Understanding Biblical Inspiration as a Written Response to Symbolically-Mediated Revelation; a Hermeneutically-Aware Model which can Inform the Reading of the Bible within the Church

By

Robert James Hill

Submitted toward the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,

University of Glasgow,

Faculty of Arts, Department of Theology and Religious Studies,

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ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 – 1346

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I dedicate this study to my immediate family: may late mother, my father, and my sister.

Abstract

This study offers a model for a hermeneutically aware contemporary understanding of Biblical Inspiration, as the Spirit-animated response to symbolic Revelation. It is supported by Biblical scholarship and philosophical hermeneutics; its compatibility with doctrinal requirements of the Catholic Church is also demonstrated.

Chapter 1 surveys sources traditionally called upon to defend Inspiration: New Testament passages, and official church statements. A critique of these highlights what they actually tell us about Inspiration.

Chapter 2 evaluates past and recent theories of Inspiration, and critiques the traditional Principle of Instrumental Efficient Causality. It also considers opinions of scholars, from Lagrange to Hoffmann, to provide a basis for this particular model.

Chapter 3 outlines the model, assessing the contribution of the symbol for a theory of Revelation which accompanies the model of Inspiration given here. Tillich, Fawcett, Polanyi, Wheelwright, Dulles and Ricoeur are among scholars whose insights are called upon. Ricoeur provides the necessary philosophical hermeneutics for the validation of the model. Finally, Biblical evidence is sought for the contention that this model is identifiably at work in Scripture; Brueggemann and Westermann provide insights from some prophets and the psalms, which support the proposed model; they also, with Perrin, Crossan, and others, provide support from the New Testament.

Chapter 4 explains how metaphor and myth can aid the interpretation of symbol in Scripture. Through Ricoeur's proposed five types of Revelatory Scriptural discourse, the chapter proposes that Ricoeur's model of Revelatory discourse is closer to what this study calls Inspiration.

Chapter 5 shows the compatibility of the model for Inspiration with Catholic Magisterial pronouncements. Drawing from contemporary readings of Scripture by Mesters, Mabon, Dewey, Belo and Best, the study demonstrates that this model satisfies academic requirements and also is relevant for the person of faith's reading of Scripture, whether in the church of today, or the past, thereby providing theological underpinning for the Second Vatican Council's desire that the Bible be made available to the widest possible readership.

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Introduction: Why bother about Inspiration?

Many scholars today would doubt whether pursuing the question of Biblical Inspiration is worth the effort involved. Some have dismissed the concept as irrelevant for today, for example, the brothers A. T. and R. P. C Hanson declare that, not only is it impossible for intelligent people to subscribe to the traditional doctrines of inerrancy and inspiration, but that these represent a deviation in Christian doctrine (although they do concede that the Holy Spirit may have used such erroneous theorising to good use in the past).[1] John Barton doubts whether the concept is useful,[2] and Karl Rahner observes that some scholars are apparently happy to endorse inspiration, but don't bring it into their exegetical work,[3] while still others give up the pursuit of a meaningful description of Inspiration, because they conclude that the problems associated with it are beyond solution.[4] Sandra Schneiders notes a strange outcome of this: that some scholars who undertake quite sophisticated research share a view with people of very unsophisticated and simple faith, because both categories are prepared to accept the reality of inspiration, but are unable to give a rational explanation![5] Finally, there is a significant group of scholars who believe that it is not only possible and desirable to try to say something useful about Inspiration, but, as Martini maintains, perhaps even necessary for theology today.[6] Add to the list Pierre Benoit, Karl Rahner, Roderick A. F. MacKenzie, John L.

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[1] See Collins, R. F., 'Inspiration', 65:72, p. 1033, in Brown, R. E., Fitzmyer, J. A., Murphy, R. E, (General Editors) The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, pp. 1023 – 1033, Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1997.
[2] Barton, J., People of the Book? The Authority of the Bible in Christianity, SPCK, London, 1988, p. 37.
[3] Rahner, K., translated by Henkey, C. H., revised by Palmer, M., 'Inspiration in the Bible', p. 7, in Rahner etc., Studies in Modern Theology, Herder, Freiburg, and Burns & Oates, London, 1965, pp. 1 – 86.
[4] See Schneiders, S. M., The Revelatory Text. Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture, The Liturgical Press, Minnesota, 2nd Edition, 1999, p. 48; see also McKenzie, J. L., The Old Testament Without Illusion, Image Books, Doubleday and company, New York, 1980, p. 12.
[5] See Schneiders, S. M., The Revelatory Text, p. 48.
[6] Collins, R.F., 'Inspiration', 65:72, p. 1033.

McKenzie, Thomas A. Hoffmann, Sandra Schneiders, et al., who have tried to contribute to contemporary understanding of Inspiration, and it becomes apparent that interest in Inspiration is far from dead.

Of course, the question must arise: what does the present study expect to contribute to the subject? Is there still something to add to the opinions of those listed above? I believe that the answer is in the affirmative. Bruce Vawter believes that there has, in the proper sense, only ever been one theology of Inspiration developed – and that was by the Scholastics of the Middle Ages; since then, formulations have been little more than reactions to scholasticism, whether positive or negative, Protestant or Catholic.[7] Lagrange tried to reconcile Thomistic Scholasticism with historical-critical methodology, and Benoit tried to refine this; MacKenzie sought to widen the scope of Biblical Inspiration to take into account modern research's conclusions about multiple authorship of Biblical texts; McKenzie argues for the social character of Inspiration to be taken into account - since individual Biblical writers tend to be anonymous - and he also challenges us to consider carefully the relationship between revelation and inspiration; and Hoffmann presents Inspiration as one of three factors which give Scripture its unique sacred character. Finally, Rahner has presented a dogmatic theologian's view of Inspiration, centred on the role of the early Apostolic Church rather than on any individual writer, thereby giving his own perspective on the social character of Inspiration. Each of these will be examined in more detail later, and this study will attempt to draw from their strengths, as well as identifying some of their weaknesses.

[7] Vawter, B., Inspiration, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1972, p. 44.

The present study will attempt to do something which I am not aware of anyone else attempting; at least, not in the present way. The study will consider three main areas:

1. As its title suggests, it will propose a model for Biblical Inspiration which is 'hermeneutically aware' as the title has it. The hermeneutical basis for the model, which will be presented in full in chapter 4, is the philosophical hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur. I believe that the theories of Ricoeur on the interpretation of symbols will allow us to elaborate a model of Inspiration which involves the inspired response of the biblical writer to what will be called here 'symbols of revelation'. The notion of symbol employed here will be drawn from Tillich, Fawcett, Lonergan, Dulles and others. The model of Inspiration is elaborated from T. A. Hoffmann's description of Inspiration as 'being animated by the Spirit of Christ', a concept which will allow us to present a dynamic of revelation and inspiration which is informed by Ricoeur's hermeneutics.

2. The theory of Inspiration to be proposed will, I believe, resonate with the experience of people's interaction with the God who undertakes self-disclosure in symbolic form. Several illustrations of symbolic revelation in Scripture and beyond will be cited in support of the model, insofar as they suggest evidence of inspired written responses to symbolic divine disclosure.

3. The concept of Biblical Inspiration is invoked to support the contention that the Bible is capable of transmitting to humanity in every age the Word of God. The Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church was insistent that the Bible be made as widely available as possible to people everywhere,[8] and that it be the

[8] Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, article 22, in Flannery, A., (General Editor), Vatican Council II. The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, Fowler Wright Books Ltd., Tenbury Wells, 1975, p. 762. Hereafter, this document will be referred to as *Dei Verbum*. Unless otherwise stated, page numbers refer to this edition.

'soul of all theology'.[9] The present study of Inspiration will suggest that the model offered here makes that claim intelligible, in that it will help to explain how people of every age have been able to read the Bible and see in it the Word of God, despite different theories of interpretation through which that reading has taken place – pre-scientific as well as scientific. Interpretation theory in any age is an invaluable aid to reading the Bible; but to be animated by the Bible as the Word of God in writing, requires the possibility of an inspired readership of the Bible, as well as Inspired authorship. The continuity necessary for this to happen in every age is guaranteed by the Tradition of the Christian community; in its liturgy, its teaching, and its community life. Hence, the final element to be included for this proposed model is continuity with the Tradition of the Church, and its expression through the Magisterium, i.e., specifically, this theory of Inspiration will also attempt to meet the requirements of the doctrine of Inspiration.

[9] *Dei Verbum*, article 24, p. 764.

CHAPTER 1

BIBLICAL INSPIRATION: SETTING THE BOUNDARIES

§ 1.1 DESCRIBING INSPIRATION – A BRIEF HISTORY

§ 1.1.1 Inspiration in the Scriptures

It would seem sensible to derive any theory of Biblical Inspiration from a biblical beginning. However, in practice, this has turned out to be less productive than one might expect. Two New Testament passages are frequently cited: 2 Timothy 3:16-17, and 2 Peter 1:19-21.

The first of these seems to give clear endorsement to the view that the Bible is Inspired:

> All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.[10]

The Greek word *theopneustos*, usually understood to mean 'God-breathed',[11] was translated into the Latin of the Vulgate by the verb *inspirare*, 'to breathe in'.[12] There have been debates – often heated – on whether the correct translation should read that 'all Scripture is inspired, and useful for teaching…' or that 'all inspired Scripture is suitable for teaching…'. If the former reading is taken, then there is no room for admitting partial inspiration; if the latter, selective inspiration is a possibility.

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[10] All Scripture citations in this study are, unless otherwise stated, taken from The New Revised Standard Version Bible, Catholic Edition, Catholic Bible Press, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, Tennessee, 1993. Hereafter, referred to as NRSV.
[11] Mounce, W., 'The Pastoral Epistles' in Metzger. B.M., Hubbard, D. A., Barker, G. W., (General Editors), Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 46. Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 2000 (58 Volumes on CD ROM), note on 2 Timothy 3:16.
[12] Collins, R.F., 'Inspiration', 65:9, p. 1024.

However, to argue for or against either reading is to miss the point made by the author of the letter, who simply wants to insist that Scripture is useful, *because* it is inspired; it says nothing about *how* or *to what extent* it is inspired. Since the letter cannot refer to the Bible as we know it today, and since Paul clearly considered extra-Canonical material as inspired (e.g. the LXX Psalm 68:9), the issue is very much about the usefulness of Scripture. Romans 15:3-4 has "For whatever was written in former days was written for our *instruction*, so that by steadfastness and by the *encouragement* of the Scriptures we might have hope".[13]

The other New Testament text often quoted in support of Inspiration is 2 Peter 1:19-21:

> So we have the prophetic message more fully confirmed. You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

This does not mention Inspiration, but it recognises that prophecy comes from the Holy Spirit, and not from the human will. Prophecy was taken as the key to understanding Inspiration from early Christianity until scientific critical methodology made clear the existence of several literary genres in the Bible other than prophecy.

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[13] Johnson, L. T., The First and Second Letters to Timothy. A New Translation and Commentary, Anchor Bible Vol. 35A, Doubleday, New York, London et al., 2001, pp.420. 422-425.

§ 1.1.2 Patristic Views on Inspiration

Since the orthodoxy of some of the writers frequently called the Fathers of the Church can be less than certain, they are perhaps more accurately designated 'Early Christian Writers'.[14] However, here, they will be designated as 'The Fathers'.

These writers did not produce a coherent view of Inspiration, much less a unified theology. By and large they adopted the language of the New Testament, and hence the language of the Hellenistic world, to describe Inspiration. Neo-Platonism provides, to a greater or lesser extent, the philosophical background for their arguments on Inspiration, but since the formulations of Neo-Platonism itself were highly diverse, the Fathers have given us no more than trends which, although not universally shared, are at least common features in their writings. Following Collins' lead, we will consider three of the Patristic ideas that have most influenced Christian thinking on Inspiration.[15]

1. **Condescension**. This idea appears in John Chrysostom's writings, and is perhaps the strand of Patristic writing on Inspiration that has endured best. It attempts to describe how the divine word is conveyed in human speech and writing in an analogous way to the Divine Condescension in the Word of God made flesh. Just as assuming human nature was a necessary condition of the Incarnation, so too the process of communicating divine truths to humans necessarily involved total humanity.[16] This idea reappeared in Vatican II and in the Pontifical Biblical Commission's 1993 Instruction on the Interpretation of the Bible in the Church.[17]

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[14] Vawter, B., Inspiration, p. 20.
[15] Collins, R. F., 'Inspiration' 65:28-31, pp. 1027-1028.
[16] Vawter, B., Inspiration, pp. 40-42.
[17] *Dei Verbum*, article 13; Pontifical Biblical Commission's Instruction *Interpreting the Bible in The Church*, 1993, in Houlden J. L., Interpreting the Bible in the Church, III.D.2.c, SCM, London, 1995, pp. 78f..

2. **Dictation.** Jerome explained the Letter to the Romans by invoking dictation; performed by the Holy Spirit, through the apostle. Romans' perplexing order of words seems to have been the reason that Jerome resorted to this theory, although it is possible that the great translator of Scripture settled for a theory of dictation because he was just not really interested in the problem of Inspiration.[18] Augustine also favoured dictation, and in his Confessions, he imagines himself in Moses' place, writing Genesis, which he could only have done if God dictated both the content and the style.[19] The dictation theory found its way into the Council of Trent's decree of 1546, which was cited *verbatim* by Vatican I in 1870, as we will see later. Individual Fathers did not limit themselves to any single theory for Inspiration; Chrysostom, the greatest exponent of condescension, also refers to dictation by the Holy Spirit. Much later, Calvin favoured dictation, and wrote:

> ...the Lord...commanded the prophecies...to be committed to writing, and to be held part of his word. To these at the same time were added historical details, which are also the composition of the prophets, *but dictated by the Holy Spirit...*
>
> ...nothing else was permitted to the apostles than was formerly permitted to the prophets – namely to expound the ancient Scriptures, and show that the things there delivered are fulfilled in Christ: this, however, they could not do unless the Spirit of Christ went before, *and in a manner dictated words to them.*[20]

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[18] Vawter, B., Inspiration, pp. 39 – 40.
[19] Vawter, B., Inspiration, p. 23; Chadwick, H., (translator), St. Augustine. Confessions, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998, Book 12:36, p. 266.
[20] Calvin, J., (translator unknown) Institutes Of The Christian Religion, MacDonald Publishing company, P.O Box 6006, Florida 33608, (date unknown), Book IV, Chapter 8, article 6, 8. pp. 611 – 612.

Both Luther and Calvin quoted Isaiah 59:21 in support of dictation, especially: 'my words that I have put in your mouth…'.[21]

A serious weakness in the theory of dictation, and one that has dogged many theories of Inspiration, is that it fails to do justice to the role of the human author of Scripture.[22] Dictation scarcely allows for the variety of literary forms encountered in the Bible; if Divine verbatim dictation was the method of Inspiration, why does the style of writing change so noticeably? O'Collins says:

> (Verbal dictation)…cannot properly explain the many differences of form and style among the inspired writers. Did the Holy Spirit's style change from the decades when Paul's letters were written to the later period when the Gospels were composed? If the human authors played no real part in the literary process, such differences could only be due to a mysterious or even arbitrary divine choice to vary the style and alter the form.[23]

And what about the human instruments of dictated Scripture? Why, if the theory is valid, are there so many different human personalities in the dictated texts? And if Moses wrote the Pentateuch under dictation, why does Moses argue with God in the text (Exodus 3:1-4.17)? The same could be said of other Biblical characters when they are commissioned: like Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:4-10) and Ananias (Acts 9:10-19), who both positively resist the divine call, never mind not too readily surrendering to the demands God makes of them. What actually emerges from these accounts is a picture of a living relationship, or dialogue, between God and the 'called' individual,

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[21] Achtemeier, P. Inspiration, p. 26.
[22] Law, D., Inspiration, pp. 58 – 61.
[23] O'Collins, G., Fundamental Theology, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1981, p. 231.

but a dialogue which completely respects the humanity, individuality, personality, and autonomy of the person addressed by God.[24]

3. God the Author

This shows the other side of the problem. Perhaps it was attention to this aspect of Inspiration that caused writers to lose sight of the significance of the human input. Later, we will consider more fully whether it might legitimately be claimed that God can be described as God as Author of Scripture. For the present, we need only note that until well into the 20th century, the theology of Inspiration rested on a 'modern' understanding of author, i.e. non-Biblical terms. But this may not at all reflect the reality of Biblical authorship. Augustine wrote that God is to be regarded as the author of both Testaments, as part of his argument against the Manicheans who rejected the Old Testament. Ambrose likewise held that there was one Divine author of both Testaments. 'Author' will be used in this study to mean that God is the ultimate source of both Testaments; but this is not the same as ascribing *literary* authorship to God.[25] In fact, questions of both human and divine authorship are going to be significant issues in this study.

The next section begins with the question of God as Author, but this time from the background of Church (Magisterial Pronouncements).

§ 1.3 MAGISTERIAL PRONOUNCEMENTS ON INSPIRATION

These have been very rare in the history of the Catholic Church. For the most part, they do not present us with a full doctrine of Inspiration; often, the Magisterial

[24] Law, D., Inspiration, p. 60.
[25] Collins, R. F., 'Inspiration' 65:31, p. 1027.

statements which mention Inspiration at all only do so in the context of a wider issue, as is clear from the earliest existing statements onwards

§ 1.3.1 The *Statuta Ecclesiae Antiqua*

This compilation of Canonical and doctrinal statements from late 5th Century Gaul contains the earliest surviving formulation that God is the author of both Old and New Testaments. The issue here is not Inspiration of Scripture, but that the Old Testament too has its origins in God.[26] This was to counter the Manichean view, challenged by Augustine as we saw above, that the Old Testament was diabolic in origin.

§ 1.3.2 The Council of Florence (1441)

Here, the word 'Inspiration' appears for the first time in a Magisterial document:

> (The holy Roman Church) professes that one and the same God is author of the Old and New Testament, i.e. of the Law, the Prophets and the Gospel, because by inspiration of one and the same Holy Spirit the saints of both covenants have spoken.[27]

This decree was reserved for the Jacobites, who had challenged the content of the Canon, and was not part of the universally binding decrees of the Council.[28] Authorship is still not precisely defined, but now we are told *why* God is the author of both testaments: it is because the saints of both covenants were inspired by the Holy Spirit.

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[26] Neuner, J., Dupuis, J., The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church, The Mercier Press, Dublin and Cork 1973 p. 18; *Enchiridion Biblicum.* Documenta Ecclesiastica Sacram Scripturam Spectantia Auctoritate Pontificiae Commissionis De Re Biblica Edita, Editio Quarta Aucta et Recognita, Napoli, Romae MCMLXI (Hereafter designated *EB*) *30.*
[27] Neuner, J., Dupuis, J., The Christian Faith, p. 68. *EB 47.*
[28] Vawter, B., Inspiration, p. 70.

§ 1.3.3 The Council of Trent (1546)

This Council's main concern was to defend the Canon of Scripture, and any questions of authorship and Inspiration were largely secondary. Trent uses the familiar model of dictation to describe Inspiration: Scriptural books have come down to us,

> ...having been received from the mouth of Christ Himself, or from the apostles *by the dictation of the Holy Spirit*, and having been transmitted as it were by hand to hand.[29]

Trent merely states that God is the author of both Testaments:

> (the Church)...venerates...all the books of the old and New Testaments, for God alone is the author of *both*...as being inspired by the Holy Spirit and preserved in continuous succession in the Catholic Church.[30]

Notice that God is designated author of both Testaments that contain the Biblical books, but is not called the author of the books themselves. Trent, therefore does not tell us how, even by dictation, God can be the author of the constituent parts of the Testaments.[31]

§ 1.3.4 The First Vatican Council (1870)

This Council took up the traditional formula found in Florence and Trent that God is author of the Old and New Testaments, and added that God is the author of the *books* of the two Testaments:

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[29] General Council of Trent, Fourth Session, Decree on Sacred Books and on Traditions to be Received (1546). English version in Neuner, J., Dupuis, J., The Christian Faith, article 210, p. 70; c.f. *EB 57*.
[30] Ibid p. 70. My italics.
[31] Vawter, B., Inspiration, p. 24.

> These books…are sacred and Canonical, not because, having been carefully composed by mere human industry, they were afterwards approved by her authority, nor merely because they contain revelation with no admixture of error, *but because, having been written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God for their author and have been delivered as such to the Church herself.*[32]

The significance of the new phrasing is not as great as it first appears, because the Fathers of Vatican I claimed to be doing no more than reasserting what Trent had earlier declared. Further, a later Canon of the same decree, which does not use the word *author,* shows that the Council wants to repeat that the books of both Testaments are Inspired:

> If anyone does not receive as sacred and Canonical the books of Holy Scripture, entire and with all their parts, as the sacred Synod of Trent has enumerated them, or denies that they have been divinely inspired, *anathema sit.*[33]

Vatican I may have been only repeating Trent; however, a development occurred after Vatican I, when a new concept soon began to appear in post-conciliar papal pronouncements, specifically in the encyclical letters spread over the next 50 years.[34] The new note was Biblical Inerrancy. For 50 years and beyond – right up until Vatican II - this subject would be bound up in statements on Inspiration, to the extent that the two had a tendency to become confused with each other.

