inspiration was necessary in the divine plan of God's self-revelation to men.

Christianity's traditional attitude toward its sacred books, both those received as a legacy from Israel and those produced by its own apostolic writers, has always been reverently maintained by the Catholic Church as part of the deposit of faith. It is the belief that these sacred books were written under a peculiar divine influence, so that God is rightly regarded as their Author, and in consequence, the Christian Bible is a normative record of those truths which God has deigned in His mercy to reveal to us.

All this, of course, is axiomatic in Catholic theology; and such a statement has the air of a truism. Yet, as you well know, such a simple seeming statement involves not a few difficult problems. Indeed, before we can discuss these questions fruitfully, it will help to determine more accurately three notions which this statement contains: viz., what view should be taken of the Bible itself, considered as a whole? what does the word, author, signify, particularly when applied to the divine source of this written revelation? what is meant by truth from the biblical viewpoint?

The Nature of the Bible

What then is the nature of the Bible? what approach will best reveal to us the meaning of our sacred literature? There are, broadly speaking, two attitudes which have been taken, historically, to the Scriptures: the critical method, which enjoyed such a vogue in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; and that which Dom Célestin Charlier has called the psychological method,⁷ which might also be termed the theological method.

199-220; "L'inspiration et les exigences de la critique," *ibid.* 496-518; "Une pensée de saint Thomas sur l'inspiration scripturaire," *RB* 4 (1895) 563-571; *La méthode historique*, Paris, 1903.

⁷ Dom Célestin Charlier, "Méthode historique et lecture spirituelle des Écritures," *Bible et Vie chrétienne* §18 (1957) 7-26. We shall subsequently refer to this article as "Charlier."

The critical method, practiced by rationalist liberals like Wellhausen, Gunkel, Loisy, was essentially an intellectual approach in the narrow sense. Its inventors were engrossed in comparing the Bible with other forms of literature, and, often enough, intoxicated with the heady discovery that the Scriptures were very human documents. These men belonged to an age obsessed with the search for scientific objectivity, with the making of factual inventories, with the recovery and criticism of documentary sources; and they were imbued with a crusading iconoclasm bent on destroying the old-fashioned view held by so many earnest Christians that the Bible had somehow dropped ready-made from its celestial home, a kind of divine oracle without any necessary relation to time, human culture, or history.

While it would be unjust to slight the contributions made by these scholars to biblical science, it must be admitted that they were children of an age notorious as a low point in religious thought, both philosophically and theologically.⁸ It was an age blissfully unaware of the profound differences separating the culture and genius of the Semitic peoples from the thought-forms and civilization of the Greek-formed West.⁹ It suffered most of all from the fact that, in its anxiety to acquire what it considered a detached, purely scientific view of the essentially religious, personal Semitic viewpoint, it had unconsciously adopted the basically irreligious *Weltanschauung* of ancient Greece.¹⁰

The pernicious effects of this rationalist approach to the Bible are well known: a disdainful neglect of the divine origin of the Scriptures, an ever-increasing skepticism and infidelity manifested toward the Judeo-Christian revelation, based on the denial of its

⁸ Charlier, 10-11.

⁹ "Or la Bible appartient de toute évidence à un monde dont le génie humain est profondément différent du nôtre. La méconnaissance de ce génie propre est à l'origine des fantaisies rationalistes autant que des pusillanimités apologétiques." Charlier, 12.

¹⁰ On this point, the essay of Dom Gregory Dix, "The Conflict of the Syriac and Greek Cultures," *Jew and Greek*, London, 1953, 1-18 is excellent. The perniciousness of such a radical error in the rationalist viewpoint can be most palpably felt by examining the monographs on comparative religion produced by liberal critics like Holtzmann, Beyschlag, Weiss, etc., under the impression they were writing biblical theology.

historical character. In such circumstances, it is not surprising that biblical inspiration should become confused with that "inspiration" exhibited by the world's great literary artists who had created the classics, while inerrancy, conceived in the image and likeness of nineteenth century liberalism, was categorically denied to the Bible.

In the face of such a destructive onslaught, the Catholic theologian bent every effort to devise an apologetic that could save the eternal values of the ancient Christian faith. Not ill-equipped, in many instances, with the scientific methods and erudition of his opponents, the Catholic scholar endeavored to turn these very weapons against their unbelieving inventors.¹¹ This meant, inevitably, that the Catholic critic was forced to meet his adversary on the adversary's ground; and it need surprise no one that today many of his arguments appear as outmoded as the opinions he was trying to refute. He tended to accept the excessively idealistic view of historical and scientific truth, the quite modern concept of authorship, and, more generally, the almost exclusively intellectual approach to the Bible, characteristic of his own Greek education. I mention all this merely because it forms part of the picture of the Catholic attitude to the study of biblical inspiration prior to Pius XII's *Divino Aflante Spiritu*, and not in any spirit of criticism, which would be as unfair to pioneers like Franzelin and Lagrange as it would be disrespectful to the affirmations of the Church found in encyclicals like *Providentissimus*.¹²

¹¹ *Exemplo sit* the work of M. J. Lagrange on the Gospels which is mainly apologetic in orientation. Nowhere in the scholarly introductions to these volumes is there anything like a really theological treatment of the evangelists' thought.

¹² We must not however lose sight of the fact that the theological viewpoint of some fifty years ago was necessarily conditioned by contemporary controversy and by the limited scientific knowledge of the day. I venture to suggest that it was something of the sort which Benoit was endeavoring to suggest when, after admitting Franzelin's influence on the formulae employed by the Vatican Council and by Leo XIII's *Providentissimus*, he calls the Franzelin theory "une cote mal taillée" (*Initiation Biblique*,³ 13). Coppens criticized Benoit's remarks, insinuating (he subsequently withdrew the rather unfair charge) that they were an attack on the doctrinal affirmations of the *magisterium*. In the light of all this, it is interesting to recall Coppens's remarks in a later article. "Au reste, quel mal y aurait-il à mettre en lumière le caractère encore imparfait de la notion léonine d'inspiration et inerrance? Les études bibliques ont accompli beaucoup de progrès depuis la publication

What is the theological or psychological approach to the Scriptures, the newer and more comprehensive view of the Bible's meaning? It is a method that was born, partly of a generally felt dissatisfaction with the old, purely literary Higher Criticism, partly of a growing desire to recover the religious values which Christian tradition had always found in the Bible, and partly of the widening of scientific horizons by fresh discoveries in archeology, ethnology, and psychology. Scholars began to realize the necessity of attending not merely to the literary context, immediate or remote, of the inspired books, but also to the historical, cultural, racial milieux in which the Bible had been produced. They became conscious of the singular nature of Semitic thought-patterns, dominated by an existentialist interest in living reality.¹³ Where the Greek mind was haunted by the problem of the one and the many, Semitic dialectic was fascinated by the spiritual mystery of the unity of all things. It found in the symbol, rather than the abstract concept, a natural vehicle of expression.¹⁴ The religion of the Hebrews had begun, not with a metaphysical deduction of God's existence, but with a vital, supernatural experience of the living God veiled in awful mystery upon cloud-wrapt Sinai.

This new awareness of the character of the Semitic religious genius produced in modern biblical scholarship the realization that "none of the human factors which have influenced the birth, formation and final shape of the sacred Book can be withdrawn from

de la grande et belle encyclique. De nombreux auteurs se sont appliqués à scruter mieux encore les textes scripturaires et à en tirer les leçons qui s'imposent. Les Souverains Pontifes eux-mêmes ont publié de nouveaux documents qui ne se contentent pas de répéter ce qui avait déjà été dit. Il serait absurde de prétendre que les documents les plus récents n'accusent pas un certain développement doctrinal." *art cit. ETL* 33 (1957) 39.