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[32] The First Vatican General Council, Third Session, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius* on the Catholic Faith, Chapter II, on Revelation (1870), in Neuner, J., Dupuis, J., The Christian Faith, article 216, p. 72; c.f. *EB 77.* My italics.
[33] Neuner, J., Dupuis, J., The Christian Faith, article 218, p. 72; c.f. *EB 80.*
[34] Hereafter in this study these will collectively be referred to as the 'Biblical Encyclicals'.

§ 1.4 THE 'BIBLICAL ENCYCLICALS' AND BIBLICAL INSPIRATION

The three encyclicals in question are those of Pope Leo XIII, *Providentissimus Deus* (1893);[35] Pope Benedict XV, *Spiritus Paraclitus* (1920); and Pope Pius XII, *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (1943).

§ 1.4.1 *Providentissimus Deus*, and a definition of Inspiration

Vatican I, as we saw earlier, said no more on Inspiration than that the books of the Bible were written by the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and because of that they have God as their author. It would be almost another quarter of a century, and Leo XIII's encyclical, before the first Magisterial definition of Inspiration would be given.

It would be a mistake to dismiss this encyclical as just a traditionalist reiteration of opposition to so-called 'Higher Criticism'. In fact, although some regarded it as already 50 years out of date when promulgated,[36] others recognised in it significant progress in its demand for up-to-date research in the original Biblical languages.[37] Leo had appeared to signal the beginning of a new relationship between Catholic Scholarship – even progressive scholarship - and the Holy See, not only in this encyclical, but also in other events of his long pontificate, including the establishment of the Pontifical Biblical Commission. It seemed that Leo, at least in the early years of his pontificate, wanted to direct the Church in a modernising

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[35] All quotations from encyclical letters are taken from www.Vatican.va, following the appropriate links, e.g. the Holy Father; then the Pope in question; encyclicals.

[36] This opinion was expressed by the Archbishop of Canterbury of the time, Archbishop Benson, who nevertheless admired the exquisite Latin of the text. C.f.Burtchaell, J. T., Catholic Theories of Biblical Inspiration Since 1810. A Review and Critique, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1969, p. 281.

[37] Brown, R. E., and Collins, T.A., 'Church Pronouncements', 72:4, p. 1167, in Brown, R.E., Fitzmyer, J.A., Murphy, R. E., (editors) The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1997, pp. 1166 – 1174.

direction which could not easily be reversed, even if his successor as pope turned out to be as conservative as his predecessor Pius IX had been![38]

Providentissimus Deus is also where we first encounter Biblical Inerrancy, and which appears in the other two 'Biblical encyclicals', as well as in Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*. The same encyclical also offers the first real attempt in a magisterial pronouncement to define Inspiration. Presumably, this definition was offered as a sort of commentary on divine authorship as understood by both Trent and Vatican I.[39] Leo also offers the Principle of Efficient Instrumental Causality, which we will consider in detail later, as a suitable explanation for Inspiration. All three of these features of the encyclical are included in the next two quotations:

> ...because the Holy Ghost employed men as *His instruments*, we cannot therefore say that it was these inspired instruments who, perchance, *have fallen into error*, and not the primary author. For, by supernatural power, He so moved and impelled them to write - He was so present to them - that the things which He ordered, and those only, they, first, rightly understood, then willed faithfully to write down, and finally expressed in apt words and *with infallible truth.* Otherwise it could not be said that He was the Author of the entire Scripture.[40]

and:

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[38] Ratté, J., Three Modernists. Alfred Loisy, George Tyrell, William L. Sullivan, The Catholic Book Club, London, 1972, p. 5.
[39] Vawter, B., Inspiration, p. 70.
[40] *Providentissimus Deus* article 20; *EB 125.*

> It follows that those who maintain that an error is possible in any genuine passage of the sacred writings either pervert the Catholic notion of inspiration or make God the author of such error.[41]

From these, it seems that Leo's preoccupation was at least as much with Inerrancy as it was with Inspiration, and now the familiar God-as-author principle is invoked to support the claim of completely Inerrant Scripture. In 1993, when giving the address on the occasion of the promulgation of the 1993 Pontifical Biblical Commission's Instruction, *Interpreting the Bible in the Church*,[42] Pope John Paul II noted that Leo's objective had been to preserve Inspiration and Inerrancy from any threat posed by the findings of Higher Criticism – methodology which was not favoured by Leo! In attempting to preserve both the Inspiration and Inerrancy of the Bible, this Pope appeared to many to close the door on permissible use of a whole spectrum of solutions which could help reconcile the findings of historical-critical research, and a model of Inerrancy with which this research could be reconciled. This is unfair to Leo, although the encyclical did rule out any theory of Inerrancy which advocated limited Inspiration; Cotter maintained that it clearly ruled out anything that smacks of a) a claim that only parts of the Bible are inspired, b) or of degrees of inspiration, or c) of hiding behind the distinction between revelation and inspiration: anything inspired, but not revelatory could admit of the possibility of error.[43] Cotter was clearly wrong on this last point, as we shall see later.

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[41] *Providentissimus Deus* article 21; *EB 126.*
[42] Kilgallen, J., and Byrne, B., (translators) Address Given By His Holiness John Paul II, on the occasion of the Promulgation of the Pontifical Biblical Commission's 1993 Instruction *Interpreting the Bible in the Church,* April 23, 1993, on CD Rom from Harmony Media Inc., Gervais, OR., U.S.A.
[43] e.g. Cotter, A.C., 'The Antecedents of *Providentissimus Deus*', pp. 117 – 124, in Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. V., No. 2, April 1943, p. 124.

According to Cotter, Leo systematically set about disproving each of these three positions, and reaffirming traditional teaching that the Biblical text was incompatible with error; but ironically, while Cotter was insisting that Higher Criticism and Biblical inerrancy were incompatible, Pius XII was about to issue an encyclical which would both uphold Biblical Inerrancy *and* would give strong endorsement of Higher Criticism, despite the fact that this methodology showed clearly that it was indefensible to maintain that the Bible was historically accurate in every single detail. Evidently, something must have been changing in the Vatican for such a change to occur, and much more than just a few changes of Pope at that! Before we consider how Pius XII was able to present a new formulation of position, we will examine briefly what had been happening since 1893 and *Providentissimus Deus*, and to do that, we need to look briefly at the consequences of the Modernist Crisis of the late 19th/early 20th Centuries.

The Modernist crisis came to a head during the pontificate of Pope Pius X, whose response to it seriously restricted the use of Higher Criticism in Biblical Studies.[44] Pius X's major concern was to protect the faithful from the dangers of this new heresy, and his encyclical *Pascendi* (1907), the Holy Inquisition's decree *Lamentabili* (1907), and the responses of the Pontifical Biblical Commission (from 1902 onwards) were all geared to Modernism's total eradication. Whereas Leo XIII, had been reluctant to condemn Loisy's early writings, Pius X showed no such restraint.[45] No subtle distinctions were made between possible merits of Higher Criticism, and theological misuse of that methodology. Loisy's books were condemned outright, and other authors, including M. J. Lagrange, came under suspicion. Biblical scholars soon became very wary about writing on anything other

[44] Brown, R. E., 'Church Pronouncements, 72:5', p. 1167.
[45] Ratté, J., Three Modernists, pp. 17-18.

than 'safe areas' - a phenomenon noted by Pius XII in *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, and because of which, he encouraged scholars to branch into more difficult areas of research.[46] But before Pius XII signalled this new departure, the 'head in the sand' tendency from Catholic scholars was being noted:

> In the Catholic Church the study of the Life of Jesus has remained down to the present day entirely free from scepticism...(i)n principle it has remained at a pre-Straussian standpoint, and does not venture upon an unreserved application of historical considerations either to the miracle question or to the Johannine question, and naturally therefore resigns the attempt to take account of and explain the great historical problems.[47]

By the end of 19th Century, the 'biblical question' had become a test case for the wider question of the relationship between religion and science.[48] Once Catholic scholars started to appreciate how useful modern techniques were for the study of language and history, it could only be a matter of time before the New Testament itself would come under similar critical scrutiny.

Following the promulgation of *Pascendi*, and the Inquisition's anti-Modernist decree *Lamentabili*, only a very conservative and non-scholarly Biblical studies was taught in seminaries and religious houses,[49] and Church authorities were so cautious toward Biblical studies, and supervision was so strict that non-scholarly interpretation of Scripture was taught and preached everywhere without exception, and accepted alike by students and parochial congregations without question: after all, no other

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[46] *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, article 46, *E.B. 564.*
[47] Schweitzer, A., trans. Montgomery, W., The Quest of the Historical Jesus, Adam and Charles Black, London, 1963, p 294, footnote 2.
[48] Ratté, J., Three Modernists, p. 7.
[49] McBrien, R. P., Catholicism, Harper, San Francisco, 1994, p. 422.

interpretation of Scripture was known! It would be misleading, however, to suggest that at this time there was no progress being made in Catholic Biblical Studies. If it was true that at the end of the 19th Century the 'biblical question' was central to the debate on the tension between science and religion, it is equally true that the Biblical movement, active in the early years of the 20th Century, was crucial in breaking new ground, which would eventually find favour in the 1943 encyclical of Pius XII, *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, which, in turn, led to the advance in Biblical Studies within the Catholic Church that made Vatican II possible.[50] This Biblical movement, active alongside Liturgical, Ecumenical, Missionary, Social Action and Lay Apostolate Movements, acted discretely, and helped advance the cause of critical Biblical interpretation with caution, and without incurring condemnation from Church authorities.

One of the giants of this period was Père Marie-Joseph Lagrange (d. 1938), to whom credit must be given for showing how, contrary to popular assumption, Leo XIII's stance on both Inspiration and Inerrancy did not exclude the methodology of Higher Criticism. It was also due to Lagrange's influence that competent Catholic scholars were educated in Jerusalem, and were ready to carry through the directives of *Divino Afflante Spiritu* in 1943.[51]

§1.4.2 Facing up to the Problem of Inerrancy

It became increasingly apparent to many that Leo XIII's stance could not resolve the tension between historical critical methodology, and the Inspiration and Inerrancy of Scripture. There was no shortage of opinions which suggested that Leo had wisely solved the problem by demanding that so-called 'Higher Criticism' fall in line with

[50] Ibid., pp. 659f.
[51] Ibid, p. 647.

the Church's traditional teaching; the argument ran that, since all Scripture is Inspired, therefore error and Scripture are simply incompatible. Since God is the author of Scripture, every word must be Inspired, therefore error is metaphysically incompatible with the inspired word of God, therefore, the higher critics must bend to Tradition; tradition must not yield to Higher Criticism.[52] Clearly, however, an attack on modern methodology was not the answer to the problem. Thankfully, Lagrange showed that there was a much more satisfactory way to tackle the problem; so much so that the encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* was able to endorse Lagrange's approach to Biblical studies.[53]

It is important to realise that, despite the condemnations and excommunications of the Modernist period, critical biblical scholarship itself was never excluded, although in practice it did pass under a cloud. The Magisterium strove to ensure that any hint that Scripture was not inspired, or was irrelevant for theology, was excluded from Catholic teaching; thus it condemned Loisy's assertion that Scriptural texts were relevant only insofar as they provided a witness for their own historical age – a witness which was not even necessarily very reliable at that![54] This was why *Providentissimus Deus* and the 1st Vatican Council had both rejected any possibility of allowing for a partial Inspiration of Scripture.

Too many issues still remained unresolved, however. In principle nothing prevented Catholic Scholars from using modern criticism, but in practice, no one knew where the boundaries lay within which they could work, because no one had tried to define the relationship between Higher Criticism and dogmatic theology.[55] This lack of resolution led to absurd situations; for example, Catholic Professors at German

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[52] For example, Cotter, A. C., Antecedents, p. 124.
[53] McBrien, R. P., Catholicism, p. 50.
[54] Robinson, R. B., Catholic Exegesis since *Divino Afflante Spiritu*. Hermeneutical Implications, Scholars' Press, Atlanta, Georgia, 1988, p. 16.
[55] Robinson, R. B., Exegesis, pp. 17 – 18.

universities were expressly exempt from taking the anti-Modernist oath required by *Lamentabili*, lest they thereby be humiliated in front of their Protestant colleagues.[56] Official documents produced in the years leading up to the Second World War showed no sign of a change of direction in anti-Modernist opinion, so the anomalies continued. The Pontifical Biblical Commission's publications between 1915 and 1955 usually took the form of very negative and conservative answers to particular questions posed to the Commission. These positions were largely superseded by later documents, and in 1955, the secretary to the Commission made it clear that Catholic exegetes were free to respond to them as they felt appropriate. But only with the arrival of *Divino Afflante Spiritu* in 1943 was it really possible to address these situations,[57] by an encyclical taking a very different stance on historical-critical techniques. It was largely due to the patient work of Père Marie-Joseph Lagrange that such a turn-about in the Catholic Magisterium happened at all.

§ 1.4.3 Lagrange and Inerrant Scripture

In 1890, Lagrange established the *École pratique d'études bibliques et Archéologiques* (commonly known as the École Biblique) in a disused abattoir in Jerusalem, with little material or financial resources to call upon.[58] It was founded for the study of the Bible both as the Inspired word of God, and as a literary work to be studied by those methods that were applied to other literary works. His great achievements were to take Catholic Biblical Scholarship into an area once dominated by the sometimes rationalistic and sceptical Protestant scholars, and to demonstrate that historical criticism and faith were not necessarily opposed to each other.

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[56] Ibid, p. 18.
[57] It will be shown later in this chapter, however, that the matters were in some ways left unresolved even after the 2nd Vatican Council in the 1960s.
[58] Kselman, J. S., and Witherup, R. D., 'Modern New Testament Criticism' 70:37, pp. 1136, in Brown, R. E., Fitzmyer, J. A., Murphy R. E. (Editors), The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, pp. 1130 – 1145, Chapman, London, 1997.

Lagrange upheld the Church's right to reject any interpretation contrary to its teaching, but he did not accept that this right denied the validity of critical methodology; instead, he saw that the Church, through its Magisterium, asserted a higher truth.[59] This would appear to set him on an unavoidable collision course between Magisterium and higher critics; but Lagrange's solution to the expected *impasse* was simple, yet brilliant. His first step was to stress the almost complete absence of points on which either the Magisterium or the majority of the Fathers, held a position which was diametrically opposed to critical findings - Pius XII would recall this idea in *Divino Afflante Spiritu*.[60] Therefore, Lagrange concluded that, with the few exceptions in which conflict between Church and criticism might occur, the scholar was completely free to employ critical apparatus as appropriate. In theory, the critic and the results of the critic's research were under the authority of the Church; in practice, the Church had seldom exercised this authority, and increasingly, was wise enough to be restrained in doing so.[61]

But even this important qualification still left one major issue unresolved - that criticism seemed constantly to imply error in the Bible, and therefore to undermine Biblical authority; since Leo XIII had insisted that error and the Bible were simply incompatible, how could this issue be resolved? As we already noted, as late as the year of *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, Cotter was writing an appraisal of Leo's encyclical on the occasion of its 50th anniversary, and saying that the earlier pope's teaching made it abundantly clear that, since the Bible is divinely Inspired, it is metaphysically incompatible with error.[62]

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[59] Robinson, R. B., Exegesis, p. 19.
[60] *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, article 47, *EB 564*.
[61] Robinson, R. B., Exegesis, p. 20.
[62] Cotter, A.C., Antecedents, p. 124.

Lagrange did not solve the dilemma by returning to the nature of Inspiration. Leo XIII had not left much room for manoeuvre here; there was nothing to be gained from trying to ascribe error in the Bible to the human author, since this was precisely the kind of limitation on Inspiration that Leo had ruled out. Instead, Lagrange focused on another section of the encyclical, which said that Biblical writers had had no wish to comment on the nature of the physical world: they merely reported on physical phenomena as they observed them:

> ...we must remember...that the sacred authors, or to speak more accurately, the Holy Ghost 'Who spoke by them, did not intend to teach men these things...,things in no way profitable unto salvation'. Hence, they did not seek to penetrate the secrets of nature, but rather described and dealt with things in more or less figurative language, or in terms which were commonly used at the time...[63]

So, if the ancient writers were recording the physical world as they saw it, and not attempting to write according to modern scientific standards, then there is no question of error where the Biblical account differs from a scientific account.[64] Leo went on to say that the principles he had aid down in his encyclical would apply to the cognate sciences and in particular to history.[65] Lagrange set out these principles, based on Thomistic logic. Truth and falsehood, he noted, are properties only of formal propositions; therefore, if the sacred writer did not intend to make a formal proposition about an historical occurrence, that statement could neither be called true or false. Here, the intention of the author was of paramount importance; if the author

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[63] *Providentissimus Deus,* article 18. *EB 121.* The quotation within this passage is from St. Augustine, De Genesi Ad Litteram Imperfectum Liber, i. 21, 41.
[64] Robinson, R. B., Exegesis, p. 20.
[65] *Providentissimus Deus,* article 20. *EB 123.*

did not intend to pass judgement on the truth or falsity of a statement, then its truth or otherwise was just not an issue.[66] Thus, Lagrange shifted the question of truth away from the relationship between the words of the text and the scientific explanation of what had actually happened.[67] If the author did not intend to claim truth for his account, then the question of error in that account is irrelevant.

Lagrange presented three levels of argument:[68]

1) From *Providentisimus Deus*, Lagrange argued that since Biblical authors did not have access to modern scientific knowledge of nature, they could only record the physical world as they saw it. It was not the custom of their time to seek historical accuracy, therefore, we should not look for it in their writing; their purpose was to record the collective memory of their nation.

2) Therefore, Biblical authors only intended to record those matters useful for human salvation, i.e. to convey teaching that God had revealed. This intention was supported by the assertion of Biblical Inspiration. However, Lagrange did not say that strictly profane elements were not Inspired; rather, they were Inspired toward the goal of passing on revelation, and not toward recording detail which had no significance for human salvation.[69] If the authors *had* presented formal propositions about the historical truth of Biblical writings, then these profane accounts could have communicated revelation, but as things are, they are mere instruments in revelatory communication.

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[66] Robinson, R. B., Exegesis, p. 21.
[67] In the light of the debate which would take place on Biblical Inerrancy during the 2nd Vatican Council, leading to the Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*, Lagrange's argument appears to be – and was – very Scholastic in approach. As noted on p. 56 below, Cardinal König of Vienna was much less Thomistic – and much more direct in his approach.
[68] Robinson, R. B., Exegesis, pp. 21 – 22.
[69] P. Grelot used a similar argument at the time of Vatican II. See p. 64 below.

3) Finally, Lagrange used the existence of literary genres in the Bible to determine authors' intentions. It was a serious mistake to try to force the entire Bible into only one genre: that would be to miss the authors' intentions in writing.

Lagrange's major contribution to hermeneutics was to move the emphasis away from the narrow view of an Inerrant text, and to place the author's role at the centre of the interpretation process. As we will see later, Ricoeur's philosophy of hermeneutics has seriously called into question the validity of focussing on authorial intention as the key to the interpretation of a text. However, Lagrange's focus on the author's intention did help to resolve the deadlock between an Inerrant Scripture and scientific criticism.

For Lagrange, the author was the Inspired instrument by which revelation was conveyed to the Church, and the author's intention was the inspired testimony to divine revelation;[70] he consistently maintained that Inspiration should not be considered from the position of God as author, but from the perspective of the human instrument. We shall see later that more recent writings have cast doubt on the usefulness of instrumentality as an explanation for Biblical Inspiration.[71]

Lagrange managed to take the heat out of the Inerrancy problem, but without paying the price of making the Bible irrelevant to theology. He recognised that the whole of Scripture is not direct revelation: if Scripture were religion *in toto*, this would reduce the Bible to 'a book dropped from heaven', and there would be no solution to the problem of Inerrancy, even in trivial cases of discrepancy between the Bible and historical fact.[72] But Revelation took place throughout the history of Israel, and

[70] Robinson, R. B., Exegesis, p. 22.
[71] Vawter, B., Inspiration, p. 99.
[72] Robinson, R. B., Exegesis, p. 22.

especially in the life of Christ. Scripture is the normative witness to Revelation. For Lagrange, Inspiration was validation for the claim that Scripture is Normative.

§ 1.4.6 How Lagrange paved the way for *Divino Afflante Spiritu.*

Lagrange shifted the focus from Scripture that was Inerrant because God was its author, to Inspired Scripture that was also composed by a human author. In so doing, he shifted attention to the author's intended meaning. Little of this was reflected in the 2nd of the Biblical Encyclicals, Pope Benedict XV's *Spiritus Paraclitus* (1920), except for a brief reference in this otherwise highly conservative document to the existence of different literary styles and genres in Biblical writing, a reference which was incorporated into the final encyclical of the trio. Lagrange's shift of emphasis can be recognised from the opening paragraph of Pius XII's 1943 encyclical, to such an extent that the later document contrasts strongly with its predecessor of 50 years before. Whereas Leo XIII had emphasised the benevolence of God who has bestowed on humanity his gift, Pius XII stresses the role of the human author, inspired by the Holy Spirit to compose the sacred books.[73] This difference is apparent when the texts are examined side by side:

***Providentissimus Deus* § 1**	***Divino Afflante Spiritu* § 1**
The God of all Providence, who in the adorable designs of His love…has bestowed upon man a splendid gift and safeguard-making known to him…the hidden mysteries of His divinity, His wisdom and His mercy	Inspired by the Divine Spirit, the Sacred Writers composed those books which God, in His paternal charity toward the human race, deigned to bestow in them…

[73] Robinson, R. B., Exegesis, p. 23.

Divino Afflante Spiritu, articles 33 and 34 make explicit the hermeneutical shift, which is central to the whole document, in focussing on the human author:

> ...the inspired writer, in composing the sacred book, is the living and reasonable instrument of the Holy Spirit...(and)...so uses his faculties and powers, that from the book composed by him all may easily infer 'the special character of each one and, as it were, his personal traits'. Let the interpreter, then, with all care and without neglecting any light derived from recent research, endeavour to determine the peculiar character and circumstances of the sacred writer, the age in which he lived, the sources written or oral to which he had recourse and the forms of expression he employed.[74]

and,

> Thus can he the better understand who was the inspired author, and what he wishes to express by his writings. *There is no one indeed but knows that the supreme rule of interpretation is to discover and define what the writer intended to express.*[75]

However, despite Pius' assertion about the universal acknowledgement on the supreme rule of interpretation, the rule was not always as readily implemented as his encyclical suggests.[76] However, the emphasis on the author's intention as indication of the true meaning of a passage heralds the hermeneutic shift marking the key departure in *Divino Afflante Spiritu.*

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[74] *Divino Afflante Spiritu,* article 33, *EB 556-557.* The words quoted in single commas are from Pope Benedict XV, encyclical letter *Spiritus Paraclitus*, (1920), article 8, *EB 448.*
[75] *Divino Afflante Spiritu,* article 34, *EB 557.* My italics.
[76] Robinson, R. B., Exegesis, p. 23

In article 23, the hermeneutical shift is made explicit: the search for the literal sense of the passage is to be the prime task of the exegete:

> ...let the interpreters bear in mind that their foremost and greatest endeavour should be to discern and define clearly that sense of the biblical words which is called literal. Aided by the context and by comparison with similar passages, let them therefore by means of their knowledge of languages search out with all diligence the meaning of the words; all these helps indeed are wont to be pressed into service in the explanation also of profane writers, so that the mind of the author may be made abundantly clear.[77]

Pius XII has formulated the literal sense of Scripture as that which was intended by the author. But this was not the usage familiar from Thomas Aquinas for example, for whom the literal sense was the meaning conveyed by the words of Scripture;[78] Scholastic writers were just not much concerned with the intention of the human author. Aquinas, drawing on ancient Greek literature and philosophy, certainly acknowledged that the literal sense was concerned with authorial intention, but in the case of Scripture, the literal sense was defined from the perspective of God as the author; not of the human writer. For Scholasticism, the human author need not even be aware God's intention when the passage was being written.[79] Hence Thomas Aquinas writes: "...the literal sense is that which the author intends, and the author of holy Scripture is God..."[80]

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[77] *Divino Afflante Spiritu,* article 23, *EB 550.*
[78] Brown, R. E., and Schneiders, S. M., 'Hermeneutics', 71:9, p. 1148 in Brown, R.E., Fitzmyer, J.A., Murphy, R. E., (editors) The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, pp. 1146 – 1165, Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1997,; Brown, R. E., The *Sensus Plenior* of Sacred Scripture, St. Mary's University Press, Baltimore, Maryland, 1955, p. 3.
[79] Brown, R. E., *Sensus Plenior*, p. 2.
[80] "Quia vero sensus litteralis est quem auctor intendit, auctor autem sacrae Scripturae Deus est..." *Summa Theologiae*, 1a. I, 10, in Gilby, T., St. Thomas Aquinas Summa Theologiae Volume I CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY (1a.I) Latin text, English Translation, Introduction, Notes, Appendices &

Therefore, Pius XII's equation of the literal sense with the human author's intention is new. It is also crucial, because on this rests the justification for employing modern critical apparatus in Biblical exegesis: and this encyclical does not merely permit the use of modern critical methodology; it virtually demands it:

> What is the literal sense of a passage is not always as obvious in the speeches and writings of the ancient authors of the East, as it is in the works of our own time. For what they wished to express is not solely determined by the rules of grammar and philology alone, nor solely by the context; the interpreter must, as it were, go back wholly in spirit to those remote centuries of the East and with the aid of history, archaeology, ethnology, and other sciences, accurately determine what modes of writing, so to speak, the authors of that ancient period would be likely to use, and in fact did use.[81]

Not only should the exegete use modern criticism, but the hermeneutical emphasis of the encyclical now makes it plain that the exegete *must* analyse the text using these tools, to determine the intention of the original human author. It is not difficult to see how this encyclical became known as the *Magna Carta* of Catholic Biblical Studies!

J. Fitzmyer[82] reads *Divino Afflante Spiritu*'s quest for the literal sense of Scripture as no more and no less than the search for what is truly meant by the spiritual sense. He makes the point in defence of the historical-critical method against those who complain that it does not reveal the spiritual meaning of the Bible, and notes that Pius XII clearly relates this literal sense of Scripture to the duty of the exegete, which

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Glossary, Blackfriars in Conjunction with Eyre & Spottiswoode, London, 1964, pp. 38 (Latin) and 39 (English).

[81] *Divino Afflante Spiritu,* article 35, *EB 558.*

[82] Fitzmyer, J. A., Scripture, the Soul of Theology, Paulist Press, New York/New Jersey, 1994, p.70.

is "...to set forth in particular the theological doctrine in faith and morals of the individual books or texts...".[83] But, according to Fitzmyer's reading of article 26, the meaning of Scripture intended by God can only be what is contained in the words intended and expressed by the human author, and that the literal sense of Scripture is precisely the spiritual sense of the Word of God.[84] It may have been a straightforward matter to make this link in 1943: in a later chapter, we will see that by the time that the Pontifical Biblical Commission produced its Instruction on the Interpretation of the Bible in the Church (1993), there were many serious reservations about the validity of this equation, of defining the literal sense in the manner chosen by Pius XII. The Commission chose to modify the definition of the literal sense to what the human author had *expressed*, rather than what the author had *intended*. Fitzmyer was apparently reluctant to accept the change of wording; perhaps this explains his rigorous defence of the historical-critical method as the correct way to determine the spiritual sense of Scripture, through its pursuit of the literal sense. The significance of this change of wording will be returned to in the final chapter of this study.

Divino Afflante Spiritu also had the effect of 'Canonising' Lagrange's principles, laid out in his *La Methode Historique*,[85] thereby easing the pressure on – but still not entirely resolving - the difficulties caused by previous understanding of Biblical Inerrancy. Further, Pius XII made it clear that that textual criticism, and the study of the original languages are indispensable to the task of Biblical interpretation. Ahern draws our attention to another interesting innovation in this encyclical; the implicit recognition of the debt that Catholic Biblical Studies owes to the achievements of

[83] *Divino Afflante Spiritu,* article 24, *EB 551.*
[84] Fitzmyer, J. A., Soul, p. 63.
[85] Aherne, B., 'Textual Directives of the Encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu*', p. 342, The Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. VII, No. 3, 1945, pp. 340 –347.

'the Humanistic Renaissance and the fresh impetus it gave to the sciences of antiquities and letters'.[86] The encyclical is clearly intent on ensuring there is to be no turning back on using modern apparatus to study Biblical literature. This much is evident in its encouragement to Biblical scholars to consider difficult and contentious problems of exegesis.[87] This is progress indeed from days following the Modernist crisis! The 1943 encyclical seems to exude a confidence that using critical tools for Biblical research would strip away inessential historical details to clear the way to true understanding of what the author intended to convey, hence establishing clearly the theological content of the text. Since the human author did not intend to convey an historical truth, it was no longer a problem to concede that historical details were irrelevant to the author's true intention, which was to convey theological, i.e., divine truth which God wanted to express.[88]

§ 1.4.7 The Weaknesses in *Divino Afflante Spiritu*

There can be no doubt of the achievements of this important encyclical. No longer could anyone legitimately claim that Higher Criticism and Biblical Inerrancy were irreconcilable. However, in clearing up one issue that had plagued Catholic Biblical Studies since the Modernist crisis, it managed to highlight more issues to be resolved; some problems were even intensified.[89] The search for the literal sense understood as that intended by the author is clearly based too strongly on the assumption of single authorship for each Biblical book. When Redaction Criticism was used along with the Form Criticism which Pius XII endorsed, the whole question of the search for the literal sense was driven wide open: how does one identify the literal intention of numerous anonymous authors? R. E. Brown indicated where the

[86] Aherne, B., 'Textual Directives', p. 341. C.f. *Divino Afflante Spiritu,* article 41, *EB 561.*
[87] *Divino Afflante Spiritu,* article 46, *EB 564.*
[88] Robinson, R. B., Exegesis, p. 24.
[89] Ibid, p. 25.

problem arises when he noted that the identification of the literal sense with the intention of the human author was too narrow; this formulation is too closely associated with the presumption that each Biblical book is the result of a single author.[90] Brown himself spent a considerable amount of time in investigating the existence of 'more-than-literal' meanings in the Bible, including his doctoral thesis on the *sensus plenior* of Sacred Scripture. That particular investigation need not concern us here, except to note that Brown himself admitted that his earlier work on the subject relied too heavily on a single authorship of the Biblical books.[91] It was this assumption of a single author for each Biblical book that lay behind *Providentissimus Deus*' understanding of Biblical Inspiration, with its assumption that the Bible was 'a static inspired text', produced by a writer whose mind and will had somehow been moved by the Holy Spirit.[92] This model of Inspiration fitted well into the conventional understanding that the authors of Biblical book were those whose names had been traditionally ascribed to them. Thus, there were four evangelists who had each written one of the four Gospels. Such a view – which still finds an echo in the way we continue to designate the books of the Bible according to traditional authors' names – makes it so much easier to advocate the grace of God working on each individual author to produce specific books.[93] If, however, we abandon such a narrow concept of Biblical authorship, if we accept that there was a much wider number of agents engaged in producing final Biblical texts, we must ask: can Leo XIII's model of Inspiration still be employed? Vawter notes that Leo XIII's model is very consistent in its logical exposition, but asks: is it likely that this ever

[90] Brown, R.E. The Critical Meaning of the Bible How a Modern Reading of the Bible Challenges Christians, the Church, and the churches, Paulist Press, New York/Ramsey, 1981, p. 30.
[91] Brown, R. E. Critical Meaning, p. 29.
[92] Vawter, B., Inspiration, p. 86.
[93] Ibid, p. 87.

had been the way in which any Inspired book was produced? It is this criterion, rather than logic, that will determine whether the model is appropriate.[94]

We will return to these themes in the next chapter, when we consider both the contribution of 20th Century Catholic Biblical Scholars to Biblical Inspiration, and a significant document from the Pontifical Biblical Commission on the Historical Truth of the Gospels *Sancta Mater Ecclesia* (1964), which gave tacit approval, not only to For, but also Redaction Criticism. Meanwhile, we return to Conciliar pronouncements, and to the Second Vatican Council.

§ 1.5 THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL: DOGMATIC CONSTITUTION ON DIVINE REVELATION, *DEI VERBUM*, (1965)

Vatican II did not produce a document on Scripture: within the Chapters of its Constitution on Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, there are chapters on the Old and New Testaments, on Scripture in the life of the Church, and on the Inspiration and Interpretation of Scripture, and the Constitution is defined by its opening chapter, on Revelation itself, and on the Transmission of Revelation. Before we consider relevant sections of the Constitution, some background information will be useful.

Early in the life of Vatican II, during the debate on the first *schema* on Revelation, a tussle for the hearts and minds of the Fathers was played out in the heated debated on the purpose of the Council. It was this struggle which, although perhaps not exactly determining the future influence the Council would have on the Catholic Church, certainly went a long way in determining, whether its direction would be consolidatory or ground-breaking. Actually, it was to be perhaps both, and neither,

[94] Ibid, p. 75.

despite the attempts made by officials of the Roman Curia to ensure that the discussions in the preparatory commissions, and despite the fact that conservative views alone were reflected in the reports from these commissions. Pope John XXIII had insisted that the Council would be pastoral rather than dogmatic, and in his opening speech had clearly stated the need to support that pastoral role of the Magisterium by the careful consideration of how dogma should be expressed for the present age; therefore the conservative faction was forced to employ such strategies if it was to retain control over the Council.[95]

The struggle was not entirely new. For example, it would be a mistake to assume, despite Pius XII's insistence on the need for critical exegesis, that *Divino Afflante Spiritu* was immediately implemented everywhere. Pius XII's pronouncements were always greeted with outward adulation, but more often than not, they were completely ignored in practice. It did not end here: in 1964, the Pontifical Biblical Commission issued the important Instruction *Sancta Mater Ecclesia,* on the Historical Truth of the Gospels.[96] Cardinal Ruffini of Palermo's position as a member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission was at this point very difficult, in the light of an article he had written, in which he attacked Pius XII's endorsement of Higher Criticism, and which appeared on the front page of *L'Osservatore Romano* in June 1961, after John XXIII had announced the Council, but before its opening:

> How can one suppose that the Church has during nineteen centuries presented the Divine Book to its children without knowing the literary genre in which it was composed, if this is the key to exact interpretation? Such an assertion becomes all the more absurd when one takes into

[95] Walsh, M. J., 'The History of the Council', p. 36, in Hastings, A., Modern Catholicism: Vatican II and Afterwards, pp. 35 – 47, S.P.C.K. London, 1991.
[96] see above, p. 32.

> account that a large number of these superior-minded critics not only call for a new applications of the theory of literary genres in regard to the inspired books but remit to the future a definitive explanation; that is to say, to the time when one will come to understand better, *through the study of history, of archaeology, of ethnology, and of the other sciences*, on the manner of speaking and writing of the ancients, particularly the Orientals.[97]

The italicised section is a direct quotation from *Divino Afflante Spiritu.*[98] Clearly, Ruffini intended a direct attack on the encyclical, and here we encounter a strange logic. Ruffini, a loyal member of the Curia, could be so bold as to call the Pope's position absurd, and at the same time claim to uphold orthodoxy. Clearly one would need to have the right connections to be able to do this![99] No wonder Pius XII, exasperated by these tactics from Curial colleagues determined to undermine his efforts to harmonise Church teaching with the intellectual and moral concerns of the age, decided that his only option was to 'go it alone' in formulating moral and doctrinal teaching.[100] However, Ruffini's strategy is not so far removed from something found in the encyclicals themselves. When these begin by praising to the hilt the wisdom of papal predecessors, this may well be a prelude to the unveiling of ideas which their predecessors would not have countenanced for a moment. *Divino Afflante Spiritu* is good example of this.

On the other hand, if *Dei Verbum* was not a surrender to the conservative faction in the Roman Curia, neither did it herald ground-breaking innovation in the doctrine of

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[97] Rynne, X., Vatican Council II, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1999, p. 37.
[98] *Divino Aflante Spiritu* article 35; *EB 558.*
[99] Rynne, X., Vatican II, p. 37.
[100] Ibid, p .11.

Divine Revelation. *Dei Verbum* cannot be credited with the first endorsement of historical critical methodology: *Divino Afflante Spiritu* takes the credit for this.[101] Nor did it clear the way for the adoption of redaction critical methodology: *Sancta Mater Ecclesia*, the 1964 Instruction on the Historical Truth of the Gospels from the Pontifical Biblical Commission achieved this about one year before *Dei Verbum* was promulgated.[102] To this extent, it was not a progressive document any more than it was reactionary

But if *Dei Verbum* did not set out new content, its significant achievement – at least as far as the scope of this study is concerned - lay in the way old doctrines were freshly expressed, which, of course, was the objective Pope John XXIII had identified at the opening of the Council. For our purposes, this achievement can be considered under two headings: the Catholic doctrine of Divine Revelation, and the concept of Biblical Inspiration (and, for that matter, Biblical Inerrancy).

§ 1.5.2 *Dei Verbum* and the Transmission of Revelation: Scripture and Tradition

A conservative victory in the debate over the Constitution on Revelation would have had serious consequences. *Dei Verbum's* eventual formulation of Tradition would not have been possible, and it was a new understanding of Tradition that was one of the crucial factors in the Constitution's final form. This new understanding had developed from the Tübingen school in the 19th Century, and built on by J. R. Geiselmann.[103] The area under investigation here was the statement of the Council of Trent on Scripture and Tradition in the mediation of Revelation. This decree had

[101] pp. 25 – 32.
[102] p. 32.
[103] Ratzinger, J., translated by Glen-Doepel, W., 'Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation. Origins and Backgrounds', p. 156, in Vorgrimler, H., General Editor, Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, Volume III, Burns & Oates/Herder and Herder, London/New York, 1969, pp. 155 –166.

been interpreted as ruling out the Reformers' insistence on the principle that revelation came through Scripture alone – the so-called *sola scriptura* principle. Famously, Trent had defined that:

> (The) Gospel was promised...through the prophets in the Sacred Scriptures; Our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, first promulgated it from His own lips; He in turn ordered that it be preached through the apostles...as the source of all saving truth and rule of conduct. *The Council clearly perceives that this truth and rule are contained in the written books and unwritten traditions which have come down to us, having come down to us, having been received by the apostles from the mouth of Christ himself, or from the apostles by the dictation of the Holy Spirit, and have been transmitted as it were from hand to hand.*[104]

It had usually been assumed that Trent ruled out once and for all any possibility of a *sola scriptura* principle for Catholic theology.[105] But Geiselmann notes that the Trent wording had been changed from its original formulation. This involved the change of the text '*partim in libris...partim in...traditionibus*' to '*in libris scripti et sine scripto traditionibus*'. Geiselmann concluded that the change was made because some of the fathers at Trent favoured a Catholic version of *sola scriptura.* Hence he concluded that Trent had left open the door here for what amounted to a consideration of the material sufficiency of Scripture. Geiselmann's position is no longer favoured, but he certainly drew attention to the fact that the actual text of the Trent decree does not explicitly *divide* between Scripture and Tradition. The conservative faction of the

[104] "The General Council of Trent Fourth Session. Decree on Sacred Books and on the Traditions Received (1546)" in Neuner, J., and Dupuis, J., The Christian Faith In The Doctrinal Statements of the Catholic Church, Mercier Press, Dublin and Cork, 1973, p. 70. (My italics); *EB 57.*
[105] Ratzinger, J., 'Origins and Backgrounds', p. 156.

Vatican II theologians belonged to the Roman school of theology that endorsed the *partim...partim* approach to Revelation. They were to fight rigorously to defend their position from the beginning of the life of the document on Revelation.

§ 1.5.3 Relevant sections of *Dei Verbum*, examined article by article.

The first paragraph of the Constitution, its Preface, is a re-reading of the earlier Councils Vatican I and Trent:

> ...a *relecture* of the corresponding texts of Vatican I and Trent, in which what was written then is interpreted in terms of the present, thus giving a new rendering of both its essentials and its insufficiencies...we might perhaps see the relation of this text to its predecessors as a perfect example of dogmatic development, of the inner *relecture* of dogma in dogmatic history.[106]

From the very beginning, then, we have a formulation which highlights those principles for the presentation of magisterial pronouncements to do with the development of doctrine; the need to demonstrate continuity with the teaching of the past, and the need to express in a more up to date way the truth contained in the relevant doctrines.

After the preface, the Constitution can get down to the business of what it means by Revelation itself. Ratzinger identifies some seven versions of the text on Revelation which appeared on its way to promulgation, which he identifies by the letters A – G. Surprisingly, it was only with the 5th of these, Text E (discussed in the Assembly

[106] Ratzinger, J., trans. Glen-Doepel, W., 'Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation. *Preface*', p. 169, in Vorgrimler, H., (Gen Editor), translated by Glen-Doepel, W., et al, Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, Volume III, Burns & Oates/Herder and Herder, London/New York, 1969, pp. 167 – 169.

between 30 September and 6 October 1964), that a chapter was dedicated to Revelation itself.[107] But in the course of this long development, it became possible for the council Fathers to abandon the duality of fonts of Revelation which had caused problems in earlier drafts, and which was so hotly debated by liberals and conservatives alike. A focus on the origin of Revelation itself could then allow the Council to place the discussion of the transmission of Revelation within its proper context.