¹³ Charlier, 14: "La dialectique sémitique ignore le processus abstraitif de notre raison, et, si elle l'avait connu, elle s'en serait défiée. Dominée par le souci de la réalité vivante, elle se refuse à séparer la pensée de la vie."

¹⁴ For it was primarily interested in the presentation of reality and in testimony, rather than in reality's analysis and demonstrative proof. "It has been said that the purpose of scientific statement is the elimination of ambiguity, and the purpose of symbol is the inclusion of it. We write in symbol when we wish our words to present, rather than analyze or prove, their subject-matter. . . . Symbol endeavors, as it were, to *be* that of which it speaks, and imitates reality by the multiplicity of its significance." Austin Farrer, *A Rebirth of Images*, London, 1949, 19.

the productive and formative activity of the Holy Spirit."¹⁵ These words of Dom Charlier suggest that for a comprehensive understanding of divine inspiration we must consider the effects of this charism not only upon the written or oral sources, the various redactors and glossators of the sacred books, but upon the entire ambient culture in which God's activity had worked for generations as an energizing leaven. As Charlier remarks, "Inspiration is then infinitely more than the communication by God of a kind of mechanical influx which subordinates to it the literary activity of certain free instruments: it is the productive, all-embracing penetration, by the Holy Spirit's vivifying action, of the whole history and life of the people of God."¹⁶

Permit me to cite but one consequence of this new attitude which has a bearing upon the doctrine of biblical inspiration: the recently renewed interest in the spiritual sense of the Scriptures as understood and exploited by the Fathers of the Church and by the modern creation of biblical Theology.¹⁷ This viewpoint is important for a proper study of the Bible's inspiration because it rests ultimately upon what we might call an "incarnational" conception of our sacred literature. Scripture is not the mere projection of divine ideas upon human events or human formulations, providing God's word with some sort of figurative connection with time and space. The divine scriptural word is, like the Incarnation of the personal divine Word, a profoundly real entry of God into human

¹⁵ Charlier, 16.

¹⁶ Charlier, 16. If we are to evaluate properly God's authorship of the books of the Bible, we must set this divine activity into its context, God's particular providential governance of the history of the ancient Near East. Only then can we do justice to what R. A. F. MacKenzie has called "the multiplicity of inspiration," by realizing that the Bible is the product of an inspired tradition extending at times over several centuries.

¹⁷ Benoit, art. cit., *RB* 63 (1956) 421. I say the spiritual sense as understood in patristic exegesis, which recognized in the salvation history as recounted in Scripture the human expression of the divine direction of history. To put it another way: the Fathers regarded the Scriptural word as essentially related to the *Heilseignis*, of which it was the infallible interpretation. Thus "spiritual" in patristic thought is not opposed to "material": it denotes that principle which orientates the whole man and all human history to the Spirit of God. Predicated of the sense of Scripture, it no more meant a slice of the biblical meaning in contradistinction to the "literal" sense, than "spiritual" applied to man denoted a slice of human nature. Cf. Charlier, 18.

existence. "Just as the second person of the Trinity, the Word of God, became in every way like man, sin excepted, so the words of God (His revelation) expressed in human language are completely like human language, error apart. That is what John Chrysostom meant by his magnificent praise of the divine condescension found, as he repeatedly affirms, in the sacred books."¹⁸ This familiar doctrine of Pius XII is a faithful echo of the patristic teaching regarding scriptural inspiration. We shall refer to it again in a moment in discussing our next point, the concept of author as applied to the Bible.

The Concept of Author in Biblical Inspiration

One of the most elusive ideas in the treatise on biblical inspiration is the notion of author, both as applied to God and to the sacred writer. Clearly, of course, it is an analogous concept, since there is question of the collaboration of God and man.

To characterize the inspired writers, the modern doctrinal affirmations of the Church have applied the very precise, modern concept of literary authorship to them.¹⁹ The idea of authorship entertained by the ancient world comes much closer, as R. A. F. MacKenzie has stated, to the notion of patron, witness the Jewish custom of placing under the egis of Moses, David, and Solomon, the Law, the psalter, and the Wisdom literature.²⁰ Today we have perhaps a better grasp of the complexity of the process by which many of our sacred books were composed and so can solve more satisfactorily than was possible fifty years ago the questions created by modern criticism's denial of immediate literary authorship, to certain OT and NT figures, of books traditionally regarded as their work.²¹

¹⁸ *Enchiridion Biblicum*,² Rome-Naples, 1954, #559.

¹⁹ R. A. F. MacKenzie, *art cit.*, *CBQ* 20 (1958) 2, 4.

²⁰ The same holds true to a certain extent of the prophetic writings, of the Petrine and Pauline epistles, and of the Matthean Gospel, all of which have been aggregated to the inspired books by having their *auctoritas* recognized by the synagogue or the Church.

²¹ For instance, cf. the opinion of C. Spicq regarding the Pauline authenticity of Hebrews: *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, I, Paris, 1952, 169-219. "There were schools of writers, made up of disciples, in a wide sense, of great men;

As regards the divine authorship, we must re-examine the meaning of the Church's age-old assertion that "God is Author of Sacred Scripture." The expression, it appears,²² was first employed in the doctrinal battle waged by the fourth and fifth century African Church against Manichean dualism. Just as the existence of the two "authors" of the universe was denied by the councils of the period, so the one God was acknowledged as unique "author" of the new and old Covenants.²³ *Auctor* in these decrees is probably employed in its primary meaning, "producer, originator." This seems clear from the second Council of Lyons' use of *archēgos* in the Greek text in which it simply reproduces the earlier formula.²⁴ While Augustine Bea has sought to show that the term author had the literary sense in these ancient documents,²⁵ it is difficult to see that his argument is really conclusive. Karl Rahner has pointed out the danger of too facilely equating *auctor* with literary author.²⁶

Moreover, there is need of careful investigation into the precise sense in which, in many patristic writings, Scripture is said to be divinely inspired. It may well be that these texts affirm prophetic inspiration, which does not necessarily provide a basis for God's literary authorship. In any event, we have to examine the grounds for attributing such literary authorship to God. As applied to human writers, the notion involves certain stylistic individualities which bear a close relation to a man's character, temperament, background, qualities which cannot be applied to the divine author of Holy Writ. Accordingly, it is very much a question whether the insistence of theologians since Franzelin's day that God is literary

these successive generations of followers were consciously continuing the work of their respective masters, and so put their compositions under the master's name," R. A. F. MacKenzie, *art. cit.*, *CBQ* 20 (1958) 8.

²² A. Barucq, H. Cazelles, "Les Livres Inspirés," in *Introduction à la Bible*, I, Tournai, 1957, II.

²³ *Enchiridion Biblicum*, #30.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, #40.

²⁵ A. Bea, "Deus auctor sacrae scripturae. Herkunft und Bedeutung der Formel," *Angelicum* 20 (1943) 16-31.

²⁶ Rahner, *art. cit.*, *ZKT* 78 (1956) 139 n. 1.

Author of the Bible is an explanation of the dogma of inspiration, or whether this is simply a matter which was not defined.²⁷

Again, there is a very real problem connected with the assertion of the double authorship, human and divine, of Scripture. God's literary authorship in no way impairs that of the inspired writer, who cannot be reduced to the status of a secretary. In fact, God's authorship does not merely tolerate the co-operation of men: it demands it. Yet the attribution of literary authorship to God must somehow put Him in the same category as the human author. Any vague comparison seeking to describe God's activity as a kind of concursus, in which the divine causality remains transcendental, provides no basis for the kind of predication we are speaking of. We must be able to show precisely how God and man can be truly called authors of any biblical book. Nor, as Rahner remarks, can we sufficiently explain the individual literary qualities of each hagiographer by simply stating that God permits him to work "in a free and personal manner."²⁸

How then describe the divine literary authorship of the Bible? how can we justify the attribution to God of authorship of books written by men? can it be done without prejudice to the real, yet subordinate, authorship of the sacred writers?