Article 2 Vatican II departs from Vatican I in the way it speaks of Revelation. The earlier Council had argued from the natural knowledge of God, and from that progressed to 'supernatural revelation', and from there, to the transmission of Revelation in Scripture and Tradition. But *Dei Verbum* begins by considering God's revealing activity,[108] which takes place ultimately in the person of Christ; from this comes an understanding of revelation expressed as dialogue with God. Later, in article 25 of *Dei Verbum*, we find that reading of Scripture is where 'a dialogue takes place between God and man' – a *colloquium inter Deum et hominem*'.[109] When the concept of dialogue is introduced, it brings with it the idea of an actualisation within that dialogue; in other words, the dialogue with God always takes place in the present: "(Jesus') address 'no longer do I call you servants...but...friends' (John 15:15) is given here and now with the intention of forcing us to reply."[110]

The text offers a picture of Revelation where word and event make up a whole, together touching humanity in its totality. The Council fathers wanted to move away

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[107] Ratzinger, J., trans. Glen-Doepel, W., 'Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation. *Chapter I Revelation Itself*', p. 170, in Vorgrimler, H., (Gen Editor), translated by Glen-Doepel, W., et al, Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, Volume III, Burns & Oates/Herder and Herder, London/New York, 1969, pp. 170-180.
[108] Ratzinger, J., trans. Glen-Doepel, W., '*Chapter I*, p. 170.
[109] Ibid, p. 171.
[110] Ibid, p. 172.

from the Neo-Scholasticism favoured by the conservative faction, and which had tended to reduce Divine self-disclosure to intellectual propositions. These in turn would reduce the human response of faith to an acceptance of these propositions. The Council did not rule out that Revelation can exist in propositional form; but it did stress that Revelation challenges the entire human person, engaged in dialogue with the One who reveals, and not just the intellect. Revelation is also realised in events, gestures, and words which "culminate and find themselves recapitulated in the great Event of Christ...the Gospel is Jesus himself."[111] This model of Revelation suggests a dialogue in which humanity is partner, and it fully recognises the true nature of humanity, perhaps for the first time in a document on Revelation.[112] This article closes with a statement about the totality of Revelation: it is Christ, "who is himself both the mediator and the sum total of Revelation."[113]

Article 3 deals briefly with Revelation before the time of Christ. It stresses that Revelation does not come to us as one big timeless idea; rather, it is the operation of God in human history, and identifies this history as the place of humanity's salvation.[114] This is turn paves the way for article 4 to describe Christ as the final word of God, since in Christ, we no longer have someone in history merely speaking of God: Christ is himself the speech of God. Ratzinger explains this as follows:

> God does not arbitrarily cease speaking at some point of history and at some point of his disclosure, (as) there (should) be much more to say, but

[111] de Moulins-Beaufort, E., translated by Borras, M., 'Henri de Lubac: Reader of *Dei Verbum*', p. 675, in Communio 28, Winter 2001, pp. 669 - 694.
[112] Ratzinger, J., trans. Glen-Doepel, W., '*Chapter I*, p. 172.
[113] *Dei Verbum,* Flannery, A., (General Editor), The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents, Dominican Publications, Dublin, 1975, article 2, p. 751.
[114] Ratzinger, J., trans. Glen-Doepel, W., '*Chapter I*', p. 173 – 181.

> Christ is the end of God's speaking, because after him and beyond him God has, as it were, said himself...[115]

The Christ event, seen as an end of the Revelation process, can also, however, be viewed as a beginning that continues, because Revelation is nothing more or less than humanity constantly addressed by God. It is therefore a constant promise of what is to come.

The human response to Revelation needs some reflection now, and this is the subject of article 5. While this recalls Vatican I's identification of three elements in the awakening of faith, plays down to a large extent those elements of faith as a response to Magisterial teaching, and exterior signs, such as miracles and prophecies, in favour of the idea of an inwardly directed faith, which is constantly perfected by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and which provides ever deepening insights into Revelation. Tradition is considered in this paragraph as the growing insight into the Revelation, mediated by the Holy Spirit, and given to humanity.[116] The human response to Revelation will lie at the heart of the model for Biblical Inspiration to be developed later in this study.

The ground prepared in chapter I of *Dei Verbum* made it possible for its next chapter to consider the transmission of Revelation, and here we can see the clearest signs of the scars left by the struggle for what would eventually be the expression of the mind of the Council fathers.[117] In article 7, the first of Chapter II, we find the statement:

> ...Christ the Lord, in whom the entire Revelation of the most high God is summed up (cf. 2 Corinthians 1:20; 3:16 – 4:6) commanded the apostles to

[115] Ibid, p. 175.
[116] Ibid, p. 179.
[117] Ibid, p. 181.

preach the Gospel, which had been promised beforehand by the prophets and which he fulfilled in his own person and promulgated with his own lips.[118]

This understanding of the unity of the Word of God in Jesus Christ, and the identification of this as the single source of Revelation was the most important step in overcoming the centuries-old custom of speaking of two sources of Revelation.[119] The history of *Dei Verbum*'s passage to final promulgation shows that the debate was not about Revelation or Scripture –these had been described by Vatican I - but rather it was about proper role of Tradition. It is only fair to note that others are of different opinions: for example, de Moulins-Beaufort claims that Henri de Lubac insisted the Constitution was about Revelation, although this was apparently made to counter suggestions that the constitution was primarily about Scripture.[120]

De Moulins-Beaufort helpfully points out the significance of the unifying concept of Jesus Christ as *the* source of Revelation: article 2 of *Dei Verbum* had stated that "...(the) economy of Revelation is realised by *deeds and word*, which are intrinsically caught up with each other."[121] His conclusion from this is that neither words nor gestures in themselves were therefore sufficient to contain the fullness of Revelation, and therefore neither the written word, nor oral transmission are enough to do justice to the living character of Revelation.[122] This living character of the Word of God is attested, of course, in the letter to the Hebrews 4:12.

This is significant for the relationship between Scripture and Tradition in the transmission of Revelation because, paradoxically, it is Tradition which has suffered

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[118] *Dei Verbum,* article 7, p. 753.
[119] Fisichella, R., translated by Walker, A., '*Dei Verbum Audiens et Proclamans*: On Scripture and Tradition as Source of the Word of God', p. 86, in Communio 28, Spring 2001, pp. 85 – 98.
[120] de Moulins-Beaufort, E., 'Reader of *Dei Verbum*', p. 672.
[121] *Dei Verbum,* article 2, p. 751.
[122] Fisichella, R., '*Audiens*', p. 89.

somewhat from lack of attention in the post Vatican II era, in which "...Scripture alone has taken over as the lady of the house."[123]

But a misplaced enthusiasm for Scripture at the expense of Tradition would mean that the former is deprived of its appropriate *humus,* which it needs if it is to express itself as a living word that can nourish the Christian community in every generation. Far from Geiselmann's suggestion that there was room for a Catholic concept of *sola-scriptura*, as far as Vatican II was concerned, Scripture and Tradition work together in the transmission of the living word of God. In fact, if the Word of God was available to us only in written form, it would then be confined to a text, it would no longer be something alive and active, and would no longer bear any relation to the Church in which it was being read in any given age. In the final chapter of this investigation, this idea will be considered in the light of Ricoeur's hermeneutical theory that the meaning of a text does not reside in the intention of the historical author of that text, but is a property of the text itself. I will suggest that, in terms of the reading of Scripture, it is precisely Tradition that explains how the meaning of the written text can be alive for the reader of any given age. I will also suggest that, just as Ricoeur believes that there are criteria for identifying correct meanings of texts, it is Tradition provides these criteria within the Christian community.

The Vatican II fathers were trying to avoid an absolute identification of Scripture with the word of God, but in so doing, they made an unfortunate choice of the word *locutio* to refer to Scripture in article 9, instead of *verbum.* The choice is unfortunate because, in his understanding, *locutio* strictly speaking refers only to speech, and not

[123] Ibid, pp. 92f.

to writing.[124] This may, however, remind us of another important point: De Moulins-Beaufort draws attention to de Lubac's reflection that Jesus himself has left us nothing in written form, and that the Scriptures are the collection of what others have written about him – Moses and the Prophets in anticipation, the apostles and the evangelists in witness. De Lubac concludes that the purpose of the 'Book' is solely to provide access to the Person who is the word of God.[125]

However, the point is that Scripture and Tradition have complementary roles in the transmission of the Word of God. Ratzinger, on article 9, notes that there is a clear distinction drawn in the definitions of the two concepts as defined by Vatican II, one that seeks to preserve the unity of Scripture and Tradition:

> It is important to note that only Scripture is defined in terms of what it *is*:...Scripture *is* the Word of God consigned to writing. Tradition, however, is described only functionally, in terms of what it *does*: it hands on the Word of God, but *is* not the Word of God....tradition('s)...task...is to preserve (the Word of God), explain it, and make it more widely known.[126]

Tradition's task is not 'productive': it is 'preservative', designed to serve as part of something already given.

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[124] Fisichella, R., '*Audiens*', p. 94.
[125] de Moulins-Beaufort, E., 'Reader', p. 679. De Moulins-Beaufort locates de Lubac's reflection in his work on Medieval Exegesis: unfortunately, he does not give precise references to its exact location.
[126] Ratzinger, J., trans. Glen-Doepel, W., 'Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation. *Chapter II. The Transmission of Divine Revelation.*', p. 194, in Vorgrimler, H., (Gen Editor), translated by Glen-Doepel, W., et al, Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, Volume III, Burns & Oates/Herder and Herder, London/New York, 1969, pp. 181 – 198.

§ 1.5.3 *Dei Verbum*: The Bible - Inerrancy and Inspiration

If Chapter II was about defining the role of Tradition, Chapter III is clearly concerned with Scripture – its Inspiration and Inerrancy. The next chapter will list some of the models and explanations that have been offered for Biblical Inspiration. Here, we will limit our consideration to the advances Vatican II brought to how we might understand Inspiration. In the past, an inordinate amount of time was devoted to the problem of Inerrant Scripture, and the apparent *impasse* - if God is the author of Scripture, how can it contain any error of any kind. Perhaps all that is necessary for us to note at this stage, however is that the Council chose to express the concept in a new way. *Providentissimus Deus* stated that Biblical Inspiration is incompatible with error of any kind, since to maintain that there was error in the Inspired text was to attribute the error to God himself;[127] however, *Dei Verbum* states that "we must acknowledge that the books of Scripture, firmly, faithfully, and without error, teach that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confined to the sacred Scriptures."[128]

Here, we see clearly that the emphasis has been placed, not on error, but on the truth that God wanted confined to Scripture for our salvation. This is clearly a desire on the part of the Council fathers to express more openly what Inerrancy means, but it is also an attempt to avoid the repeating earlier *a priori* and absolute definitions of Inerrancy, statements which blatantly ignored the incontrovertible fact of historically inaccurate material in the Scriptures.[129] This formulation is not limited to the present article, but recurs elsewhere in the Constitution (articles 7, 8, 10). The Council would

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[127] *Providentissimus Deus*, article 21, *EB 125.*
[128] *Dei Verbum,* article 11, p. 757.
[129] see Grillmeier, A., 'Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation. *Chapter III. The Divine Inspiration and the Interpretation of Sacred Scripture*', p. 201, in Vorgrimler, H., (Gen Editor), translated by Glen-Doepel, W., et al, Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, Volume III, Burns & Oates/Herder and Herder, London/New York, 1969, pp. 199-243.

not allow for any misinterpretation that permitted a distinction between 'errant' and 'inerrant' Scriptures, any more than it could allow a distinction between Inspired and non-Inspired parts of the Bible. It insisted that Inerrancy and Inspiration both stem from the will of God, who communicates (reveals) to humanity his saving truth, and this communication is done in such a way that saving truth is passed on 'firmly, truthfully and without error.' These last words, from article 11, describe Scripture's unique role in guaranteeing the permanent existence in this world of the truth of salvation, and thus of being witness to the faithfulness of God to humanity.[130] To repeat de Lubac, the words of Scripture give us access to the Word of God.

The Constitution's argument on Biblical Inerrancy is related to its understanding of Inspiration. The Inspired books of the Bible provide the unique way in which Revelation is imparted to the Church, through the Holy Spirit.[131] The Inspired books impart that truth which God is concerned with passing on to convey to humanity for its salvation. The remaining chapters of this study will explore what Biblical Inspiration might mean, and how it might be understood to operate.

There is more to be said about Inerrancy, however. As we have seen, the issue for this document is the transmission of that truth which God wishes to convey for purposes of salvation. But in that case, how are we to relate to those parts of Scripture that clearly do not present us with historically accurate accounts? Grillmeier notes that the history of the Constitution once again sheds light on the intentions of the Fathers in the final formulation, and he quotes part of the now famous speech by Cardinal König, to the effect that historical and scientific concepts

[130] Grillmeieir, A., '*Chapter III*,' p. 231f.
[131] Ibid, p. 232.

are from time to time found to be deficient in the sacred books.[132] This statement was never opposed or rejected, either by the Theological Commission, or in General Congregation, which indicates that no one considered that it contradicted earlier Magisterial teaching on Inerrancy. However, this point must also be balanced by the Council's insistence that on no account could a view of partial Inspiration, limited only to particular truths or particular parts of Scripture be endorsed: at a vote on 21 September 1965, objections were raised concerning the expression *veritas salutaris*, since it apparently contradicted earlier pronouncements which clearly ruled out any limitation on the scope of Inerrancy to matters of faith and morals. In the ensuing exchange, the Theological Commission reiterated the traditional view that all Scripture is inspired, and is therefore the word of God, and that this word of truth does not teach anything other than *veritas salutaris*.[133]

Grillmeier takes us down the road of a distinction between 'formal object' and 'material object'. The Inspired books were written, not to provide information on historical or scientific matters; they were written solely for the purpose of conveying those truths that God wished to convey to humanity for our salvation.[134] P. Grelot argued from the starting point that Scripture conveyed truth not only in fact (material object), but also according to its purpose (formal object).[135] This also, however, allows so-called secular or profane truths to acquire a relation to salvation, not because they convey accurate factual or scientific information, but because, even if they are inaccurate in historical detail, they are part of the process of the

[132] Ibid, p. 233. The Latin texts as given on this page reads: "...in Biblis Sacris notitias historicas et notitias scientiae naturalis a veritate quandoque deficere".
[133] Ibid, p. 234.
[134] Ibid, p. 235.
[135] pp 22 - 24 above.

communication of salvific truths in written form. Therefore, there is no inconsistency in maintaining that all Scripture is Inspired, but some parts are deficient in accuracy:

> Everything in Scripture has a share in the truth that God wanted to have written down for the sake of our salvation...What secular science regards as the material mistakes and inaccuracies in Scripture should not be considered in isolation and simply be described as error. It should all be seen within the framework of Scripture and judged in terms of its service for the word of salvation.[136]

This is the sense in which it is possible to speak of the Inspiration of Scripture: writing having taken place to convey the truths of salvation through the assistance of the Holy Spirit. *Dei Verbum* did not resolve the question of whether Inspiration is verbal or plenary: it was not, as Grillemeier noted, concerned with forwarding theories, but with enunciating the principles.[137]

§ 1.5.4 *Dei Verbum*: Summing up; what is needed for a theology of Biblical Inspiration

To close this chapter, we can consider a brief outline of how Biblical Inspiration is described in the documents of Vatican II. The analysis given here follows closely, but not exclusively, the line taken by R. F. Collins:[138]

i) Vatican II clearly desires to provide continuity with the previous Magisterial teachings on Inspiration. Also, it cites New Testament passages which historically have been used to support this teaching, particularly 2 Timothy 3:16-17, and 2 Peter 1:19-21.

[136] Grillmeieir, A., '*Chapter III*,' p. 236.
[137] Ibid, p. 233.
[138] Collins, R. F., 'Inspiration', p. 1024.

ii) However, the Fathers of the Council clearly wished to avoid appearing to favour any particular theory of Inspiration. Therefore different aspects of Inspiration are stressed at different times: some passages stress Inspiration as the quality of the Biblical texts themselves (articles 8, 21, 24), and at others, it is the writers who are described as Inspired (articles 7, 18), and in still others, Inspiration is predicated of the Holy Spirit (articles 7, 9, 14, 18, 20).

iii) It should be noted that the Constitution clearly takes on board the Pontifical Biblical Instruction on the Historical Truth of the Gospels, *Sancta Mater Ecclesia*, of 1964, which outlined a threefold stage of development of the four Gospels, to be covered in greater detail in Chapter 2. Article 18 of the Constitution extends Inspiration beyond the apostles themselves to 'others of the apostolic age.'[139]

iv) Repeatedly, Inspiration is invoked as the ground for holding that the Scriptures contain the word of God. The Gospels benefit from the charism of Inspiration in a singularly pre-eminent fashion.

Vatican II shows continuity with earlier Magisterial pronouncements, but it does not simply re-iterate earlier texts without development. Grillmeier notes that the fathers clearly wished to avoid mechanistic expressions for Inspiration like those found in earlier Magisterial pronouncements The new expression was worked out by exploring more fully than before the relation between the human and the divine authors of Scripture. Now, God is not referred to as *auctor litterarius* in the literal sense. However, there is ascribed to God a true influence on the sacred writers. In

[139] The Abbott translation has 'apostolic men', and add the footnote: that this refers to the generation partly contemporary with the apostles, but younger than they are." Abbott, W.M., (General Editor), The Documents of Vatican II, With Notes and Comments by Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox Authorities, Geoffrey Chapman, London and Dublin, 1966, p. 123, n. 44.

this way, the traditional position is retained, but no detailed working out of the mechanics of this – such as the earlier suggestion of the suitability of the principle of instrumental causality – is now given. The Council, instead, is content to stress the role of the human writer, and this is in keeping with the understanding of Inerrancy outlined in previous paragraphs of this investigation. Grillmeier expresses this well:

> Everything that belongs to the *auctor litterarius* in the strictly technical sense is to be sought on the side of the human authors…they are no longer described as living instruments…the description of God as the '*auctor principalis*' is dropped. Instead, the sacred writers are described as 'true authors', which is precisely what *auctores litterarii* is intended to convey…(T)he text made room for a recognition of differences and limitations in the human authors.[140]

Clearly, there is no new definition of Inspiration in *Dei Verbum*. As far as a definition goes, *Providentissimus Deus* said all that needed to be said: that the Scriptures have both God and the human writer(s) as authors. But what *Dei Verbum* does manage to do is to remove unnecessary obstacles to an exploration of *how* Inspiration might operate. Leo XIII had proposed Instrumental Causality as a model for its understanding, but this was not the same as including that Principle as an essential part of the definition. *Dei Verbum* provides no alternative model for how Inspiration works; but it does lay down for us the context within which the search should take place. And that context is that of Revelation, the source of which is the Word made flesh. Within this context, we have found that Scripture is the Word of God insofar as it is consigned to writing; that Scripture conveys to us those matters

[140] Grillmeieir, A., '*Chapter III*,' p. 229.

that God wanted to convey for our salvation; and that Inspiration means that God is the author of Scripture. What it refrains from doing is proposing the method by which Scripture is Inspired, or whether Inspiration is located in the human author or the text (in fact, it states both of these). And finally, whenever the word author is used in a literary sense, it clearly is applied to the human, rather than the divine author.

Subsequent treatment of Biblical Inspiration in this study will draw heavily on these emphases, especially in developing a model for Inspiration which relies on the human authors of Scripture, prompted by the Holy Spirit, writing in response to perceived revelation which is Divine self-disclosure. For the present, we have considered relatively briefly, but sufficiently broadly, many of the key factors that need to be kept in mind if we are to develop a hermeneutically aware theory of Biblical Inspiration that remains true to the tradition of Catholic theology. The next chapter will examine firstly the shortcomings of both the Thomistic understanding of Inspiration, and its reliance on the Principle of Instrumental Causality.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGIES AND MODELS FOR BIBLICAL INSPIRATION

§ 2 INTRODUCTION: PROBLEMS WITH INSPIRATION

The previous chapter took us through the history of the formulation of Biblical Inspiration, from New Testament citations, through Patristic theories, and finally tracing its passage through Magisterial documents, up till the 2nd Vatican Council and its Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*, of 1965. This chapter will turn to theologians and Biblical scholars ancient and modern, in an attempt to tease out what must be said about authorship - human and divine - and about the role of the community in writing Scripture. As we noted in chapter 1, it has been said that the synthesis of Thomas Aquinas gave rise to the only real theology of Inspiration ever produced;[141] we will attempt to identify this theology's strengths as well as its weaknesses. This will also be done for the Principle of Instrumental Causality, invoked by Aquinas and others to explain Inspiration.

We will turn to more recent theologians and exegetes to help identify some problems left unsolved by Thomism, and we will take on board the most helpful of their suggestions. We will adopt the proposal of one contemporary Biblical Scholar, T. A. Hoffmann, to supply us with a model for understanding Biblical Inspiration in a way that respects what we encounter in the Scriptures themselves.

[141] see p. 2.

So what are the problems with Inspiration? Several are suggested by Sandra Schneiders, which she considers under three headings.

Firstly, there is a problem in identifying just how Inspired the Bible is. The Christian community clearly had no problem in attributing divine origin to 'the Scriptures' that were in use by the early Church. Already, this observation throws up a problem which we will need to return to later, namely did the early community regard the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures with equal authority? Schneiders does not raise this particular question, and for now, we merely note that the question of what Scriptures were and were not Inspired apparently did not arise until the patristic age, when the process of drawing up the Canon of Scripture was taking place. Debate ranged from Marcion - who denied the Inspiration of the Old Testament, and whose opinion was rejected by the Church - to what Christian texts should be accepted as Inspired and Canonical, e.g. the *Didache*, or the Letter of Barnabas, which were excluded from the Canon, and the Book of Revelation, which was only later recognised as Inspired.

Schneiders writes that 'the Church never considered inspiration the grounds or the criterion for including a writing in the Canon, but, once a book was Canonised, it was regarded as inspired.'[142] This statement can be misleading. If she means that the acceptance of a Canon of Scripture does not define the extent to which other, non-Canonical books are Inspired, her statement is fine, but if she is saying – and it is not easy to rule out this from her wording – that Canonisation is necessary *before* a book can be called Inspired, then this is very much at variance with Magisterial teaching. Lagrange identified from the Councils of Florence, Trent and Vatican I, a clear historical progression of the events which resulted in the Canonisation of Biblical

[142] Schneiders, S., The Revelatory Text, p. 47.

books: a) books are written under the influence of the Holy Spirit, b) *therefore*, they have God as their author, c) *therefore*, the Church recognises them as Canonical and authoritative.[143] Schneiders is correct, however, if she maintains that the extent of Inspiration may stretch beyond the limits of the defined Canon. Later, we will see how Hoffmann cites Inspiration as only one of three factors that are responsible for giving Scripture its unique sacred character.[144] It is perfectly acceptable to assert that a book is inspired, even if it is not part of the Canon. There are, of course, many different understandings of the content of the Canon of Scripture; the Catholic Church has accepted the Canon as that laid down by the Council of Trent; the Reformers accepted a reduced number of books as Canonical; in each case, the question did not arise as to whether Canonical books were inspired. The Inspired quality of a Biblical (i.e. Canonical) book was not called into question until perhaps the Enlightenment, when Biblical books were for the first time studied in the same manner as other ancient texts. Only when Renaissance and Enlightenment scholars became more aware of the human role in writing Scripture, did the questions of divine authorship and the usefulness or meaningfulness of the term Inspiration arise.

The second point of difficulty about Inspiration that Schneiders raises has to do with the explanation of Inspiration – where is Inspiration actually located? From earliest times, she notes, the debate was whether the divine influence was directed at the author (this was the prophetic model of Inspiration favoured by Augustine, and later taken up by Aquinas), or at the text (which was maintained by Origen). As we will see later, the prophetic model is now considered to be too limited, since it fails to recognise literary genres in the Bible other than prophetic. This model of Inspiration

[143] Burtchaell, J. T. Theories, p. 135.
[144] Hoffmann, T.A., 'Inspiration', p. 454.

also makes it difficult to avoid the conclusion that the human author is no more than taking dictation from the divine author (despite the popularity of this theory, which we considered in chapter 1). On the other hand, if the emphasis is placed on the text, how are we to avoid the accusation that the Biblical book descended from above? The Medieval Scholastics invoked the Principle of Instrumental Causality to address the problems with Inspiration; as we have already seen, this model has proved to be less than adequate.

Schneiders' third point on difficulties with Inspiration is concerned with the theology of Inspiration. The question is: what is the theological significance of saying that the Bible is Inspired? Does it mean, as some maintain, that the Bible is totally inerrant in every detail, or do we concede that it is not possible to explain what Inspiration means? The former position is commonly found in fundamentalist circles, whereas the latter occurs in a wide spectrum of opinion, ranging from an uncomplicated faith that believes the Bible is Inspired, but does not try to explain why, to scholars who, while accepting their own their confessional positions which affirm Inspiration, conclude that no useful explanation of Inspiration is possible, because there is such a lack of empirically verifiable evidence of divine influence.

Schneiders does not subscribe to either extreme. She associates with the scholars who attempt to place Inspiration within the context of what it means to call the Bible Sacred Scripture, and from the perspective of what we learn about Inspiration from the Scriptures themselves. At the same time, these try to reconcile the Church's traditional position on Inspiration with the accepted contemporary theories of philosophical hermeneutics. This is the approach we will take towards the model for understanding Inspiration which I hope to develop in this study. As a first step, it

may be helpful to return to the prophetic model of Inspiration described earlier, and show why this is no longer an acceptable model for our understanding of the concept, despite the fact that it has been around since patristic times, was widely used in Scholastic theology, and was used to formulate the doctrine of Inspiration found in Magisterial documents. Of course, here we have a clear illustration of where the distinction must be drawn between a doctrine, and a philosophical/theological construct that tries to explain the doctrine.

§ 2.1 THOMISTIC SCHOLASTICISM, AND THE PROPHETIC MODEL OF INSPIRATION IT ADOPTED

The great strength of scholastic theology of the Middle Ages was its achievement in producing a synthesis.[145] Since the period of Scholasticism, Christianity (Catholic and Protestant) has in many ways done little more than react to that synthesis, whether the reaction be its acceptance, its proposed modification, or its rejection altogether. If synthesis was the strength of scholasticism, its greatest weakness was probably its excessive rationalism, its speculative and deductive reasoning which may have allowed its synthesis to come about, but which has left us with explanations which, to many, seem to reflect very little of the reality they are describing. For example, we have already mentioned in passing that the principle of instrumental causality may be a logical way of explaining how Biblical writings could be inspired, and we will give a full analysis of this principle shortly.

Scholasticism's conclusions are logically derived from initial premises – but the initial premise may well suffer from a lack of empirical evidence for its postulation. But, of course, Scholasticism was characterised by the age in which it arose, and it

[145] Vawter, B., Inspiration, p. 44.

provided, for its time, a realistic analysis of the world as it was understood, attempting as it did to bring about a synthesis of all the available data from Scripture, Tradition, not to mention the best in intellectual thought on offer in its day:

> Though much given to speculation, analysis, and deductive reasoning, (scholasticism) conceived its function rather as the systematising of the data...(from) which medieval Christianity had been moulded, most of which were accepted...as parts of a divinely intended order of things.[146]

Scholasticism adopted Aristotelianism in preference to the Platonism which had been, to a more or less effective extent, the philosophical basis for the theology of the Patristic period. Platonic Dualism, at least in its most extreme interpretations, had been responsible for much of the antithesis found in the Fathers between flesh and spirit. This allowed, for all practical purposes, for that antithesis to be reduced to the antithesis, or even conflict, between the outward visible illusion of the flesh (*phenomenon*), and the inward, invisible reality of the spirit (*noumenon*). The orthodox Fathers, of course, avoided the extreme conclusion of this understanding of reality, but there was nevertheless a tendency to see a dichotomy between the 'flesh' of the text, which not only did not contain the reality of the 'spirit' of Scripture, but might even conceal this reality. In that philosophical climate, allegorical interpretation of Scripture flourished. In this approach, the literal sense, which was understood as the physical reality of the text, was not taken to convey the true meaning of Scripture; the spiritual meaning of Scripture was to be found in the allegorical sense.

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[146] Ibid, p. 44.

Aristotelianism also uses dualism, but with the difference that the two poles were not set against each other. The Aristotelian analysis drew a distinction between 'matter' and 'form', but not as hostile opposites; now they were understood as existing together to produce a union, a combination that constitutes reality. When applied to the human person, for example, the form was the soul of the material body, and the combination was what produced a *living* person. The full extent to which an Aristotelian analysis helped or hindered a better understanding of Biblical writing is beyond the scope of this study. It is noteworthy, however, that precisely this analysis, rather than the Platonism of the Fathers, allowed for the literal sense of Scripture to move to prominence among the many identified senses. It was in this period that the famous reduction of the sense to four main categories: i) historical or *literal*, ii) christological or *allegorical*, iii) *tropological* or moral or anthropological, and iv) *anagogical* or eschatological.[147] According to Aquinas, even these four could be reduced to the one important level, the literal sense, which he defined as that which the text actually stated.[148] As far as Aquinas was concerned, the literal sense was what God wanted to convey; the intention of the human writer was subsidiary to that of the divine.[149] Therefore, there was no longer a question of the physical text – the 'flesh' of Scripture – masking the spiritual reality of the Word of God. Rather, since the human author is indispensable in the process of rendering into written language the divine communication, the two authors work in an indissoluble unity.

[147] Brown. R. E., and Schneiders, S. M., 'Hermeneutics', 71:39, p. 1155, My italics here indicate the names most frequently given to these senses. C.f. *Summa Theologiae* I, Ia, 10.
[148] *Summa Theologiae* I, Ia, 10.
[149] Brown, R. E., *Sensus Plenior*, p. 2

But how can this happen? In answer, Aquinas invokes both the prophetic model of Inspiration, and the principle of instrumental efficient causality, which he considered to explain best how prophecy in the Bible operated.

Prophecy was regarded as an appropriate model for Inspiration in the Patristic age, although the Fathers tended to understand the Biblical Inspiration found in prophecy as being in opposition to the Greek secular concept, which was designated by the tradition of *mantis*, that is, a sort of alien spirit that possessed, took over the person making the oracular utterance. This possession brought about in the individual a state of *enthusiasmos*, which caused the person speaking without any consciousness of his own. Plato attributed this prophetic *mania* to, among others, politicians![150]

Not surprisingly, the Fathers were at pains to rule out this model of prophecy as in any way describing Biblical prophecy. Further, they wanted to rule out (in theory, if not always in their practical application of this theory) any question of mechanical dictation of the Biblical books by God: the Bible was not the work of passive scribes taken over by another spirit, even if this were the Holy Spirit; rather the work of the Spirit was carried out through the human activity of writers.

This Patristic understanding gave the scholastics their starting place in developing a theology of Inspiration. Again, it was from Aristotelian philosophy that they found the aid required to provide an explanation of how this could happen, and in particular, they drew on the Aristotelian category of instrumental efficient causality.

In Aristotelian thinking, there are four possible causes which can give rise, either individually, or together, to being or to activity. These four causes are:

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[150] Vawter, B., Inspiration, pp. 8f.

1) efficient (or acting),

2) material (or composing),

3) formal (or constitutive), and

4) final (or purposeful).

An *instrumental efficient* cause can act with its own power, but it can only act when it is employed by yet another efficient cause, this time, the *principal efficient* cause. The principal cause is responsible for releasing that potential to act which is contained within the instrumental cause. This activity of the principal cause upon the instrumental cause brings about an effect, which is certainly the result of this latter cause's activity, but only when this is combined with action of the principal cause.

The action of a piece of chalk writing on a board is the frequently cited example of how efficient causality operates. The chalk is capable of producing various effects – in writing, in drawing, thick marks, thin marks, dots, lines etc. It is truly responsible for each of these effects, but not until it, as instrumental efficient cause, is acted upon by a principal efficient cause - the person using the chalk to write etc.[151]

This model was applied to prophecy thus: God is the principal efficient cause who had moved the instrumental efficient cause - the prophet - to speak, or to act, or to write.[152] The result is the Word of God, since it was God who uttered the Word through the prophet. But the words are those of the prophet, expressed through the mind and the faculties possessed by the prophet, who nevertheless would have been unable to utter them without the principal cause, God, who made use of these human

[151] Ibid, p. 48.

[152] It is worth noting at this point that we do not in fact possess any manuscript of any prophet, or, for that matter, any other Biblical writer; the question of authorship is one we will return to later in this chapter, where we will consider the implications of recognising the role of other agencies in writing the biblical books we now possess. C.f. Schneiders, S., Revelatory, pp. 47-48.

faculties, and employed them to his own ends: "the words are Jeremiah's, wrung from his heart and experience; and the Word is God's."[153]

The analogy was for centuries valued as an adequate explanation of how truly divine communication could occur in a way that also allowed the written text to display every possible characteristic of human labour. Unfortunately, however, the analogy was often pressed too far by authors who were more interested in stretching its applicability, than they were in trying to research the true nature of Biblical prophecy. It is easy today to see today how the analogy tends to the artificial: clearly, there are limitations in an analogy that uses an inanimate device - with no possibility of choosing to write or not to write - as instrumental cause, to explain the alleged instrumental causality of a rational being who freely chooses to write. But, as has already been mentioned and as Vawter strongly maintains, the analogy should be assessed on the basis of what it allows us to understand, that is, how divine activity can proceed through the working of a human agency, rather than on its shortcomings.

The early scholastics had thought of prophecy as an habitual activity, an on-going situation in which the prophet would utter the Word of God, prophecy constituted an altered state for the prophet, whose nature was changed by the grace of God conferred on him? This seems not unreasonable, when we consider prophets like Elisha, desirous to inherit a share of Elijah's spirit (2 Kings 2:9—15), or the burning coal which touched Isaiah's lips (Isaiah 6:6-7), etc. But on reflection, it had to be noted that this habitual action *(habitus)* did not explain the apparently *ad hoc* nature of the Prophet's utterances. That is, not unless we are prepared to countenance the

[153] Vawter, B., Inspiration, p. 49.

unthinkable; that from his time of commission, the prophet does no other than speak the word of God:

> Prophetical light does not inhere in the mind of a prophet as a permanent form – for then the prophet would always have the faculty of prophesying, which is patently false.[154]

The prophet's mind constantly needs to be refreshed with new revelation, just as a pupil constantly needs further instruction about each single point on which he or she is being instructed.[155]

In his *Summa Theologiae,* Aquinas used the model of prophecy to explain Biblical Inspiration, which he considered to be an inferior form of prophecy – he considers that most of the Biblical writers are not prophets in the true sense, such as Isaiah and Jeremiah, but are instead *hagiographers*, sacred writers. Among these, he includes Job, David, Solomon and others, 'men writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit...'[156] Unless the charism of prophecy (and Inspired writing comes under this) is occasional, i.e. non perpetual, we would need to admit that, once inspired, the scribe could write nothing apart from inspired material. Clearly, this is untenable.

Aquinas, therefore, considered prophecy to be one of the created, gratuitous graces – *gratiae gratis datae* - which can be identified in passages from Scripture such as 1 Corinthians 12:27-31. They could be of the cognitive order, like prophecy, or directed towards speaking, such as the gift of tongues (the *glossalalia* of the New Testament), or they could bestow power to perform miracles, as witnessed extensively in the Acts of the Apostles. Surprisingly, Aquinas did not envisage a

[154] *Summa Theologiae* 2a2ae.173, 2.
[155] Ibid. p. 11.
[156] *Summa* 2a2ae 174:2, p. 73.

separate grace for writing – unlike some writers who came after him. This is strange, since Aquinas recognised that Biblical Inspiration could only be considered as imperfectly related to prophecy. Should this not have suggested a separate grace for writing, since its existence is not fully explained by prophecy? However, apparently he saw no reason to break with the tradition that had long related Inspiration and prophecy to each other. Clearly it was not yet time for the books of the Bible to be considered in their own literary right, independently of the prophetic words that were contained in part of it. Aquinas, like so many of his time, was not concerned with explaining the origin of an inspired text; he wanted to explain its content.[157]

It would be some considerable time before there was a sufficiently developed concept of other-than-prophetic Biblical writing. Admittedly, some later Thomists did try to take other forms of writing into account, but the main weakness of the scholastic approach to this particular problem seems to us today to lie in its tendency to determine the process of Inspiration from *a priori* arguments. The result is a theology of Inspiration which, despite the merits we have identified here, does not appear to offer us a model which bears much resemblance to what we actually read in Scripture. The next section of this chapter will present a brief survey of some components that Catholic Biblical scholars from the time of Père Lagrange until the present day have suggested we need to consider if we are to develop a model which is consistent with what we actually encounter in the Biblical texts themselves.

[157] Vawter, B., Inspiration, p. 56.

§ 2.2 THEORIES OF INSPIRATION FROM THE TIME OF VATICAN I AND *PROVIDENTISSIMUS DEUS*

We have already seen that many scholars today have concluded that there are so many problems with devising a theology of Inspiration that the task is scarcely worth the effort. They may have come to this conclusion at least in part as a result of the attempts to solve the problem at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, however. Around the time of Vatican I (1870) and *Providentissimus Deus* (1893), there was a concerted attempt to provide a convincing demonstration that Scripture was indeed Inspired.[158] The encyclical itself, thought to be largely the work of Cardinal Franzelin, was designed to counter any suggestion stemming from historical criticism that the Bible was either not Inspired, or that it contained error.

This Cardinal Franzelin was one of the last major exponents of what is frequently termed 'Content Inspiration'. This theory was replaced by Père M. J. Lagrange's version of the theory of 'Plenary Inspiration'. That these two theories recur in the history of the theology of Inspiration in so many subtle refinements and modifications is a further indication of the problems associated with finding an adequate explanation for the doctrine. For our purposes, a very basic description of the differences between the two will suffice.

Franzelin's version of Content Inspiration used the principle of Instrumental Efficient Causality to distinguish between the *formal* content of Scripture, and the *material* content of its verbal formulation. We have already encountered a refinement of this from P. Grelot, when, in chapter 1,[159] we were considering the genesis of *Dei Verbum.* Whereas Grelot's argument was directed at the question of the concept of

[158] Chapter 1, p. 23.
[159] Chapter 1, p. 24.

truth in Scripture, however, Franzelin's was directed at the question of *Inspiration.* This distinction in itself is timely in that it draws our attention to the need to differentiate clearly between the Inspiration of Scripture and the Inerrancy of Scripture, even if the two concepts are related in some way. Burtchaell has noted that Newman's *obiter dicta* approach to the Inspiration problem – which it is often assumed was ruled out by *Providentissimus Deus* – bears remarkable resemblance to Franzelin's position. Newman's position,[160] which seems to have been made in writing for the last time in response to the accusation that Catholics were being obliged to give assent to interpretations of Scripture which clearly ran counter to modern scientific discoveries, ran along the following lines:

1) Many of the sacred writers have written on ordinary, day-to-day matters which have nothing to do with Revelation; Tobias' dog, the salutations at the end of Paul's letters, etc. These are 'verbal asides', *obiter dicta*
2) Matters which are recorded in an historically incorrect way would come under the same non-revelatory category.
3) Unlike the statements of Popes or Councils, these statements are not concerned with matters of faith or morals, therefore they do not possess the same authoritative weight, not having been the object of formal definition.
4) Newman, in response to an objection to his view, wondered if anyone's faith would really be shaken if any of these *obiter dicta* were expressed differently: would Timothy have lost all faith in Paul had the latter left instructions for his cloak to be left with, say Eutychus, instead of Carpus (2 Timothy 13)? Is the person with whom the cloak has been left really fundamental to Revelation?

[160] Burtchaell, Theories, pp 77-78.

On closer inspection, it seems that Newman is not entirely consistent in his arguments here. On one hand, he appears to be writing on Inspiration, but on the other, he seems to refer more to what should be more accurately called Revelation. As Vawter expresses it, his somewhat ambiguous usage of the term 'Inspiration' seems sometimes to mean Inspiration, at others, Revelation, and sometimes he means the non-revealed work of an inspired author.[161] It is interesting to note that almost 100 years after Newman's *obiter dicta* theory was written up, R. E. Brown accuses many theologians of confusing the concepts of Revelation and Inspiration. In a comment, which is pertinent to Newman, and which is worth remembering when devising theories of Inspiration, he points to an important distinction: "the traditional position has been that the whole Bible is inspired but only some parts of the Bible transmit Revelation."[162]

Keeping Revelation and Inspiration in dialogue, but distinct from each other is an important aspect of the model to be proposed in this study. It is also apparent that Newman was encountering what has been another long-term confusion; this time that of equating Inspiration with Inerrancy. Certainly, the two concepts are related, as we have seen, but they are not identical. In Chapter 1, we saw how *Dei Verbum* had changed the emphasis on what Inerrancy means. Its positive expression firmly emphasised Inerrancy explained as God's will to teach firmly and without error that truth which is necessary for our salvation. The salvific truth of a statement need not be the same as its historical accuracy. A simple illustration makes this point clear. The parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) is presumably not historically accurate – no one has suggested that the son, or his father, or his elder brother ever

[161] Vawter, B., Inspiration, p. 137.
[162] Brown, R. E., Critical Meaning, p. 7.

existed. And yet apparently no one has denied the salvific truth of the story on the grounds that the story is fictitious.