We might attempt an answer to these questions by beginning with the notion that the Scriptures are the record of God's personal dealings with men. God's purpose in entering human history is twofold: to save men and to reveal Himself to them. This purpose was accomplished by God's giving of His Son as redeemer of men and revealer of the Father. The written record of this *Heilsgeschichte*, the Bible, is God's self-revelation.²⁹ However, it is obvious

²⁷ "Wir lassen es also auch dahingestellt, ob die seit Franzelin übliche Betonung, dass es sich um einen literarischen Verfasser handle und dieser Begriff mehr und Genaueres sage als irgendeine Urheberchaft (z.B. autoritativer Art) auch gegenüber einem Buch, nur eine Explikation des Dogmas von Gott als dem Urheber der Schrift ist, oder darüber hinaus etwas besagt, was nicht einfach als definiert gelten kann." Rahner, *ibid.*

²⁸ Rahner, *art cit.* 141 n. 5.

²⁹ One might profitably read on this theme: J. Levie, "L'Écriture sainte, parole de Dieu, parole d'homme," *La Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 78 (1956) 561-592; 706-729; G. Dejaive, "Bible, Tradition, Magistère dans la théo-

that God cannot reveal Himself to men except in human language, which is only to say that God cannot reveal Himself except in terms of man's reaction to His self-revelation. In other words, God's will to have the Bible written as He intended necessarily involves the hagiographer's personal reaction, personal testimony, to God's manifestation of Himself.³⁰

Indeed, since any author always puts something of himself into his book, I think it is safe to say that the notion of self-revelation provides the basis for the analogous concept of authorship we are seeking. Since the Bible as salvation-history is *primarily* God's self-revelation, God must be regarded as principal Author of Scripture. At the same time, and of necessity, the Bible, written by men, is an epiphany of those men's response of loving obedience and faith to God's message. It is also a self-revelation on the hagiographer's part, in which he records his personal reply in the dialogue between God and man which is *Heilsgeschichte*. For the human author is not a mere secretary; nor can he be, if God's aim is to be achieved. In consequence, the hagiographer must contribute something of his own: not merely his individual way of expressing the divine word (his *genus litterarium*), but also his own faith's response to God's message. The Bible is accordingly, *at one and the same time*, God's self-revelation and that of the inspired writer. While these two are to be distinguished, they must not be divided up materially, as if, for instance, Jesus' words in the Gospels are the divine element and the evangelist's remarks the human. The entire narrative is necessarily a divine-human word.³¹ Failure to appreciate this incarnational character of Scripture has sometimes led to a wrong emphasis upon the *ipsissima verba Christi* as employed in theological proofs. Of course, the text contains Christ's words, but it reproduces those words as already interpreted, to a greater or lesser

logie catholique," *NRT* 78 (1956) 135-151; Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Scripture as the Word of God," *Downside Review* 68 (1950) 1-20.

³⁰ Charlier, 22 puts the same idea in a different manner. "Tout événement dans l'Écriture est Parole et toute parole rapporte l'Événement. Ce que les Pères de l'Église, ce que la liturgie cherchent dans la Bible, c'est la marque tangible du fait essentiel, de l'événement fondamental de l'Histoire, l'entrée de Dieu dans le monde, sa révélation aux hommes dans l'espace et le temps."

³¹ J. de Fraine, "L'Encyclique 'Humani Generis' et les erreurs concernant la Sainte Ecriture," *Sciences Ecclésiastiques* 5 (1953) 8-10.

degree, by the evangelist. He is author no less of these logia than of the rest of his Gospel. Still these (and all the other words of Scripture) are, in the first place, God's words also, even those containing the writer's own reflections, because they constitute, in their entirety, God's chosen way of revealing Himself to men. This remains true even of those scriptural books, like the epistle to the Romans, where, it might appear, we have merely Paul's reaction to God's self-revelation. The Apostle's stated aim corrects such an impression. He writes to expose "the Good News" as "God's dynamic force effecting salvation" (Rom. 1:16).

Here it might help to employ the analogy provided by *Divino Afflante*, to which we have already referred. God is *personally* present in history through the Incarnation of the Son, who assumed a human nature without diminishing its human spontaneity or other human perfections. On the contrary, these were immeasurably enhanced by the hypostatic union. Moreover, the only way God could enter humanity personally was by assuming a human nature without becoming a human person. Similarly, God could only be Author of Scripture through the exercise of a uniquely divine prerogative, the employment of men as real authors, not secretaries. God cannot reveal Himself, as He has willed to do, without causing the sacred writer to reveal himself, giving his individual response and expression to this divine-human work which is the Bible.

The Semitic Conception of Truth

We must now recall briefly the difference which separates the Semitic concept of truth from the Greek. Greek philosophy considers truth as the perfect conformity of the mind to reality, found properly in the speculative judgment.³² Yet it was not through minds formed by Hellenistic culture (a rare exception might be made for the book of Wisdom and possibly Hebrews) but through the Semitic mentality that God gave us His revelation. Hence if

³² This being our western view of truth, it is not to be wondered at that our treatises on scriptural inspiration treat of the Bible's inerrancy as its principal (often it would seem its only) effect. Scriptural inerrancy for us means a quality which is simply and solely intellectual.

we wish to understand the charism of inspiration and God's purpose in bestowing it, we must appreciate Israel's attitude to truth.³³

To the Semite, truth is essentially something which is lived. It is a matter not of speculation but of experience, and—in its deepest sense—experience of God. Knowing is basically a personal encounter. Adam "knew his wife" by having intercourse with her—one of the most personal and intimate experiences possible for a human being. Adam knew God by encountering Him personally. In the Fourth Gospel, we are urged to "live the Truth" because it pertains to the existential order of Christian living. Conversely, faith belongs to the order of doing: in fact, it is the only thing Christ commands us "do," if we wish "to perform the works of God" (John 6:28-29).

It was to communicate their love of Truth (to the Semitic mind, loving and knowing are correlatives) that the inspired writers undertook their task. Their primary purpose was not the propagation of truths, the composition of a body of doctrines, but the attraction and conversion of men by exhortation, consolation, reprimand, and encouragement, so that they might "live the Truth." The Bible contains truth (one need hardly add, and nothing but truth) in our western, intellectual sense. But the value of the Scriptures, on the view of its Semitic authors, far surpassed any merely negative quality of inerrancy. It was the dialogue between God and man: a written dialogue, containing divine testimony to the living God, which sought primarily to involve men personally by eliciting their proper response in this dialogue, the whole-hearted self-commitment of man in his total being through faith, an engagement "person-to-person" with the God who acts to reveal Himself.

RECENT CONTRIBUTIONS TO INSPIRATION THEOLOGY

The Work of Pierre Benoit

The theological thought of Pierre Benoit on scriptural inspiration is conditioned by Thomistic principles and may be character-

³³Not without reason has Pius XII bidden the would-be interpreter "go back in spirit to those far-off centuries of the East," *EB* #558.

ized by its emphasis upon scholastic method rather than upon the historical context in which the Bible was produced.³⁴

He begins with a discussion of the instrumentality of the sacred writer, a subject to which he has made a significant contribution. He situates this instrumentality between the instrumental activity such as that of the waters of Baptism, which would exclude real authorship, and that instrumental activity proper to the soul under the influence of God's natural concursus. The sacred writer is an instrument because he does not act on his own initiative, nor does he receive complete knowledge of the supernatural message he expresses.³⁵ Yet his individuality is not suppressed: he is moved to compose his book "in a free and personal manner."³⁶

There are three main points in Benoit's presentation of the nature of inspiration: (1) his distinction between prophetic and scriptural inspiration; (2) the varying effects of the charism upon the speculative and practical judgment of the human author; (3) the consequently analogous nature of scriptural inspiration.

Following St. Thomas' treatment of prophecy, we must distinguish between revelation, in which God gives both the means of representation (sensations, phantasms, ideas) and also the "light" to make a true judgment; and scriptural inspiration, where only the "light" is God-given, the inspired writer employing his own ideas and phantasms. However, to avoid the difficulties of Franzelin's system,³⁷ we must again distinguish between the divine

³⁴ Benoit's first contribution to the subject took the form of a monograph on the Thomistic doctrine concerning prophecy and scriptural inspiration which was appended to his re-editing of the late Paul Synave's commentary on the questions in the Summa which treat of prophecy. We might add that Benoit's work deserves to rank high among the classical treatises on inspiration.

³⁵ He remains, says Benoit, dependent like the pupil whose statements rest, consciously or unconsciously, upon the superior knowledge of the teacher.

³⁶ Karl Rahner criticized this description of the writer's instrumental activity, remarking that Benoit has not made it clear just why inspiration does not reduce the author to the role of secretary: *art. cit.* ZKT 78 (1956) 141 n. 5.

³⁷ Of Franzelin's theory, Benoit remarks: "Il représentait en somme une sorte de compromis entre les conceptions anciennes et les nouvelles: la "dic-tée" était maintenue pour les "idées," mais abandonnée pour les mots." *Ini-tiation Biblique*,³ 13.

effect on the speculative and that on the practical judgment. The illumination of the speculative judgment which provides divine certitude is prophetic inspiration. On the other hand, scriptural inspiration which affects the practical judgment is primarily an impulse of the will. It directs the practical reason of the writer to carry out his purpose of writing a book. Normally, both practical and speculative intellects are inspired in varying degrees, according as there is question of teaching truth. This is the first illustration of the analogous nature of the concept of inspiration. It permits Benoit to assert that while the whole Bible is inspired in every part, there can be question of the "negative privilege" of inerrancy only when there is some teaching.³⁸

The analogous nature of the concept of inspiration may be further illustrated by the way it extends proportionally to all the faculties which come into play in composing a book, as well as to the entire contents of Scripture, to all the authors and redactors who produced any given book, and to all the real senses of Scripture.³⁹

Biblical inerrancy is not the final cause of inspiration, nor its sole consequence, since God did not have the Bible written merely to teach doctrine but for the spiritual guidance of its readers. How explain the so-called "errors" in the Bible? In the past, failure to distinguish inspiration clearly from revelation led to unsatisfactory solutions like the restriction of inspiration to matters of faith and morals, an exaggerated appeal to "implicit citations," or to the theory of "historical appearances." To define the limits of biblical inerrancy, formal instead of material criteria must be used. These come down to three questions: what attitude does the author adopt toward his subject? what degree of affirmation does he employ in speaking of it? how far does he demand acceptance of his views?

Only at the end of his study does Benoit refer to the study of *genera litteraria* as a solution for the problem of inerrancy. Quite

³⁸ Benoit, *art cit.*, *RB* 63 (1956) 420 n. 2; also *Initiation Biblique*,³ 39.

³⁹ We might add that for Benoit inspiration extends analogously to certain versions of the Bible, specifically to the Septuagint: cf. "La Septante est-elle inspirée?" in *Vom Wort des Lebens. Festschrift für Max Meinertz*. . . . Münster, 1951, 41-49; also, P. Auvray, "Comment se pose le problème de l'inspiration de la Septante?" *RB* 59 (1952) 321-336.

frankly, one might wish he had begun with this method adopted officially by the *magisterium* which enables us to maintain the absolutely fundamental principle that the Bible contains no error. Pedagogically speaking, it has always seemed to me that this point of departure produces upon the inquirer a much healthier psychological effect.

The Contribution of Joseph Coppens

In reviewing Benoit's exposition in *Initiation Biblique*, Joseph Coppens, the celebrated Louvain scholar, criticized several points, of which three have relevance here: (1) the Bible can contain false "affirmations," provided they are not "taught";⁴⁰ (2) the "teaching" of the sacred writers is restricted to "objectively religious and supernatural truths" and to natural and profane truths which the author considers "in their religious and supernatural significance"; (3) the only kind of error excluded by inspiration is that which would compromise the objectively religious and supernatural truths of its teaching.⁴¹

In a subsequent article, Coppens takes issue with the three principles which we pointed out earlier as fundamental to Benoit's view of inspiration: the theory of the two-fold inspiration of the Bible (viz. the distinction between scriptural and prophetic inspiration), the distinction between judgments as speculative and practical, and the rejection of material criteria in ascertaining the author's meaning.⁴² He questions whether Benoit's subdividing of inspiration into purely scriptural and prophetic is really useful or founded in reality. He prefers to restrict prophetic inspiration to passages where there is also question of some revelation.⁴³ As regards Benoit's categories of judgment, he finds the terms "specu-

⁴⁰ Benoit subsequently adopted the term "énoncé": cf. *RB* 63 (1956) 419 n. 1.

⁴¹ Coppens (*ETL* 31 [1955] 673) believes Benoit to have come close to Newman's system, although he admits that *Divino Afflante* had anticipated Benoit's restriction of the "domain guaranteed by inerrancy," and he admits the real differences between Benoit's and Newman's positions. Coppens objects to the expression "objectively religious and supernatural truths" as equivocal.

⁴² Coppens, *art. cit.*, *ETL* 33 (1957) 36-57.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 44-45.

lative" and "practical" vague and inadequate: it is not evident that practical judgments never include a speculative aspect. Terminologically, Coppens would prefer to call them judgments of *apprêt* and *arrêt*: the first connoting an approximative, provisory judgment; the second, a definitive affirmation which the writer intends to teach, engaging his (and God's) authority, and demanding the reader's assent.⁴⁴ Finally, while Coppens admits that material criteria alone are insufficient for judging the author's mind, he insists they are necessary because they include "the classical means of evaluating the doctrinal signification of a scripture text."⁴⁵

The Thought of Karl Rahner

With the brilliant essay of Karl Rahner, a new element is introduced into the recent discussion of the nature of biblical inspiration: the historical process in which the divine influence actually operated.⁴⁶

Rahner's thesis may be expressed as follows. The formal, pre-defining act of the divine Will by which God founded the Church of the apostolic age (the *Urkirche*) includes the inspiring of Scripture as one of the constitutive elements of the process by which the Church was divinely instituted. The Scriptures were not merely occasioned by the foundation of the *Urkirche*, nor were they a result of it. God's authorship of Scripture through inspiration was an essential moment in the production of the *Urkirche* and derives its peculiar character from the divine founding of the Church. Thus, scriptural inspiration is "simply God's authorship of the Church insofar as this has a relation to Scripture as a constitutive element of the *Urkirche* itself."⁴⁷

How does Rahner conceive God's founding of the Church? by a will-act which is absolute and which is eschatological. It is abso-

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 45-46.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 44. I might add that Coppens' summary of points on inspiration which he feels are more or less settled today is well worth a little study: *ibid.*, 52-55.