Newman was handicapped by his apparent lack of awareness of movements in critical biblical scholarship which were taking place in Germany and France in his own day – a lack of awareness that he appears to have shared with his Italian contemporaries! However, it was the sharpness of his mind, rather than his knowledge of exegesis, which enabled Newman to make a valuable contribution to the question. Burtchaell contends that Newman's thoroughness in dealing with the question of Inspiration alone makes him worthy of consideration.[163] Nevertheless, it seems strange to us today to read of a theory of the content of Inspiration which was worked out, not on the basis of the language of the Bible itself and the expressions used therein, but on its handing of questions of faith and morals!

Was Newman guilty of advocating partial Inspiration of the kind explicitly ruled out by *ProvidentissimusDeus*? I have suggested that Newman does not sufficiently clarify the distinction between what is Revelatory and what is Inspired. He appears to have been incensed at the suggestion that his *obiter dicta* were bound up in questions of error and falsehood.[164] Newman merely asserted, however, that these statements were not authoritative. But surely authoritative teaching is about the transmission of Revelation, not Inspiration!

To return to the apparent similarity between the position of Franzelin's own position and that of Newman, it should be noted that the former's theory was never formally rejected. What did happened, however, was a more persuasive voice, an eminent

[163] Burtchaell, J. T., Theories, pp. 65-66.
[164] Ibid, p. 77.

Biblical scholar, indicated the weaknesses of Content Inspiration theories in a way that cause them simply to disappear from view.

M. J. Lagrange voiced the opinion that the theory of content Inspiration was little better than the old, now discarded, dictation theory. Both theories diminished the responsibility of the human author in that they removed personal responsibility from the holder of the pen. Content Inspiration's main fault lies, not in that it removes the wording of the text from God's influence, but that it removes the thoughts and words from the human author. Clearly, Lagrange's understanding of Inspiration grew from his conviction of the validity of historical criticism, in that he believed that once scholars were able to determine what the human author of Scripture had intended in writing all doubts, contradictions apparent errors, uncertainties etc. would disappear. This aspiration seems to have been shared with Pius XII, at least as he expressed it in *Divino Afflante Spiritu* in his insistence that the primary task of the exegete is to determine the literal sense of Scripture, which he had defined as the meaning of the passage which was intended by the author.[165] Therefore, any theory of Inspiration that diminishes the human part in writing Scripture will mean that it is even more problematic to try to discover what was intended.

Lagrange proposed a position that lies between what he considered to be two extremes. At one extreme lay the theory of dictation, which proposes in effect that the entire book is deposited, ready-made, by God in the mind of the writer. At the other extreme is the theory which locates God's will in the act of choosing as his agents only those people whose own ideas are those God wishes to pass on. If the first version deprives the human author of a legitimate role in writing, the other

[165] c.f. Chapter 1, p. 27.

deprives God of any real authorship: in the first case, the book is not of real human endeavour, in the second, it is no more God's work than is any other book. But Lagrange's theory, he feels, lies between these two extreme positions. This draws on the causal progression of events encountered earlier: certain books have been written under the influence of the Holy Spirit, therefore they have God as their author, therefore they are received as Canonical and authoritative.[166]

Lagrange detected methodological problems with Franzelin's theory of Content Inspiration, since it divides the Bible into two categories, one human, and the other divine. Lagrange was insistent that the Bible was *at the same time* the work of God and the work of the human author. Following the Thomistic argument, Lagrange also employed the principle of efficient causality to explain the relationship between the two.[167]

Lagrange expressed Inspiration thus: no matter who has written down the Biblical words, no matter when, the message that is conveyed in those words is the message of God. In an early account of his theory of Verbal Inspiration, which he is credited with taking the concept to its most developed form, from the starting point of a questioner's objection: "If Inspiration extends even to the use of words, even to the choice of expressions, how can it be that the sacred writers are anything but simple instruments, pens writing under dictation?"[168]

As well as drawing from what he finds in the text itself, Lagrange also draws from Aquinas. He describes Inspiration as an enlightenment that brings to the author a clarity with which to carry out the process of composing the text. The Inspiration

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[166] Burtchaell, J. T., Theories, pp. 133-135.
[167] Collins, R. F., 'Inspiration', 65:48, p. 1030.
[168] Burtchaell, J. T., Theories, p. 134.

diversifies according to the kind of truth being taught, and the literary mode in which it is being expressed. Burtchaell puts this well in a statement which I will draw heavily on when I propose a model of Inspiration which responds to a symbolic expression of Revelation:

> It makes no difference what sources provide the writer with his materials: older documents, profane writings, direct revelation, personal experience, education in a Jewish or Christian milieu. *It is God's action that determines the author to assemble certain ideas and not others, to understand and judge them with unfailing insight, and to work them into effective form for publication.*[169]

Lagrange's theory held sway to such an extent that Content Inspiration was not again presented as a workable model for Inspiration. Then along came the Modernist crisis. Lagrange's enthusiasm for the role of the human author in inspiration, and for historical criticism caused his passing under something of a cloud of suspicion. It would not be until 1943, and the publication of *Divino Afflante Spiritu* before it would be officially stated that historical criticism was necessary for proper exegesis.

Before leaving the debate on Content versus Verbal Inspiration, it should be remembered that neither theory was ever condemned; neither was either theory ever fully, or permanently accepted. As we saw in chapter 1, Vatican II, in *Dei Verbum* and elsewhere, described Inspiration variously as being directed at the books themselves, or the writers, where appropriate. In the opinions expressed in the rest of this survey of theories on Inspiration, different issues will be more thoroughly examined.

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[169] Ibid., p. 136. My italics. I will express this idea differently later.

§ 2.3 CATHOLIC SCHOLARS WHO WROTE ON INSPIRATION FROM A BIBLICAL POINT OF VIEW.

Lagrange tried to reconcile critical exegesis with Thomistic principles which were the favoured theological opinions of the time. This naturally led only to limited success in furthering the scope of the theology of Inspiration. The following sections will begin with Benoit, who tried to extend the Thomistic concept of prophetic Inspiration to other literary genres of the Bible.

§ 2.3.1 Pierre Benoit

Like Lagrange, Benoit taught at the *École Biblique* in Jerusalem; like Lagrange, he was a Dominican; and like Lagrange, he tried to reconcile Thomism with contemporary Biblical research. At an early stage in his writing, and in the wake of *Divino Afflante* Spiritu, which had awakened in scholars a fresh impetus to examine once more the questions of Inerrancy and Inspiration, Benoit turned to a deeper investigation of Aquinas' understanding of prophecy, and of Biblical Inspiration as a form of prophecy. Benoit identified within the Thomistic analysis a basis for maintaining the true distinction between the charisms of prophecy and Inspiration.[170]

Benoit began from Aquinas' premise that prophecy is essentially an intellectual function, but he also recognised that the distinction between intellectual, or speculative, judgements on the one hand, and practical judgements on the other was one which was recognised within the scholastic synthesis. Benoit pointed out that prophecy came under the category of intellectual judgement, since it involved Revelation, whereas Inspiration, which did not involve Revelation, was properly described under the heading of practical judgement. Inspiration involved practical

[170] Vawter, B., Inspiration, p. 102.

judgements because it was concerned with the collection, selection, arrangement of materials, and this also explained two other features of Inspiration. Firstly, the choice of material made by the author is not suggested by questions of truth in an intellectual sense – what can we say about the intellectual content of the truth of a poem, for example. Secondly, the author makes the practical judgement of whether to write in forms which are variously poetic, narrative, exhortatory, apocalyptic, epistolatory etc. and in this we have the beginnings of the various literary forms of the Biblical writings. This, of course, marks an important departure from the framework which surrounded the previous understanding of Inspiration as having to do with a Bible which is seen more as a collection of propositions requiring the assent of faith, an 'earlier Denzinger' as Vawter puts it;[171] now, we have the opening, albeit from a Thomistic starting point, which allows us to come to grips with the reality of Inspiration as we actually find it operating in the Bible itself.

This latter idea was of great importance to Benoit. Writing in 1965,[172] he notes that, although Vatican I and *Providentissimus Deus* wrote of Inspiration in a way that linked it very much with Biblical Inerrancy, in fact, it makes much more sense to link Inspiration and Revelation. This is precisely the point which I will make much use of in elaborating the model for Inspiration later in this work. And just as he had managed to find from within scholasticism a principle that explained the difference between prophecy and Inspiration, so too in the seldom–quoted encyclical, *Spiritus Paraclitus* of Benedict XV written in 1920, did he find Magisterial ratification of the existence of different literary forms in Biblical writings.[173] On the whole, this encyclical, written to commemorate the 1500th anniversary of the death of St.

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[171] Ibid, p. 102.
[172] Benoit, P. 'Inspiration and Revelation', p. 7, Concilium, Vol. 10, No. 1, December 1965, pp. 5 – 14.
[173] Chapter 1, p. 15.

Jerome, is seldom regarded as other than very conservative in tone, a document which added nothing new to Catholic Biblical scholarship, but reiterated many of the old suspicions and reaffirmed earlier condemnations.[174] Benedict, like his immediate predecessors, was concerned to prevent any suggestion that there could be trace of error in the scriptural texts. However, quoting from Jerome, Benedict asserts that the human author of Scripture, while protected by divine influence from error while writing, is still free to express himself in a way which is consistent with the manner of his culture, times and background:

> For (Jerome) not only consistently asserts the common features of all sacred writers, viz., that in writing they followed the Spirit of God, so that God must be considered the primary cause of every thought and every sentence of Scripture, but he also accurately distinguishes the special characteristics of each one.[175]

Here again, we have Inspiration cited as a guarantee against error. As we have already seen, even *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, which encouraged the adoption of form critical methodology and the study of oriental languages was concerned to identify the literal sense, so that groundless fears about error in the Bible would be dispelled once and for all![176] As late as the third draft of the *schema* on Revelation to be put before the Second Vatican Council, Benoit notes, the same tone was to be found:

> ...it is necessary to examine closely the human language that God has seen fit to be used in his service. Thus we may see his intentions better

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[174] c.f. Brown, R.E., Collins, T. A., 'Church Pronouncements', 72:5, p. 1167; Brown, R.E. Critical Meaning, pp 15-18;
Vawter, B., Inspiration, pp. 124-5, 132.
[175] Pope Benedict XV, Encyclical *Spiritus Paraclitus* (1920), article 8; *EB 448.*
[176] Benoit, P. Inspiration', p. 6; *Divino Afflante Spiritu EB 550 –556.*

> through those of the sacred writer, and refrain from calling something erroneous when it is only a matter of speaking peculiar to some time and place.[177]

For completion, we should compare this with the final text of *Dei Verbum*:

> For the correct understanding of what the sacred author wanted to assert, due attention must be paid to the customary and characteristic styles of perceiving, speaking, and narrating which prevailed at the time of the sacred writer, and to the customs men (sic!) normally followed at that period in their everyday dealings with one another.[178]

Notice there is no suggestion here that attempts have been made to call erroneous what was merely idiomatic! Benoit is convinced that a more appropriate coupling with Inspiration is Revelation, rather than Inerrancy as had been the Magisterial 'line' until Vatican II, and he records that, at the time of the concluding stages of Vatican II, much was being done by scholars to explore the relationship between Revelation and Inspiration. His assessment of this trend provides us with insights which have a prominent place in the understanding of Biblical Inspiration which underpins this study, namely that Inspiration is better understood if considered less a perception of divine truth, and more of an impulse which is directed towards the discovery, formulation, and communication of that message which is the transmission of that divine self-disclosure which is termed Revelation.[179]

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[177] Ibid, p. 6.
[178] General Editor, Abbott, W. A., The Documents of Vatican II, With Notes and Comments by Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox Authorities, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum,* paragraph 12, G. Chapman, London, 1966, p.120.
[179] Benoit, P., 'Inspiration', p. 7.

Earlier, mention was made of Benoit's work in retrieving an understanding of Inspiration from Thomistic categories of speculative and practical judgements – and for this, his work has been cited as something of a classic endeavour[180] - and how from this, he was able to explain the distinction between prophecy proper and Inspiration. However, Benoit himself has written that rather than press too heavily these arguments, it would be far better to devote attention to the Biblical data which we possess on Inspiration.[181] Again, he provides this study with a direction to pursue, and shortly we will undertake a close examination of what the Biblical text itself can tell us about the actions of the authors who were inspired to write.

Following Hoffmann, whom we will examine in detail below, Inspiration will here be understood as being animated by the Spirit of Christ. Benoit notes, however, that the Bible rarely uses the word Inspiration to describe the action of the Spirit which inspires people to action. Indeed, the term is never found in the Old Testament. Further, the impulse to act is never at first the impulse to write a book! The Spirit often prompts individuals to action that will shape the history of Israel: Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Samson, Saul (even though he is subsequently abandoned by God in favour of David). At other times, the Spirit prompts individuals to speak out: the people are to hear the Word of the Lord (not yet read it). Through this spoken word these prophets give meaning to the works of God, which in turn reveal the purposes of God to his people. The prophets are the messengers of God, and to effect their ministry, the Spirit pours life into them. Through the gifts of the Spirit, the Messianic age is prepared, when the Holy Spirit will pour himself out upon all (Joel 3:1-2), an outpouring which was realised at Pentecost (Acts 2:16ff). Benoit thinks that we may

[180] Burtchaell, J. T., Theories, p. 245.
[181] Benoit, P., 'Inspiration', p. 7.

have two complementary aspects of Inspiration; the "oral" Inspiration, and the complementary "pastoral" Inspiration. Both work in the fullness of Revelation in Christ; the Kingdom proclaimed in word and action: certainly, Jesus commissioned the Apostles to preach the Word and to found the Church – not to write books![182]

Benoit develops this last point. He draws our attention to the remarkable fact that in the New Testament, the divine mandate to write is never explicitly connected with the Holy Spirit (he cites Revelation 1:11, 19ff in support of his argument); but the same is also true of the Old Testament. This, he says, is not intended to cast doubt on Inspired Scripture; rather, it is to draw attention to the necessary inspired activities which preceded writing. So, it is essential that we retain a sense of awareness of an Inspired writing's historic setting: to isolate the inspired Bible from its preparation in Word and Action is to reduce it to some kind of sterile, 'pre-existent' writing lacking human origins. In each example of the spirit-driven actions of Biblical figures, Benoit maintain that they are Inspired first and foremost to pastoral action; whereas the prophets are subject to oral Inspiration. As an addendum to these insights of Benoit, we might well remember that, not only do we not read of people Inspired by the Holy Spirit to *write*; we do not even possess the original text of any document which is to be found in today's Bible.

To bring this section to a close, we might note two themes which will recur in this study. The first is to see Revelation and Inspiration as related. Brown has lamented the fact that all too often, writers collapse Inspiration into Revelation.[183] I wish to associate with that observation; as we shall see later, one of the problems with developing a coherent model of Inspiration appears to lie precisely in the confusion

[182] Ibid, pp. 7-8.
[183] Brown, R. E. Critical Meaning, p. 7.

as to whether the writer means Inspiration, or Revelation, according to the models pursued in this study. By Revelation, I will hereafter mean divine self-disclosure. I will suggest that a symbolic model of Revelation is an appropriate one to pursue, following the lead given by Avery Dulles. By Inspiration, I mean the Spirit-led impulse to record in writing a response to the perception of the content of specific symbols of divine self-disclosure. Revelation will here be understood as a Divine activity; Inspiration as a Spirit-driven human response. Necessarily, the two will be seen to work together, but the two should not be confused.

In the following sections a brief examination of some authors will try to shed more light on some of the issues that we have been alerted to by Benoit's article.

§ 3.3.2 R.A.F. MacKenzie: multiple authorship of Biblical texts and Inspiration

Benoit's analysis is very helpful in drawing our attention more fully to something we recognise already, that the divine-human cooperation responsible for, say, the prophecies of Isaiah, is very different from that which produced second Maccabees, or even that the Paul who wrote Galatians was differently moved when he committed to writing his note to Philemon.[184] Partial Inspiration may not be an acceptable solution, but differing outcomes of Inspiration are clearly evident in the Bible.

However, his theory of Inspiration, derived as it is from scholasticism, still rests heavily on a concept of authorship which is now considered to be an inadequate understanding of the roles of various agents in the bringing about of the Biblical texts in the form we know today. The next writer in this series of Catholic scholars who, in the wake of *Divino Afflante Spiritu,*, have shed some additional light on the problems

[184] Vawter, B., Inspiration, p. 103.

of Inspiration, if not exactly the solutions to those problems is R.A.F. MacKenzie, who challenges scholars to do much more than simply make some adjustments to various aspects of scholastic thinking. Instead, MacKenzie challenges us to return to the question of how God could be the author of sacred Scripture, and how, at the same time, we can continue to insist on Scripture's human authorship. The question needs to be addressed anew, because, as we shall see from the direction of MacKenzie's arguments, it is no longer helpful to invoke the principle of instrumental causality, when it is widely recognised that the 'instrument' in question not only operated over many hundreds of years in some cases, but clearly involved very many hands over that period of time! So, now the question of human involvement of authorship must be extended to: who can legitimately be called the Inspired authors of Scripture?[185]

MacKenzie, like Benoit, seeks a theory of Inspiration which works with the Biblical data. He appeals for a theory which connects with the historical reality of the genesis of the books;[186] that the Old Testament is not like a compendium of books or articles which we might easily find on the shelves of bookshops today, each having been written by a separate author. Rather, the Old Testament is:

> the accumulation of a people, the archives of a family, a deposit which was not (until the very end of the Old Testament period) a dead letter, but was constantly used, reinterpreted, brought up to date, commented on, expanded.[187]

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[185] Ibid, p. 104.
[186] MacKenzie,, R.A.F., 'Some Problems in the Field of Inspiration. The Presidential Address at the 20th Annual Meeting of the Catholic Biblical Association of America, Massachussetts, 4 September, 1957', pp. 2ff., Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 20, Washington D.C, 1958, pp. 1-8.
[187] MacKenzie,, R.A.F., Problems, pp. 2-3.

MacKenzie takes the example of the Book of Judges, which began its life in the 12th Century B.C.E., as oral traditions of the exploits and victories, which circulated in different *milieux*, and which eventually were committed to writing. But the writing itself then underwent various editorial processes, including expansion and addition of 'moralising' material at the hands of various editors; the thrust of his argument is that the book as we now have it was some 800 years in the making, as a result of the labours of many and varied participants in the process, some writers, some collectors, some editors of texts, but all anonymous contributors. If all of this is true, then the question cannot be avoided: where exactly do we locate Inspiration in all of this? Who is the Inspired author? Clearly, the reality of the Biblical situation uncovered by form and redaction critics is very different from the supposed one to one author-to-book relationship envisaged by Vatican I and *Providentissimus Deus.* Is the author to be identified as the one who puts the final touches to the book (which may happen several hundreds of years after the process was begun in the oral tradition), or are those responsible for the earlier sources also to be considered authors? And then, how much Inspiration goes to each kind of author?[188]

At this point, it is worth considering the origin of the Latin word *author,* which could mean in classical times, the literary author, but it could also mean a whole range of others things:

> Thus Livy referred to the *auctor templi*, the *architect* of the temple; Seutonius, to the *auctor gentis romanae*, the *founder* of the Roman

[188] Ibid, p. 3.

> nation; Vergil to the *auctor vulneris*, the *cause* of a wound; Cicero wrote *tibi auctor sim*, let me be your advisor; and so forth.[189]

This word *auctor* is used by the Fathers, and in Magisterial documents by and large to refer to God as the author of Scripture. This was invoked to support the claim to divine origin of Scripture: that God is the *auctor* of Scripture was stated by the Church as a counter-claim to the Manichean assertion that God was the *scriptor* of the Old Testament, and that Ambrose used the term, not in the sense of literary author, but of cause, as in the Greek *aitios*.[190]

The consequence of this is that we cannot take the concept of author to apply to either the divine, or the human author of Scripture in the sense of literary author as in contemporary use of the term. J. L. McKenzie wrote that instrumental causality was employed as a principle to give due credit to both the divine and human authors. But, he asks, what is due credit?[191] God as author must mean something very different from God the source of a dictated Bible; the human author must be understood to include much more than a single agent writing an individual book. And, of course, this has it consequences for our understanding of Biblical Inspiration, and to whom Inspiration may apply. Vawter writes:

> ...to those who first thought of the term 'author' to designate the human provenance of certain Biblical works, the concept of 'patron' might emerge more handily today. What they were trying to say was that these works were holy and composed under the influence of the spirit of God, they were connected with great names of the past, prophets and wise men,

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[189] Vawter, B., Inspiration, p. 22.
[190] Ibid, p. 23.
[191] McKenzie, J. L., The Old Testament, p. 14.