⁴⁶ Cf. also Rahner's essay, "Zur Frage der Dogmenentwicklung," in *Schriften zur Theologie* 1, Einsiedeln-Zürich-Cologne, 1954, 49-90.

⁴⁷ Rahner, *art. cit.*, *ZKT* 78 (1956) 158.

lute because included in the decree of the Incarnation, prior to any decision of human liberty. It is eschatological because, in contrast with the election of Israel, it constituted the definitive *Heilsveranstaltung* in Christ and the Church, viz. the definitive presence of divine grace in the world as the eschatological event of God's mercy, the consummation of history.⁴⁸

What does Rahner mean by the *Urkirche* and how does he understand its function in the salvation history? It might be called the Church-*in-fieri* during the apostolic age, which was directed by God in such a manner as to determine the character of the Church as an institution which was historically perceptible and destined to be indefectible. Involved in this work of foundation was not merely Christ alone but also the group of disciples he had gathered during his public life, who later enjoyed the absolutely unique experience of Pentecost. God's relationship to this *Urkirche* was a very special one: only through this first generation does he have a relation to succeeding generations of Christians. For revelation closed with the death of the last apostle, and Peter and the apostolic college possessed, in addition to the office handed on to their successors, an untransferable function in the Church.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ God wills the entire *Heilsgeschichte* in a more absolute way than he wills profane human history, because it is, as Rahner (*art. cit.* 151) says, "God's own history." God is thus Author of the Church in a more intimate way than of other things of which he is transcendental cause. This historical divine activity which we call *Heilsgeschichte* reaches its climax in Christ and the Church. Before Christ, God's dialogue with men had not received its definitive pattern. Whether it would issue in a judgment or in grace was not yet finally determined: the objective realization of the divine activity bore the possibility of being voided. The divine imperative of the positive Mosaic code contained from the beginning the potency to be abolished. It is only the OT's character as prehistory of Christ and the Church which remains as permanent.

⁴⁹ I have discussed this point more fully elsewhere. "This creation of what had been merely a group of Jesus' loyal adherents into the Church of the NT was the immediate result of their "baptism with a Holy Spirit." Since this unique experience, which could never be repeated in the lives of any other men, had constituted these disciples as the Church, they had no need of receiving the Christian sacrament of baptism. Yet this same consciousness of the unique character of their own experience led them, according to the evidence of the NT (Acts 2:41), to impart Christian baptism to those who wished to be added "to the number of the saved" (Acts 2:47). "The New Testament Doctrine of Baptism," *Theological Studies* 18 (1957) 207-208.

But the founding of the Church took the form of an evolutionary process extended in time.⁵⁰ There were events in her coming-to-be which were not destined to specify the Church's complete status, viz. Temple worship and certain judaizing practices. Hence the eschatological character of the Church endowed her with a clear self-consciousness of her own divinely intended nature and gave her the power to prune away any pseudo-Christian phenomena attending her emergence from the matrix of Judaism.

How does Rahner justify his view that the writing of Scripture under divine inspiration formed a constitutive element of the Church's founding? Granted that by his divine direction of the historical process through which the *Urkirche* evolved into the Church, God decreed to found the Church, then the *Urkirche* had necessarily to contain certain essential elements (the *depositum fidei*, the primacy, apostolic succession, the sacraments). Now the formation of (at least) the NT belongs to these constitutive elements because the Scriptures are the Church's book. Only she can recognize their inspired character or interpret them definitively. If the Scriptures are the word of God, they are just as fundamentally the Church's self-expression of her faith.⁵¹ Like the apostolic preaching, the writing of the NT formed part of the initial phase of the Church's existence which was to remain normative throughout her subsequent history. It was because the *Urkirche* was aware of the necessity of preserving a record of her faith, her traditions, her very development, that she confided these things to writing.⁵²

⁵⁰ Cf. "Kingdom to Church: the Structural Development of Apostolic Christianity in the New Testament," *Theological Studies* 16 (1955) 1-29.

⁵¹ To deny this would be to deny any real authorship to the NT hagiographers and reduce them to mere mouthpieces of a heavenly message. It would also be to deny an essential characteristic of the books of the NT: they are a manifestation of the faith of the writers and not only a manifestation of the divine revelation in Jesus Christ.

⁵² Rahner, *art. cit.* 152: "Die Schriften des Neuen Bundes entstehen als Lebensvorgänge der Kirche: sie sind Niederschläge dessen, was in ihr und durch sie als ihr Glaube überliefert und gepredigt wurde; es sind Schreiben, die als Äusserungen des kirchlichen Lebens, als Briefe, Ermahnungen, Predigten usw. entstehen . . . *Indem* die Kirche ihre Paradosis, ihren Glauben und ihren Selbstvollzug schriftlich konkretisiert, also Schrift in sich bildet, wendet sie

This remarkable theological synthesis provides Rahner with a satisfactory explanation of the divine-human authorship of Scripture. God is Author of Scripture because He willed its composition as an essential part of the *Heilsgeschichte* through which He revealed Himself by means of a supernatural historical *Heilsgemeinde*, which thus objectifies itself in the Book. God is principal Author, since this historical process exhibits within our world effects wrought by God alone. However, since God willed that the Church record in writing her awareness of her true nature and mission, the apostolic writers who evince this Christian faith are also real, yet subordinate authors. Moreover, just as the divine activity, which presided over the developments by which He formed the *Urkirche* into the Church, necessarily came to a conclusion once the Church was fully constituted, so too the history of God's authorship of Scripture *eo ipso* reached a conclusion as one of the events of this *Heilsgeschichte*.⁵³

Rahner is also able to explain how the Church recognized the inspired character of Scripture.⁵⁴ The Church's long hesitation about the canonicity of certain NT books makes it historically improbable that any revelation of the NT (or OT) canon was expressly given through any of the apostles. So does the fact that the *Epistle of Barnabas* and *Pastor Hermas* were once regarded as canonical. We must, says Rahner, distinguish an implicit revelation of a book's inspiration and canonicity (which necessarily occurred before the death of the last apostle) and the expressly conscious, reflexive advertence to these qualities. He shows how the implicit awareness of the inspired character of his writings was present to the sacred author himself. Insofar as the NT authors were aware that they formed part of the concrete life of the Church-in-fieri expressing herself through Scripture (a knowledge which is supernatural), these writers can be said to have been

sich als die massgebende Urkirche an ihre eigene Zukunft, und umgekehrt: Indem sie sich als das massgebende Gesetz, nach dem alle Zukunft der Kirche angetreten ist, für diese Zukunft konstituiert, bildet sie Schrift."

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 161 n. 28.

⁵⁴ Most theologians are ready to admit, with Bea, that "how and to whom this first revelation was made, we simply do not know." Cf. Rahner, *ibid.*, 163 n. 32.

conscious of their inspiration without perhaps reflecting upon it.

This magnificent contribution by one of the most original thinkers in the Church today constitutes a landmark in the study of biblical inspiration. I have found only one difficulty with it: no room appears to have been left for the possibility of the composition of an inspired book after the death of the last apostle. Since Rahner demands a revelation to the Church of the NT canon, a revelation that would of necessity have been given before the death of the apostles, it is hard to see, in his theory, how the Catholic critic could avoid an aprioristic rejection of certain fairly cogent arguments for dating 2 Peter in the second century. We shall find a rather convincing solution to this problem in the very recent article of Bernhard Brinkmann.⁵⁵

Further contributions by Bernhard Brinkmann

This German theologian of the Jesuit faculty of St. Georgen in Frankfurt asks two pertinent questions: (1) how did the Church recognize the inspired character of the books of Scripture? (2) why does the canon of Scripture contain only a certain number of books when, as Rahner for instance admits, there were other inspired writings?