> who were famous as having been instruments through which the Spirit worked....if it has already been assumed, therefore, that alongside the inspired writing with its definite though likely anonymous author there can also be another inspired author...it might appear that a search for *the* inspired author of a Biblical passage is neither useful nor desirable.[192]

So, in fact, we need to recognise the possibility that behind a written document there may stand as its inspired source, a prophetic body, a Church, a tradition such as the Deuteronomic or Priestly traditions found in Genesis, schools deriving from Paul, Matthew, John, etc.[193] This is Vawter's formulation: I will suggest that this be rephrased – a prophetic body, etc., can themselves constitute new ways (later, I will call these symbols of Revelation, after Fawcett, Tillich and others) which mediate divine self-disclosure, to which yet others may be Inspired to respond in writing. I believe that to use the term inspired sources as Vawter does, simply compounds the confusion between Revelation and Inspiration.

MacKenzie reminds us that there is no problem, in theory, with a charism of Inspiration that has been distributed over long periods, and among different authors at different times, according to the part each played in the production of the book which the Church accepted as Canonical. But, he asks, how far back does one go? At what stage can one say that the composition of a book began? He returns to the Book of Judges to illustrate his point, specifically to the Song of Deborah in Judges 5. Who is the inspired author of that? It could be claimed that it was the 'prophetess' who composed it, but that doesn't help; inspiration goes with writing, and it is most unlikely that a 12th Century minstrel or bard would also be a scribe. So, was it the

[192] Ibid, pp 108-109.
[193] Ibid, p. 109.

first scribe to put marks on papyrus? This won't solve the difficulty either, since the book gives an explicit citation: "Then Deborah sang that day…", and the general rule for such citations is that the author who includes them in the final book, not the one who first wrote them down is the one who is inspired. He illustrates this latter point with the passage in 1 Maccabees 14:20-23, and the letter written by the Spartans. Assuming this letter is authentic, would it be reasonable to assume that the pagan Spartans were divinely inspired to write the original letter?[194] Although MacKenzie does not mention that the problem would not exist for those who do not accept the books of Maccabees as Canonical, we might back up his argument with a further example from the New Testament, where Paul, in Acts 17:16-34, when he is in dialogue with the philosophers at the Areopagus, quotes one of their own poets, in a manner which would be familiar to them (Acts 17:28). Conzelmann comments here that the original source is not only non-Biblical – it is from the *Phainomena* by the Stoic poet Aratus – but is actually in its own context incompatible with the Biblical idea of Creation, being pantheistic in outlook. Did the writer of Acts know of the original sense of these words? Did he read into them his own Biblically based belief in the One God? Conzelmann notes that, intriguingly, the same quotation was used by the Jewish author Aristobulus to back up belief in the Biblical story of creation.[195] Would anyone claim Aratus was inspired? Later, I will suggest that this type of apparent anomaly can be resolved if we adopt a symbolic model of Revelation. Anything can be a symbol capable of mediating divine self-disclosure; the Inspired writer is merely one who is motivated by the Spirit of God to commit to writing his/her response to the Revelation mediated by that symbol, which does not need to

[194] MacKenzie,, R.A.F., 'Problems', p. 3.
[195] Conzelmann, H., 'The Address of Paul on the Areopagus', p. 224, in Keck, L.E., and Martyn, J.L.(Editors), Essays Presented in honour of Paul Schubert, Buckingham Professor of New Testament Criticism and Interpretation at Yale University; Studies in Luke-Acts, pp. SPCK, London, 1966.

be limited to Biblical symbols. Many people will see in a beautiful sunset a symbol of divine self-disclosure; yet there is nothing inherently Biblical in a sunset.

If the charism of Inspiration is to be shared out, how far should this extend; to all who had a hand in the collective production of the book? If so, would it also extend to the heathen authors and editors who gave some of the materials their earliest existence?[196] And what about the possible inspiration of the Greek Septuagint? When MacKenzie was writing this article, there was a rise in opinion that the Septuagint be regarded as inspired. This may seem a clear enough issue, but there are complications. Understandably, it was considered inspired by the Fathers, since it provided the form of Scripture as they knew it – in much the same way as Westerners considered the Vulgate inspired. But was the Septuagint inspired independently of the Semitic original, or only where it differed from it? For MacKenzie, there is a serious objection to an acceptance of a global inspiration of the Septuagint, and that is the fact that in the 2nd Century, the Church rejected its translation of Daniel in favour of Theodotion's translation. It is not known when, or even really why this was done - presumably because then, as now, Theodotion's translation was considered to be a more faithful rendition of the Aramaic-Hebrew text, but the fact remains that it *was* the case. Therefore, Church authorities clearly could not have considered that the differences between the LXX and the Semitic texts were divine in origin. But this highlights another problem. What about those passages which, in LXX differ considerably from the Hebrew, but which are quoted from the former in the NT, and are cited as being prophetic? For example, Matthew 1:23 cites LXX Isaiah 7:14. The Greek *parthenos*, rendered 'virgin' in the English of the New Revised Standard Version seems to say more than *'almâ* of the Hebrew,

[196] Burtchaell, Theories, p. 248.

rendered 'young woman' in NRVS. In a further example, Peter quotes the LXX, rather than the Hebrew Psalm 16[197] in Acts 2:27. In this case, the Hebrew of Ps 16:10 (Heb…or let your faithful one see the pit; LXX…suffer thine Holy One to see corruption[198]) would scarcely have supported Peter's argument of Jesus being raised from the dead. We could add other examples, not cited by MacKenzie, such as all four gospels using the LXX version of Isaiah 40:3. MacKenzie raises the question: is inspiration in the LXX to be found in those differences between this and the Semitic text, when it is the LXX is cited?[199]

While confessing to having no simple answers to the problem, MacKenzie does offer some pointers to a possible solution. He appeals for a consideration of two points; the multiplicity of Inspiration, and its unity. The former seems to give a correct evaluation of the distribution of the charism of inspiration among many people, in other words, recognising the reality of a collective endeavour in biblical authorship. However, this is not authorship by committee, by a group whose members cooperated equally and simultaneously in the work. The process of writing was very seldom carried out by a single person on a single occasion (He notes that the same must also apply to many NT texts, the assignation of the name to authors of which is at best questionable[200]), and many contributors took part in the texts production at various levels, and according to varying degrees of cooperation. The latter category he stresses, the unity of the charism of inspiration, reminds us that the purpose of the charism was to provide God's Church with certain books. Therefore, he concludes

[197] Psalm 15 in LXX.
[198] Brenton, L.C.L., The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English, Hendrickson Publishers, U.S.A., Ninth Printing, 2001.
[199] MacKenzie,, R.A.F., 'Problems', pp. 6-7.
[200] Ibid, pp. 4-5.

that for the production of a given book, there would have to be one inspiration, which affected many different people.[201]

I will suggest, again returning to the suggestion of the pairing of Symbolic Revelation and Biblical Inspiration, that the model to be outlined here will allow for both the diversity of an almost unlimited number of people who may potentially share the charism of Inspiration. All who are moved by the Spirit of God to act are in some way inspired, but those who are moved by the Spirit of God to write Scripture are moved by the one specific charism of Inspiration to write Scripture. Already I hope this begins to look like a model which is supported by the reality of the Biblical data; in Chapter 3, I will cite other examples given by Brueggemann and Westermann to expand on this assertion, and in Chapter 4, I will suggest that the philosophical hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur can provide us with the necessary theoretical underpinning to back up these assertions.

§ 3.3.2a *Sancta Mater Ecclesia*: The Pontifical Biblical Commission and the Historical Truth of the Gospels (1964)

MacKenzie of course writes primarily about the Old Testament. Six years after his article, the Pontifical Biblical Commission issued its important statement on the Historical Truth of the Gospels. Here, for the first time, the complex nature of the question of Biblical authorship is addressed in relation to the gospels.

The emergence of this important document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission on 21 April 1964, illustrates the point made earlier that Magisterial documents of the Catholic Church only concede what is necessary. *Divino Afflante Spiritu* had

[201] Ibid, pp. 7-8.

endorsed the use of Form Criticism in the hope of identifying the literal sense, i.e. the intention of the Biblical author, and thereby identify *the* correct meaning of Biblical passages. But the quest for the literal sense so defined, becomes increasingly difficult once it is recognised that multiple agents were at work in producing the Biblical books. By the mid 1960s, when the Instruction on the Historical Truth of the Gospels emerged from the Biblical commission, the work of the Redaction critics needed to be taken into account along with the Form critics. This was the first ever ecclesiastical document of the Catholic Church to give a clear, open endorsement of the use of Biblical criticism, and to admit that there were distinct stages of formation in giving us the gospels we have today;[202] not only does it tacitly admit that it is permissible to resort to Form Criticism - this much was done implicitly by *Divino Afflante Spiritu* - but it also states that although some form critics might make questionable assumptions about the nature of the Bible, this is not an adequate reason for the excluding the method itself. The Instruction then gives implicit acceptance of Redaction Criticism in that it recognises the role of the evangelists in selecting and arranging the elements which they incorporated into their writings.[203]

By Redaction Criticism here is meant that aspect of Biblical study which is concerned, not with the historical investigation of the events described in a Biblical text, but rather with discovering the thought process of the author through information gathered from the way the text has been put together.[204] The task of the redaction critic is to uncover the specific role played by the evangelist in editing and combining the sources at his disposal, and in so doing to reveal clues to the

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[202] Fitzmyer, J. A. 'Appendix, 1. The Biblical Commission and its Instruction on the Historical Truth of the Gospels',pp. 97 – 130, in A Christological Catechism. New Testament Answers, Paulist Press, Ramsey, New Jersey, 1982.
[203] Trans. Fitzmyer, J. A., Catechism, p. 117, p. 136.
[204] Tuckett, C. M., 'Redaction Criticism', pp. 580 – 582, in Coggins, R. J., and Houlden, J. L., (Editors) in A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation, SCM Press, London, 1996.

evangelist's agenda, and perhaps the concerns of the communities for which the gospels were written.[205] Clearly, the Instruction understands that different branches of the science of criticism need to complement each other when it states that no method can be ruled out *a priori*. When the sources, the raw materials which have been drawn together by the editor (or redactor, to use the term more commonly employed in Biblical studies), have been identified using the tools of source and form criticism, the redaction critic can begin to work on identifying possible aims behind the redactor's choices and arrangements of these component sources.[206] The Instruction clearly acknowledges this when it identifies a three-fold process through which the gospels were produced. This progression is explained in the Instruction thus:

Stage 1 is concerned with the words and actions of Jesus himself, in the company of the chosen apostles who were thus equipped to be his witnesses at a later date.[207] We should note that the Instruction runs the risk of confusing stages one and two in its use of language;[208] in the opening words of this section, it refers to 'Christ our Lord', which would be a more appropriate term for the next stage, which deals with apostolic witness to the Risen Christ. Since in Stage 1 we are considering the actual words of Jesus, *ipsissima verba Iesu*, it would have been more appropriate to describe these as issuing from the person of Jesus of Nazareth. However, the point is that the words of Jesus himself would have been expressed in the words and modes of 'reasoning and exposition which were in vogue at the time'. Further, Jesus used

[205] Kselman, J. S., and Witherup, R. D., 'Modern New Testament Criticism' 70:80, p. 1144.
[206] 'General Introduction' in Barton, J., and Muddiman, J., (Editors), The Oxford Bible Commentary, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001, p. 2, § 6.
[207] Fitzmyer, J. A., Catechism, p. 134.
[208] Ibid, p. 113.

the technique of accommodation in order to make his words understandable for his audience.[209]

The Christian assumption has long been that Jesus' actual words were of crucial significance, and yet the Instruction at no time insists that the gospels give us an exact record of these: the gospels are not assumed to preserve exactly the first stage of the transmission of the Gospel.[210]

Stage 2 The apostles are witnesses who proclaimed the death and resurrection of Jesus, and who recorded faithfully the life and works of Jesus, while at the same time 'taking into account in their method of preaching the circumstances in which their listeners found themselves.'[211] Significantly, the Instruction does not appeal to any of the gospels for evidence of this, but instead refers to Acts 10:36-41 in support of the claim that the apostles faithfully explained those things which they had seen and heard of the life and words of Jesus – a claim which obviously could not be included in the gospels themselves.[212] The apostles employed accommodation to suit the circumstances of their hearers; however, their authentic memory of Jesus' words and actions was not distorted or diluted by their Pentecost experience, because 'their faith rested on those things that Jesus did and taught. Nor was Jesus changed into a "mythical" person and his teaching deformed' as a consequence of their veneration of him as Lord, and Son of God.[213] So, there is clear continuity between the words and actions of Jesus himself, and their recollection by the apostles. However, some of the variations in the synoptic accounts of Jesus' actions and words are the result of the apostles' attempts to tailor their recollections to the needs of their hearers. Thus,

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[209] Ibid, p. 134.
[210] Ibid, p. 114.
[211] Ibid, p. 134.
[212] Ibid, p. 114.
[213] Ibid, p. 134.

a variation in the oral tradition precedes the work of the evangelists, which is the subject of the third stage of the process of the transmission of the gospels.[214] The significance of the Gospel of Jesus preached in words and gestures was covered above when we considered the function of Scripture and Tradition in the transmission of Revelation.[215]

Stage 3 Just as the Instruction recognised that Jesus accommodated his presentation to the circumstances of his hearers, and that evangelists had accommodated their account of those words and actions in a similar way, so now it recognises that the evangelists made selections from the available material in oral traditions, and arranged them according to the needs of their readers: 'from what they had received, the sacred writers above all selected the things which were suited to the various situations of the faithful and to the purpose which they had in mind.'[216]

The document refers to 'sacred writers', without making any judgement whether these sacred authors were from among the apostles who were responsible for the Second Stage of Gospel transmission.[217] This is significant for any attempt we may make to locate Inspiration in human agencies and actions, because once attention is directed to the editorial role in producing the final text of the gospels, the question of authorship must be significantly widened. *Divino Afflante Spiritu* had insisted that the quest for the literal sense of the Biblical texts was to determine the intention of 'the author' of that text, but this understanding can no longer be supported, and the concept of author now must be widened considerably. This may not be a major problem with the gospels, but clearly MacKenzie's identification of a history of

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[214] Ibid, p. 135; p. 115.
[215] Chapter 1, p. 23.
[216] Fitzmyer, J. A., Catechism, p. 136.
[217] Ibid, p. 116.

composition stretching over hundreds of years and through countless redactors for the book of Judges cannot be ignored.

The 1964 Instruction is also significant in its encouragement to exegetes to tackle the many problems facing the interpretation of the Scripture that were at the time unresolved. The document certainly encourages the exegete:

> freely (to) exercise his skill and genius so that each may contribute his part to the advantage of all, to the continued progress of sacred doctrine, to the preparation and further support of the judgement to be exercised by the ecclesiastical Magisterium.[218]

But, of course, in the tradition of Magisterial assertions the document adds that the exegete must 'always be disposed to obey the Magisterium of the Church...' Apparently, exegetes are given the freedom to employ whatever tools will be of use to them in furthering the understanding of magisterial statements either made in the past, or updated until the present. The quotation in the previous paragraph is a paraphrase of a section of *Divino Afflante Spiritu* – although it does go on to contribute new insights over that encyclical. Fitzmyer[219] presents the relevant sections of these two documents in this table:

[218] Ibid, p. 137.
[219] Ibid, pp. 119 – 120.

Divino Afflante Spiritu	**1964 Instruction**
There remain therefore many things, and of the greatest importance, in the discussion sand exposition of which the genius of Catholic commentators may and ought to be freely exercised, so that each may contribute his part to he advantage of all, to the continued progress of sacred doctrine, and to the defence and honour of the Church.[220]	There are still many things, and of the greatest importance, in the discussion and exposition of which the Catholic exegete can and must freely exercise his skill and genius so that each may contribute his skill to the advantage of all, to the continued progress of sacred doctrine, *to the preparation and further support of the judgement to be exercised by the ecclesiastical Magisterium* and to the defence and honour of the church.[221]

Fitzmyer considers the italicised addition of the 1964 Instruction is significant, since it appears to give complete freedom to the exegete to explore all avenues to support already existing expressions of doctrine. In a sense, this is precisely what is intended in the present study, which aims to consider how current philosophical hermeneutical theory can shed some light on the traditional belief that Scripture is Inspired.

§ 3:3:3 Karl Rahner and the Relationship between Scripture and the Church

R.A.F. MacKenzie ended his presidential address with a call for theologians to make further investigation into the question of causality:

[220] *Divino Afflante Spiritu* article 47; *EB 565.*
[221] Fitzmyer, J. A., Catechism, pp. 119 – 120. My italics, added to highlight the addition by the 1964 Instruction.

> 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.[222]

Karl Rahner chose to pursue a different path.[223] His aim is to explore the question of social inspiration from the relationship between the NT and the primitive Church.[224] But he does not attempt this from the perspective of Biblical scholarship;[225] as a dogmatic theologian, his starting point is that: "...the doctrine of inspiration that has been enunciated by the teaching authority of the Church, and further explained and expanded on by theologians."[226]

Rahner outlines the usual arguments for a theology of Inspiration, and highlights their difficulties; particularly that the traditional concept of Inspiration, although perfectly correct, is rather abstract. This unfortunately means that what is offered is often taken as an adequate description for the material content of Inspiration, which it is not. He summarises the content of the doctrine of Inspiration:

> The Scriptures have God as their originator, and therefore he is their 'author'. He is author of the Scriptures because he has inspired them... inspiration consists in God's supernaturally enlightening the human author's mind in the perception of the content and essential plan of the book, and moving his will to write no more and no less that what God

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[222] MacKenzie,, R.A.F., 'Problems', p. 8.
[223] Rahner, K., 'Inspiration in the Bible', pp. 7-86; Burtchaell, J. T., Catholic Theories, p. 252.
[224] Vawter, B., Inspiration, p. 109.
[225] Rahner, K., 'Inspiration', pp. 7-86.
[226] Ibid, p. 8.

himself wants written, God providing him the while with special assistance to ensure that the work, thus conceived and willed, be correspondingly be carried into effect.[227]

This is familiar to us from Trent, Vatican I and *Providentissimus Deus.*

Rahner turns to the question of authorship. If instrumentality is to be invoked, it must not imply that the human is merely an implement employed by the divine author, but reduced to God's *amanuensis*; this would seriously detract from the human role, while doing nothing to enhance divine authorship.[228] Sadly, the majority of descriptions appear to suggest that Inspiration would work better, if only the role of the human author could be reduced to that of secretary!

For Rahner, the following are essential for a proper understanding of Inspiration:

God is understood as the author of the Bible

(a) in a sense which makes him truly, though analogously, a literary author, yet which also distinguishes his authorship from that of the human author, and

(b) in such a way that divine authorship not only tolerates the presence of a human author, but positively requires it.[229]

Rahner is clearly correct when he says the postulation of divine authorship positively requires the presence of the human author. But it is less clear that he is correct in demanding that literary authorship, even in an analogous sense, needs to be attributed to God. As we saw above, when the principle of instrumental causality is examined

[227] Ibid, pp. 11-12.
[228] Ibid, pp. 14-15.
[229] Ibid, p. 18.

more closely, it is far from certain that the divine participation in Inspired Scripture need be understood as literary authorship.

Rahner cites the traditional expression of the necessary relationship that exists between Scripture and the Church: necessary because "Scripture needs a teaching authority in order to fulfil its own function as living, judging Word of God to the men of each age."[230]

But this raises questions. If we say the Bible cannot interpret itself, but requires an infallible interpreter, does this not mean that the Bible holds no priority over Traditions in determining the content of divine revelation? If we insist on the authority of the interpreting Church, then we risk undermining any Scriptural authority alongside Church authority. Conversely, if we insist on Scripture's own authority, where in Scripture do we locate that authority?

Rahner focuses on the unique role of the Apostolic Church, when oral tradition transmitted salvation through Christ; like all prophetic messages, this carried its own authority. In time, the oral testimony was replaced by written Scripture, so complete and unambiguous in its expression that it too carries its own authority. The oral proclamation, and its written successor both belong to the Apostolic Church; therefore the authority of the Apostolic Church and Scripture were one and the same. But this is not true of any other stage in the Church's history, therefore, we need to postulate a Church with the necessary authority to interpret Scripture. So, the teaching authority of today's Church must be fully subordinated to the Bible; all that need be maintained is that God could give the Church an infallible teaching authority which accompanies the holy, Inspired, and inerrant book. Since Book and Church

[230] Ibid, p. 30.

come from the same divine source, it follows that God will take care, through the action of the Holy Spirit, both in the production of the Bible and the life of the Church, to ensure that neither will contradict the other.[231]

This is back to the old problem of the sufficiency of Scripture, and the "Two Source" theory already mentioned in this study.[232] Rahner accepts that Trent neither ruled out nor demanded the so-called "Two Source" theory, but his explanation of Inspiration will stand whether it is accepted or rejected; he is content to ask whether there are any truths – excepting Canonicity and Inspiration – which are not at least implicitly found somewhere in Scripture, and which have reached us through the unwritten tradition alone.[233]

According to Rahner, Inspiration explains how Scripture and the Church are related:

> ...we must be able to make clear from the nature of inspiration itself that the Bible is *the* Book (not just *a* book) and *the* source upon which the teaching authority draws; at the same time we must show that the Bible is the *Church's* book and that the Church is for that reason able to testify to its inspiration.[234]

Rahner argues as follows:

1) <u>God founds the Church.</u>

God brings about the Church. This divine action reaches its climax in Christ and in the Church; before Christ, God's action in the world was incomplete, an action which could be withdrawn up to the Incarnation, because until then, the dialogue between

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[231] Ibid, pp. 32-33.
[232] See chapter 1.
[233] Ibid, p. 37.
[234] Ibid, p. 38.