He answers the first question by giving the common theological opinion that, since inspiration is a supernatural event, it can only be known through revelation. He holds however that this fact is revealed by way of conclusion, not explicitly.⁵⁶ He rejects moreover a view (held also by Rahner) that some kind of revelation is necessary for the inclusion of inspired books in the scriptural canon.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Brinkmann, *art. cit.*, *Scholastik* 33 (1958) 208-233. It might be useful to the reader to look up the 12 points in the *Zusammenfassung* at the end of this essay: they are excellent.

⁵⁶ Franzelin, Pesch, Bea, Tromp, Benoit insist on an explicit revelation for inspiration and canonicity to be known, while Lagrange, Dewailly and others hold this twofold fact can be (and was) revealed by way of a theological conclusion.

⁵⁷ Brinkmann, *art. cit.*, 209: "K. Rahner, S.J., spricht deshalb von dem Dogma des Umfangs des Schriftkanons, dem einzigen Dogma, das seines Wis-

Brinkmann's reasons for his views are based on the silence of the Vatican Council regarding the criterion of inspiration, and on the belief found in both Jewish and Christian tradition that the deciding factor is the prophetic origin of the sacred books. The NT books were believed to contain the Christian rule of faith by the early Church because they had originated with the apostles, who, like the OT writers, were prophets, instruments of God.⁵⁸ Accordingly, everything the apostles wrote, like everything they preached, was considered part of the *regula fidei*. The selection of certain of these inspired writings to form the canon of Scripture was left to the Church's choice, a choice which is positive but not exclusive.

One important consequence of this view is Brinkmann's assertion that a book could be written by some associate or successor of an apostle in the second century and be accepted as canonical, provided it faithfully recorded apostolic revelation.⁵⁹

Brinkmann's most important contribution, in my opinion, is his thesis that the canon of Scripture is the result of the Church's infallible choice. He rightly refuses to postulate a special revelation, of which there is no trace anywhere and which is excluded by the history of the canon.⁶⁰

AREAS OF FURTHER THEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

Since theology has made such advances in the understanding of biblical inspiration, we may well ask whether there is room for

sens bezüglich der Bücher des NT nur in der mündlichen Überlieferung enthalten ist."

⁵⁸ Christ's teaching on the apostolic office, and more especially the Pentecostal experience, made it clear that, whether they spoke or wrote, the apostles in the exercise of their divinely conferred mission were governed by the Holy Spirit.

⁵⁹ Again, it is, says Brinkmann, theoretically possible that the Church could still accept as canonical some apostolic book lost for centuries and recovered, if it could be shown to be certainly authentic.

⁶⁰ How otherwise explain the Church's long hesitating in accepting Hebrews into the Canon, or the fact of her non-acceptance of Paul's earlier letter to Corinth (1 Cor. 5:9), or her final rejection (after a certain acceptance) of First Clement, Barnabas, Pastor Hermas?

further development. I should like to indicate some questions which still invite exploitation.

In the first place, as I remarked in the beginning, the theologian might profitably re-investigate the final cause of scriptural inspiration. Why did God inspire the sacred writers? why is inspiration necessary to produce a book God willed to author through the medium of men? This question can be answered satisfactorily only by adopting a more religious view of the Bible than that taken by the old liberal critics. Let me illustrate from the history of Gospel criticism.

To defend the historical credibility of the Gospels, Catholic apologetics devised a system which rightly denounced the suggestion that the accounts written by the evangelists were the mere product of the faith (or imagination) of the first disciples. There was however a tendency to deny that any theological interpretation had been put upon the facts narrated and to maintain that the logia attributed to Jesus were the *ipsissima verba Christi*.⁶¹ In short, a valiant effort was made to make the Gospel stories conform to the canons of the nineteenth century's conception of history.

Today, considerable work has been done upon the notion of religious history. It is now realized that there is such a thing as metahistory, which does not suffer the yardstick of secular history to be applied to it. We admit more readily that there is religious interpretation (and necessarily so) in the sacred history of Jesus' life and death, and that it is insufficient to treat the resurrection like any other historical fact.⁶²

This more profound view of scriptural historical narration can provide a valuable clue to the purpose of the Bible's inspiration. If it were merely a question of profane history, the accuracy of the authors' statements could be checked by any valid historical method. If however the sacred writers are endeavoring to describe the irruption of the divine into human history through the Incar-

⁶¹ How often do the apologetics manuals not insist that the Synoptic accounts especially are simple, unvarnished accounts by eyewitnesses of Jesus' life and death?

⁶² On the character of Jesus' resurrection, cf. "Verrijzenis van Jesus Christus" by W. Grossouw in *Bijbels Woordenboek sub voce*, col. 1777, 2nd ed., Roermond en Maaseik, 1954-57.

nation of God's Son, we find a new necessity for inspiration: to ensure the validity of that theological interpretation essential to the type of religious history contained in the Bible. This question of the relation of inspiration to symbolic history would reward the attention of the theologian.

We also need a theological investigation of God's total purpose in inspiring the sacred books. We have seen that this divine aim is not only doctrinal. Scripture is addressed to the whole man in his concrete existence, not merely to man's intellect. It was written "that you may persevere in your belief that Jesus is the Messiah, God's Son, and that, through your belief, you may have life in his name" (John 20:31). It provides food for the Christian life in a way in which the infallible pronouncements of the *magisterium* do not. The Bible is the "testimony of living experience, which tends to stir emotions and will, as well as enlightening the mind," whereas the Church's authoritative declarations are "intended to appeal only to the intellect. . . . Naturally the same Authority guarantees the affirmations of theology (those which are *De Fide*), but it does not *make* them; and the text that is adduced in support of the affirmation is functioning only on the rational, logical level, while its affective, imperative values are in this context necessarily disregarded."⁶³

The task of defining the total purpose of Scripture and of scriptural inspiration is not easy. It involves a careful and complete elaboration of biblical theology which has yet to be done. Still it represents an ideal toward which the theologian and the biblical scholar can work.

Meantime, there are other, smaller issues to be settled. Rahner's splendid theory of the inspiration of the NT needs careful working out so that it can be applied to the OT.⁶⁴ I believe also it would be profitable to follow up Rahner's lead by investigating the mediatorial role of the Church in the inspiration of Scripture. Could we

⁶³ R. A. F. MacKenzie, "The Concept of Biblical Theology," *CTSA Proceedings of the Tenth Annual Convention*, 1955, 61, n. 14.

⁶⁴ Rahner, *art. cit.* *ZKT* 78 (1956) 146, n. 13 and 151 n. 17: both passages contain some hints of how Rahner would conceive the OT as part of the Church's prehistory. But he has not, so far as I am aware, worked out his theory completely, so as to include OT inspiration.

not learn more about the function of the inspired writers as men of the Church?

The theologian might re-examine the discriminating attitude of the Church in the period when she was forming the scriptural canon, as Brinkmann has suggested. She was not concerned with selecting writings that were simply error-free, but with apostolically authentic doctrine.⁶⁵

Finally, I suggest that two analogies with the practice of the Church with regard to the conferring of the sacraments and to preaching might help deepen our understanding of biblical inspiration. To confer any sacrament validly, the minister must intend to do what the Church wishes him to do. Might not this principle illustrate the way in which God influenced the NT writers? They intended to do what the Church wished, viz. to compose a written record of the apostolic preaching and teaching. Is not such an intention implicit in Paul's letter to the churches of Corinth and Galatia, and in Luke's prologue?⁶⁶

The second analogy derives from the Church's traditional attitude toward the necessity of a kind of "apostolic succession" in the valid, efficacious preaching of the word of God. To the bishop, as successor of the apostles, belongs the office of preaching. He shares this function with others by communicating faculties to them for that purpose. To preach without faculties is analogous to the hearing of confessions without faculties. This lofty concep-

⁶⁵ The early Church recognized that word and pen were complementary functions of the apostolic office: cf. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* III, 37,2. Since the preaching of the Gospel had been entrusted to the apostolic college, she sought the one "Gospel of God" in those writings which were to be considered normative for God's people: cf. Irenaeus, *PG* 7, 803b. Thus Irenaeus points out that Luke's book was simply the written record of Paul's preaching (*PG* 7, 845a), while Papias notes that Mark carefully reported the kerygma of Peter (Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.* 111, 39,15).

⁶⁶ Cf. 1 Cor. 15:3; 11:23; Gal. 1:6-9; Luke 1:1-2. There are many other questions we might propose for solution: viz., what relation does inspiration bear to the various senses of Scripture, in particular, to the spiritual or fuller sense? While theologians assert that "revelatio fuit cum apostolis completa," why do we never find the statement "inspiratio fuit cum apostolic completa"? In fact, as G. Bardy points out, "L'inspiration des Pères de l'Église," *RSR* 40 (1951-52) 7-26, it appears there was a constant patristic belief to the effect that they (the Fathers) were inspired.

tion of the preacher's role, postulating an unbroken chain that preserves communion with the apostles for the promulgation of the spoken word, provides a counterpart to the way in which biblical inspiration assures the Church of the apostolic authority of the written word of the NT.

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Digest of the Discussion:

Father John Sweeney, S.J., of Woodstock, Md., president of the Society and chairman of the session, thanked *Father Stanley* for his masterful presentation. He remarked that the ideas presented were such as to require a careful reading and study when the printed text would eventually appear in the proceedings of the meeting.

Father Cyril Vollert, S.J., of St. Mary's, Kansas, agreed with *Father Sweeney* on the need to read the text of the paper and to follow *Father's* development more closely than the oral presentation makes possible. *Father Vollert* said that for the moment he could raise at least one problem. He had been intrigued, he said, with the presentation of *Rahner's* theory and wondered how it could be applied to the inspiration of the Old Testament. He recognized that *Father Stanley* had indicated this difficulty in his paper and had suggested it for future discussion. But *Father Vollert* asked if *Father Stanley* would be willing at this time to hazard some sort of explanation as to how the inspiration of the OT could be explained in the light of *Rahner's* view.

Father Stanley replied that *Rahner* does not indicate what his own mind on this question would be. It is true that the OT is the prehistory of the Church. Certain elements in the OT history and religion were ephemeral but there are others that are really a part of the Church's own history. In *Rahner's* theory, the *Urkirche* lived and experienced God and Christ in such a way as to give an indelible character to the Church. In somewhat the same way, *Father* thought, this notion could be applied analogously to the *qahal* of the OT. It is clear that the NT writers were aware of the repetition of the OT in the life of Christ; the same is true of the life of the Church, which is really the *alter Christus*. The words of Pius XI reflect this: "We are all spiritually Semites." But a full answer, *Father* admitted, would require a long essay of some depth.

Father McKenzie, S.J., of West Baden College, Ind., commented further on the problem of the inspiration of the OT. He noted that the concept is extremely obscure and that he was not as sure as *Father*

Stanley that these recent efforts had advanced our understanding very much. He said that he himself had been keeping away from the problem because he could not see his way through it. Benoit's opinion, for example, seems to suggest that God is the author of the history of salvation and also of its records. Father thought that this might be an oversimplified approach but possibly fruitful if it could be reformulated to account for the inspiration of more than a book.

Father McKenzie then referred to the suggestion of the Jewish scholar, Y. Hoffmann, that the whole faith of Israel is a folk creation of a sociological kind rather than a transcendental experience of God. Modern criticism tends to reject the categorical and literal ascription of the Law to Moses, the historical books to the early prophets, prophecy to the later prophets, and the other books to assorted wisemen. Is it possible then to accept these books in some sense as the Jews accepted them? Father asked. Did their acceptance of the books refine or alter their appreciation of them in some way? Can we think of an *Urkirche* of the Jews? There is no evidence that the Jews ever refined a concept of inspiration.

Father then proceeded to analyze some of the difficulties that arise if we approach the Jewish history of salvation as some sort of an inspired folk creation. In this case we would have to draw some parallel between the OT community of Israel and the Church. This is difficult. We now know a great deal about the historical situation of Israel and very often Israel does not look very much like the Church or even like an Israelite religious community. Then there is the question of Israel's experience of God: To what extent was this unique, transcendental, and so revelation in that sense?

Father McKenzie saw a further difficulty in determining those to whom the charism of inspiration would extend. Would it include the law raconteurs and the sages repeating stories around the campfires? Or would it apply only to the deuteronomic historian who, after all, simply compiled, edited, and unified the material? What is an inspired editor? Is he an editor in the sense that Kittel, for example, is the editor of the Hebrew Bible? If so, then why should an editor of the eighth century B. C. be more inspired than an editor of the twentieth century A. D.? When does a book become a sacred book? In its production? or at its declaration? The Church, Father noted, has explicitly rejected the subsequent approval theory.

And so, Father concluded, the difficulties with the precise nature of OT inspiration can be multiplied. Perhaps the idea of a literary folk creation can be of some help as an approach. But it remains difficult to describe exactly how the author of Chronicles, for example, may be said to have been inspired. Might we not some day have a theory of "more and less" inspiration? None have yet admitted such a view. But is it conceivable that some books might be more the word of God than others,

granted that all are inspired? As Father McKenzie concluded his recital of these many problems, it was evident that the members present were willing to agree that the problem of the precise nature of OT inspiration is indeed complex.

After a moment or two of collective bafflement, the focus of discussion was returned again to Father Stanley. *Monsignor George Shea* of Darlington raised two problems relevant to Father Stanley's presentation. The first concerned Rahner's view that the writing of the NT pertains to the constituting of the primitive Church. This seems to create a problem for a fundamental theologian. It is Catholic teaching, based on the encyclical of Leo XIII on Christian unity as well as that of Pius XII on the Mystical Body, that the essential constitution of the Church was completed by Pentecost at the latest. How could Rahner's view be reconciled with this teaching?

Monsignor Shea's second question concerned the criteria of inspiration. Both Rahner and Brinkmann seem to apply the notion of fullness throughout the entire primitive Church; they seem to imply that the entire body of revelation was diffused through the whole Church; that it was believed and taught, at least implicitly, on a universal scale from the very start.

Monsignor Shea wondered whether this might not be re-examined. Isn't it conceivable, he asked, that some of the revelation was not communicated to the Church universally but only locally? Consider the canon of the Scriptures and the inspiration, for example, of the Apocalypse. Might not this revelation have been made known in one region, kept alive there, then known gradually elsewhere, until it finally obtained universal acceptance? Do we really need a universal vehicle whereby everything was taught universally, however implicitly, from the very start? Consider, too, the doctrine of Mary's *virginitas in partu*. Was not this perhaps taught locally, then gradually favored until it won universal acceptance through the guidance of the Holy Spirit? To what extent, Monsignor asked, would the theories of Rahner and Brinkmann have to be rethought to include such a possibility?

Father Stanley replied that he thought that perhaps sufficient attention had not been paid in fundamental theology to the evolutionary character both in time and in space of the formation of the Church. The whole concept of a *Heilsgeschichte* embodies this idea and it is terribly important. The fact that the magisterium has pointed to the death of Christ or to Pentecost as marking the foundation of the Church does not necessarily eliminate all subsequent development. The foundation of the Church began with the preaching of John the Baptist but it is hard to determine when the process was actually completed: possibly in 70 A. D. with the destruction of the Temple; possibly the process extended even into the second century. It is difficult to say exactly.

What is essential, Father said, is to see the Church as founded and

established over a period of time. Why is this so? Because, Father explained, it took time for the Church to come out of the shadow of the Temple. This can be seen in many of the beliefs, practices, and hypotheses of the first generation of Christians. It is clear from the Acts, for example, that until Peter received the revelation at Joppa, the apostles thought that one could become a Christian only through Judaism. This notion was soon discarded but the question it raised seems to be a cardinal point in the Acts. It is prominent also in Acts 15, i.e. in the Jerusalem Council, in Galatians 1 and 2. Examples such as this show that the founding of the Church is essentially connected with time; the whole thing cannot be considered as "given" until the entire process of foundation is complete.

Essential also, Father continued, is the progressive development of the Church geographically. Rahner would not assume that any given doctrine was held universally throughout the primitive Church. As far as the criteria of inspiration are concerned, in Rahner's view any piece of writing by an apostle is inspired. We know, for example, of an epistle to the Corinthians written before 1 Cor. Rahner would maintain that the lost epistle is apostolic and therefore inspired. It is true that on the question of the criteria of inspiration and the formation of the Canon, Rahner's theory is not as good as Brinkmann's. The latter broadens the former. But in any event, it is clear if we read the history of the first four centuries that not every revealed doctrine was ubiquitously promulgated. Father cited as an example the fact that the Roman tradition did not admit the inspiration and canonicity of the epistle to the Hebrews until the fourth century.

Father Gerard Owens, C.S.S.R., of Woodstock, Ontario, then asked Father McKenzie if he would further explain how the wider influence of inspiration to which he referred would relate to the more proximate influence of inspiration as described by Leo XIII. Could it be said, for example, that the wider influence prepares the background, whereas the more immediate influence operates in the author?

Father McKenzie replied that the doctrinal affirmation of Leo XIII was limited to one aspect of inspiration. This was due to the fact that the divine authorship, in the modern sense of authorship, was being denied by the rationalists of the nineteenth century. In his description, therefore, Leo XIII confined himself to literary authorship in the strict sense. The history of Christian thought on the whole subject of inspiration is much broader in scope. The view of the encyclical is more limited and necessarily so by the particular problem.

To illustrate this broader concept, Father McKenzie noted that, in the Bible, inspiration is concerned rather with the role of the prophet than with the sacred writer as such. The OT regarded the authors of the sacred books as prophets because they wrote under the divine influence. The same emphasis is present in the NT. In Matthew, for ex-

ample, the words of Christ after the beatitudes: "For so did they persecute the prophets who were before you," indicate that it is the apostles who are the prophets of the NT. Thus a prophet is not only a man who commits a thing to writing; the whole concept of his inspiration is broader than that.

Relevant also, Father continued, is the biblical concept of God as the director and author of all history and especially of the history of Israel and of the Christian Church. St. Thomas himself noted this when he compared the way man uses metaphors and images in a book with the way God uses men and events in history. The more general idea of divine inspiration is reflected in this parallel. Thus much light can be thrown on our understanding of how the sacred books were composed if we go back and trace the more general idea of inspiration through the whole history of Christian thought. It is Benoit's view on the analogous character of inspiration, Father concluded, that opens up all of these possibilities and this, in fact, constitutes Benoit's great contribution to the theology of inspiration.

Father Malachi Donnelly, S.J., of St. Mary's, Kansas, asked for further elaboration of a problem that arises from Brinkmann's theory. The decree *Lamentabili* censures those who say that revelation was not closed with the death of the last apostle. How can this be reconciled with a view that would point to a second century composition of 2 Peter, the Greek Matthew, or the fourth Gospel? How does the distinction between revelation and inspiration apply to this problem?

Father Stanley agreed that theologians all teach that revelation closed with the death of the last apostle. But they do not say that *inspiration* closed with the death of the last apostle. That is one of the difficulties with Rahner's view. For him, the formation of the Church comes to an end with the death of St. John and since inspiration is a part of this process, in his view, that would cease also. As far as we can see, however, inspiration did not cease. In the *Festschrift* for Lebreton, Bardy remarks that the Fathers of the Church insisted that they themselves were inspired and so were their peers. There is no problem, then, Father concluded, if we can distinguish between the close of revelation and the close of inspiration.

On the question of the authenticity of 1 and 2 Peter, Matthew, the fourth Gospel, Hebrews, etc., Father Stanley had some further remarks. Tradition has indicated that these books are authentic and it is unwise, he said, to throw out that tradition, at least as far as the time of composition is concerned. The Greek Matthew as we have it was probably written for a gentile audience somewhere around the year 80 A. D. Hebrews is written under the egis of Paul, much as the Pentateuch is of Moses. It represents the spirit of Paul. It is impossible, however, to assume that it was actually written by St. Paul; it reflects

too much neo-Platonism and Hellenism and Paul is never Hellenistic. In any case, these books are certainly inspired and canonical books. And their inspiration was recognized because the Church saw their prophetic character. They were written by the apostles (the NT prophets, remember) or by those so closely related to the apostles that the tradition confused the authors with the apostles with whom they were associated.

The only book that raises a special problem as to time of composition, Father Stanley continued, is 2 Peter. For one thing, 2 Peter is about the best Greek in the NT and could hardly have been written by St. Peter himself. We must keep in mind the distinction between revelation and inspiration, Father said, and recognize the possibility that we are dealing with the second generation of Christians. The author of Hebrews in many places refers back to the first generation: "those who have preceded us." The men of the new generation who wrote books such as Hebrews and 2 Peter were also inspired; they shared this charism with the earlier writers. At least, Father suggested, we might leave open the possibility. The point is that we should like to have a theory to account for a later composition, e.g., of 2 Peter when and if this becomes factually established.

Father Thomas Coyle, C.S.S.R., of Wisconsin, pointed out a further difficulty if we admit that revelation closed with the death of the last apostle but that inspiration could go on, e.g., in the case of 2 Peter. Is not the inspiration of 2 Peter part of the deposit of public revelation? How then could its inspiration be revealed if it was written after public revelation closed?

Father Stanley replied that once again it was necessary to keep the two ideas distinct. If there is nothing new in 2 Peter that is not already in the deposit of faith, then there is no real obstacle. These men, conscious of their inspiration, could have intended to do what the Church wanted, namely, to preserve a normative record of the apostolic teaching. That this intention was operative in the case of a particular book could have been recognized by the Church later after the public revelation had ceased. The Church has not declared that inspiration ever ceased. We even speak sometimes of religious rules as inspired, analogously of course, but in somewhat the same way.

Difficulty arises, Father Stanley continued, only if we insist, as Rahner does, that the Church must have a revelation to recognize the inspiration of a given book. In that view, of course, it would be impossible to learn that a book had been inspired after the public revelation had ceased. That is the great value of Brinkmann's view. He holds that to recognize an inspired book the Church needs nothing beyond the recognition of the authentic teaching of an apostle or prophet. This is wide enough to allow at least for the possibility of a later inspiration.

Recall that Irenaeus tells us that Luke made a book of Paul's Gospel and Papias says the same of Mark and Peter. In much the same way the Church could have recognized 2 Peter as inspired because she recognized that it contained true teaching traditionally assigned to Peter. At this point the formal discussion came to a close, but the ideas presented here stimulated much further informal conversation and private controversy throughout the remaining hours of the convention.

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