God and humanity remained open. Until then, it was impossible to tell if it would end in judgement or in grace.[235]

2) The Apostolic Church

The Apostolic Church was a unique example of divine action, different from the preservation of the later Church in history. The Apostolic Church's function is unique; God founded it at a particular moment in time, and so God has a unique, non-transferrable relationship with it, one not shared with other generations. Not only is the Apostolic Church its first period of Church in time; it is the norm for everything still to come. The Apostolic Church had a special capacity for clear self-expression, so that it could separate itself from 'Pseudo-Christian and Pseudo-Churchly phenomena'.[236] The later Church has this capacity only because it depends on the Apostolic Church. The highest possible expression of self-expression occurs when the Church does not merely measure itself against a given norm, but actually produces that norm by which the measurement is to be taken:

> ... the Church's formal teaching authority and the promised assistance of the Spirit have neither the purpose nor the capability of taking the place of a material norm of Christian faith and morals.[237]

3) The Scriptures are Constitutive Elements of the Church

The Bible is constitutive of the Apostolic Church because this stage of the Church possessed both authority and infallibility in its oral proclamation of Christ. From the fact that the Scriptures *exist* and that they are essentially the Church's book, they are recognisable as sacred only in relation to the Church in which they arose, to which

[235] Ibid, p. 43.
[236] Ibid, p. 48.
[237] Ibid, p. 49.

they were given, and which is therefore able to interpret them with authority. Rahner' insists, however, that he is not suggesting that the entire oral proclamation is deposited in Scripture alone. [238]

A fundamental character of the Scriptures from the beginning has been the fulfilment of that role which is normally ascribed to the Apostolic Church, i.e. to be not only the first in the passage of time, but also to be the source, the norm, the Canon for the Church of later eras. The fulfilment of the task of the Apostolic Church indeed was brought about precisely by the writing down of the *paradosis*, the faith, the self-constitution of that first stage of the Church's existence, to be normative for all successive ages of the Church[239].

4) Rahner's Thesis

Rahner's proposition is this:

> *By the fact that* God wills and creates the Apostolic Church, God also...wills and creates the Scriptures in such a way as to become through his inspiration their originator, their author.[240]

The Inspiration of Scripture amounts to God's founding of the Church, because the founding of the Church requires the establishment of that constitutive element of the Apostolic Church, the Bible.[241]

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[238] Ibid, p. 52.
[239] Ibid, p. 51.
[240] Ibid, pp. 52-53.
[241] Ibid, p. 53.

5) Inspiration and the Old Testament

Rahner has been criticised for this part of his theory. He maintains that the synagogue, unlike the Church, does not have the authority to testify infallibly to the Inspiration of the Scriptures. There never existed an authoritative teaching *office* from the Old Testament in the sense of a permanent institution that could be described as formally endowed with inerrancy. This does not mean that the Old Testament period was without knowledge of Inspired and Canonical books; without specifying which, he says that there were writings which were considered Inspired, and he adds that, more importantly, ideas about the meaning and extension of Canonicity were recognised and even ratified by Jesus, the Apostles, and the early Church.[242] But, he maintains, it would not have been possible for the extent of the Canon to be defined before the time of the Church, because:

> an inchoative knowledge of Inspiration and a start on the formation of a Canon was there possible, because...prophetic charism was there to support it. But no more than that. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Church, even in the case of the Old Testament, herself completed the formation of the Canon and did not simply take over the Jewish Canon as final and definitive.[243]

Rahner here appears to confuse the formation (or more accurately, the closure) of the Canon with Inspiration. At best, it is questionable if there was a sense of Canon of Scripture in the Jewish tradition before the Christian era, so he is probably correct

[242] Ibid, p. 54-55.
[243] Ibid, p. 55.

here.[244] But to describe how and when and why a community recognised books as Inspired is not the same as describing how the books are Inspired in the first place. I suggest that a step in the right direction here lies in Rahner's own observations. He writes of the human – divine dialogue prior to the Christ event. Inspiration, according to the model I propose in this study, is to do with the dialogue of Spirit-moved response to the divine initiative of self-disclosure. I will suggest that this element of dialogue is necessary to allow the ever-present aspect of divine Revelation – as we saw from *Dei Verbum*'s description of Revelation.[245] Here, I suspect, we meet another instance of the need to keep separate categories that are often collapsed into each other; in this case, Canonicity and Inspiration. Hoffmann will supply us with a model which separates these, and which will be helpful in developing our own model for Inspiration. At this stage, I want to suggest that Rahner's concept of the role of the Church in the creation of the Bible, insightful and influential as it certainly has been, still does not answer the question of Inspiration itself. Yes, as Vawter suggests, it may be a search for *the* inspired author of a Biblical passage is neither useful nor desirable,[246] but since the community did not collectively *write* any piece of Scripture, somehow, we need to consider the response of an individual to an instance of Revelation. I will describe this instance later as a symbol of Revelation.

Rahner seems to fall into the same trap as Aquinas. To reduce inspiration in the Old Testament to prophecy, as he does, is surely to make the old mistake of failing to recognise the literary genres of the majority of those (non-prophetic) writings. He has taken us back to the position of Thomism in its failure to understand Inspiration as

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[244] c.f. Brown, R.E., and Collins R. F., 'Canonicity', 66:31, pp. 1039 – 1040, in Brown, R. E., Fitzmyer, J. A., Murphy, R. E, (general editors) The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1997, pp. 1034 – 1054.
[245] Chapter 1, pp 33 – 44.
[246] footnote 83, p. 30.

inadequate prophecy.[247] But how does Rahner identify the Inspiration of the Psalms, or of the Wisdom Tradition. Where is the element of prophecy in Peter's quotation of Psalm 16 (c.f. p. 47 above) in Acts 2:27 – or would Rahner reduce the charism of prophecy to 'something needing to be fulfilled' (i.e. to the letter) in the person of Christ. Rahner's notion of the unity of the Bible might appeal to a Christian systematic theologian, but not to a Christian (or Jewish) Old Testament scholar; and it takes him a little too close for comfort to the old idea of Inspiration by subsequent approbation (i.e. of the Apostolic Church), specifically rejected in *Providentissimus Deus*![248] Rahner's theory of Old Testament Inspiration seems to ignore the fact that, for the Jewish people, what Christians call the Old Testament constituted – and continue to constitute *the* Scriptures. The Old Testament books need to be accorded their place as truly the Word of God in their own right, the Scriptures of the people of the Covenant. But this in itself does not prevent the view of the Old Testament as Christian pre-history. In an interesting article on Prediction-Fulfilment, Jensen[249] points out that, with the possible exception of scientific exegetes of the present age, no one – and here he includes not only Christians, but also various generations of Hebrews – read the Old Testament without an element of re-interpretation. Even within the Old Testament itself, the effects of re-interpretation are clearly visible. Later, this fact will be used to support the model of Inspiration as a Spirit-driven written response to Symbolic Revelation. I suggest that within Scripture itself, we encounter symbols of Revelation which are the subject of an Inspired response and a re-writing. And if I am correct in this, any theory of Inspiration must allow for a continuity that runs throughout both Testaments.

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[247] pp. 56 – 63.
[248] Vawter, B., Inspiration, p. 112.
[249] Jensen, J., 'Fulfilment in Bible and Liturgy', Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 50, 1988, pp. 646 - 662.

Is Rahner correct in equating the production of Scripture with the existence of the Apostolic Church? According to McCarthy,[250] the role of the Apostolic Church should be seen as the product of its growth and development; not as a result of its culmination. Hence, the end of the Apostolic Church is defined, not as when it *produced* Scripture; rather it occurs when it *ceases* to produce Scripture.

Rahner's recognition of the social/ecclesial dimension of Inspiration is widely recognised as his major contribution to the question. Scripture scholars including McKenzie, Benoit, and Hoffmann have also been aware of this. Rahner's work suggests to us that an analysis of the role of the community in the production of Biblical books may bear more fruit than an attempt to identify how the grace of Inspiration acts on an individual agent.[251] And yet, in the article on Inspiration, Rahner still seems to depend heavily on a narrow spectrum of possible authors for each book. For example, in his concluding remarks, he writes:

> ...inspiration requires no more than that God, willing the production of a certain definite book, influence the human writer in such wise as efficaciously to ensure that he will actually form a correct conception of what he is to write, will effectively decide to write down what he has so conceived, and will actually execute this decision.[252]

One wonders how, practically, this can be reconciled with MacKenzie's problems, illustrated by the long period of gestation for the book of Judges. There is surely a possibility that Rahner's theory is like the proposal for instrumental causality –in theory, very good, but in practice, one wonders if any book ever came to be written

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[250] Burtchaell, T. A., Theories, p. 251.
[251] Vawter, B., Inspiration, p. 111.
[252] Rahner, K., 'Inspiration', p. 60.

in that way?[253] In this light, now seems an appropriate time to move on to the next scholar in this survey, in an endeavour to explore how a realistic understanding of human authorship can properly fit with a concept of Inspiration as a Social Phenomenon.

§ 2.3.4 John L. McKenzie and the Social Character of Inspiration

In the late 1950s and into the 1960s, John L. McKenzie expressed great confidence in contemporary Biblical criticism, believing it had reached such a level of maturity that Biblical Inspiration could now be presented with greater intelligibility.[254] McKenzie speaks for his fellow exegetes who, thanks to advances in Biblical criticism, are distinctly unhappy with traditional descriptions of God as the author of His inspired word, because these make absolutely no allowance for the way in which the Inspired book was composed. We already noted that the same criticism may be levelled at Rahner's theory. It is all very well, he says, to state that God is the author of His inspired word, and that the human author is moved by God through the principles of instrumental causality, but paradoxically, this definition of Inspiration becomes silent when it comes to an explanation of the only aspect of Inspiration which is open to historical and critical investigation: that is, the actual literary activity of the inspired writers.[255]

McKenzie is concerned about the way Inspiration has been extended to more and more agents involved in the production of Biblical books – not because he objects to the charism being shared out, but because he feels that each extension of the scope of Inspiration is only conceded out of necessity. When a problem arises as to who

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[253] Chapter 1, p 26.
[254] McKenzie, J. L., 'The Social Character of Inspiration', Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. XXIV, April 1962, pp. 115-124.
[255] McKenzie, J. L., 'Social Character', p. 115.

deserves to be termed author, McKenzie feels there is a tendency to widen the field of legitimate claimants to the title of Inspired. He gives the example of the Yahwist, the first great literary character of ancient Israel. The supposition is that this literary agent has taken and collected a conglomeration of independent, scattered traditions into a *Heilsgeschichte.* The Yahwist then deserves the title author, because he has been involved in the production of a text. Therefore, he deserves to be called 'Inspired'. But the problem is that neither the Yahwist's pre-existing traditions nor their respective authors can be identified. Since neither of these is now available to us, we do not feel any need to extend to them the charism of Inspiration. But this does not seem entirely reasonable. The role of the pre-existent authors and their texts may be less significant than that of the Yahwist himself, but by the same token, their role is considerably more than nothing![256] He extends this line of thought with the help of the postulated Q sources of the Gospels.

McKenzie's unease is with the way that Inspiration is only distributed further when a difficulty is encountered. We multiply the posited number of authors and sources, but we still use the term author only in the scholastic and post-scholastic formulation, according to a modern, i.e. non-Biblical, understanding of authorship.[257]

The Biblical reality of authorship, however, is not like our current understanding, and this realisation leads McKenzie to ask why, by and large, the biblical authors remained anonymous. Does this indicate modesty on behalf of the author, or does it signal the indifference of the writer to the quality of his work? McKenzie suggests there is another reason altogether: the anonymous author remained so because he did not consider himself to be an individual voice. Instead, the Biblical author remained

[256] Ibid, p. 118.
[257] Ibid, p. 118.

anonymous because in writing he fulfilled a social function; through him the society of which he was a member wrote its thoughts. He was his society's spokesperson, and that society was the real author of the literature.[258]

Achtemeier also refers to the anonymity of the vast majority of those who were involved in producing Biblical texts. It doesn't matter, he feels, if those who wrote – respondents, as he calls them, although he includes as respondent anyone who contributes to Biblical composition - are anonymous "(because) we can...allow the proper role to the community of faith which played so large a part in the preservation and interpretation of traditions in new situations."[259]

What is important, says Achtemeier, is not the identity of the respondents, but the results of their labours.

Law[260] notes two potential problems with Achtemeier's position, points which also apply to McKenzie's theory. The first of these is that if Inspiration is properly a feature of the community, rather than of unidentifiable individual 'respondents', is there not a tendency here towards Inspiration by subsequent approbation? This, of course, is ruled out by *Providentissimus Deus,* But is this really what Achtemeier is advocating? Certainly, if he was suggesting that a book is considered Inspired *only* on the strength of the community so deciding, then Law's point is valid. But only the community to which the Bible belongs can determine its Inspiration. It is the same Holy Spirit through whom the biblical author was motivated to write – i.e., was Inspired – who makes it possible for the community to recognise the Inspiration in the first place. Law's

[258] Ibid, p. 119.
[259] Achtemeier, P., Inspiration, p. 133.
[260] Law, D., Inspiration, pp. 134 – 135.

second problem with Achtemeier's theory is that if Inspiration is somehow the accumulation of the community's role in maintaining its tradition, where is the place for divine input? Without divine input it is difficult to demonstrate that the Bible has divine origins.

This appears to me to be a more serious objection. I will suggest that the deficiency identified by Law is supplied if we see Inspiration as separate from, but necessarily related to Revelation. After we consider the hermeneutical philosophy of Paul Ricoeur, I will be suggesting that Revelation and Inspiration are the poles in the dialogue between God and humanity in that Revelation is the initiative of God in communicating to humanity; Inspiration is the Spirit-moved human response to that Revelation. This seems to answer the objection that divine input is missing. The role of the community, then, is in the Spirit-driven assessment of the presence or absence of the Inspiration of the same Holy Spirit in the creation (understood in the artistic sense) of the Biblical text.

McKenzie reminds us that Rahner proposed that Inspiration in the New Testament is best understood as a charism possessed by the Church, rather than by an individual writer. Inspiration is one of the gifts that had been given only to the early Church; later, it was replaced by other charisms and functions, more suited to the fully operational Church. Therefore, those who write the inspired books of the New Testament write them as officers and representatives of the Church, and it is the Church which is the real author of the New Testament.[261] It is noteworthy here that McKenzie clearly means by authorship much more than literary activity; unlike

[261] McKenzie, J. L., 'Social Character', p. 119.

Rahner, who felt that Inspiration required that God be given the attributes of literary authorship.

This allows McKenzie to overcome Rahner's problem with Inspiration in the Old Testament. McKenzie recognises that the Old Testament community was not what could properly be called 'church', but it was still very much a society.[262] He sees a solution to Rahner's difficulty by recognising that Israel, in living and expressing its ethos, is also involved in the dialogue of a history in which the word of God was revealed. Consequently, Inspiration is a perfectly acceptable term to use to describe its (anonymous) authors as they perform their function on behalf of their society. Note here the importance of dialogue with Revelation. This dialogue is not limited to a Christian perspective. As Vawter writes, "one need not have the Christian's view of the Old Testament as propedeutic to the New Testament in order to regard its authors in this light."[263]

Before we leave this debate on the status of pre-Christian Israel, it will be useful to include DuBarle's contribution. Rahner had maintained that there was no Old Testament Canon in any real sense until such times as the Church added these books to its own writings; DuBarle believes the opposite is true, and that in reality, what the Church was doing was to add its own emerging apostolic writings were in fact added to the old lists. Certainly, DuBarle has a point when we recall the extensive references, in the Gospel Passion Narratives, for example, to the ways in which Jesus fulfilled the Scriptures. Whether this amounts to an Old Testament Canon which pre-dated that defined by the Church is beyond the scope of this work[264] More interesting

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[262] Ibid, p. 119.
[263] Vawter, B., Inspiration, p. 112.
[264] A good summary of the question of closure of the Old Testament Canon is to be found in Brown, R.E., and Collins R. F., 'Canonicity', 66:31-35, pp. 1039-1040.

from our point of view is DuBarle's objection to Rahner's claim that Scripture is an expression of the community's faith. DuBarle asks how this can be so when books like Job and Jeremiah clearly fly in the face of the community's customary expression of faith.[265]

Surely, though, it is DuBarle who overstates his case here, and not Rahner. If anything, it is precisely as part of the record of the faith of Israel that the books like Job and Jeremiah have their role. Certainly, they are untypical of the way that the faith of Israel is usually expressed, but it is all the more necessary that they be included in the Canon for that reason – the Old Testament would be incomplete without their presence to give expression to the hard questions over which people struggled when face with apparently meaningless suffering of the innocent (Job), or in the face of the destructive experience of the Exile (Jeremiah). Ricoeur will provide us with an account of these differing types of Biblical discourse, necessarily complementary to each other for a full picture of the dialogue between God and humanity. None of these books alone gives a complete history of the faith of Israel, but that written history which we call the Old Testament would not be complete without them either. In a subsequent chapter, we will turn to Brueggemann's analysis of Jeremiah, Isaiah II, and Ezekiel: three prophetic figures who interpret the Exile in three very different ways. Each of these prophets, I will suggest, illustrates how different books have emerged as a result of different, Inspired, written responses to the same Symbol of Revelation, the Exile, which like all symbols, is capable of mediating many meanings.[266]

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[265] Burtchaell, J. T., Theories, p. 255. c.f. n. 2, p. 255.
[266] Three works by Brueggemann are listed in the Bibliography. They are cited in passing on pp 60 ff below.

But does this not mean that we still have to consider *this* individual, anonymous or otherwise, making *this* Inspired response in writing to *that* Symbol of Revelation? It seems to me that McKenzie has somehow lost this aspect of the quest for what he sees as the actual production of Biblical books. Yes, the assembling of the material, the gathering of the traditions, all of this involves the community. But the act of writing still requires individual activity, even if this is totally anonymous. It is, I suggest, the community that provides the parameters in which the Inspired writing is done. It is, I venture to suggest, the Tradition (c.f. *Dei Verbum's* description of Tradition as the vehicle through which the Word of God is passed on). This will require much more exploration at a later stage, but I would suggest that when we consider the witness of the Jobs and Jeremiahs of Scripture, we are reminded that the original witnesses here were Inspired individuals, responding to specific revelatory promptings - in our yet to be elaborated model, symbols of Revelation. These figures served as symbols of revelation to others; the community who collected and distributed their testimony, *and* the individuals who write down their Inspired version of that testimony. The number and identity of these writers are not important. They belonged to that community whose tradition included Job and Jeremiah and all the others.

McKenzie is surely correct in his assertion that Inspiration is but one of the charisms which guide the hierarchically structured religious community. None of these charisms is properly understood if considered only as applying to an individual; they are primarily communicated to the Church within which they are used, and for which they were given,[267] in this case, to provide what may be the unifying trait of Biblical literature, to be a recital of the saving deeds of God, a profession of the faith of Israel

[267] McKenzie, J. L., 'Social Character', p. 119.

and of the primitive Church. Stressing once more the importance of the society, McKenzie writes:

> The Bible is the story of the encounter of God and Israel which issued in the incarnation of Jesus, the new Israel, and His continued life in the new Israel, the Church.[268]

Almost 40 years after McKenzie wrote this article, however, R.E. Murphy was writing:

> it is neither possible nor desirable to find a unity in the literary witness. The proof of that is the fact that no one has succeeded in capturing the alleged unity.[269]

However, Murphy's statement does not take away from McKenzie's basic point. The recital of the saving deeds of God may not possess the unity that McKenzie over-optimistically seeks, but the idea of a record of the dialogue existing between God and his people, a people that became aware of God revealing his presence in its life in a range of deeds whose significance scholars still discover anew, will have significance for later explorations of how Inspiration may have worked for this people, and its authors who recorded its collective voice.

McKenzie finds that two recurrent expressions are used to convey Israel's experience of its God; these are: the word of God, and the knowledge of God. Israel knew Yahweh, because Yahweh had spoken to Israel. Therefore, because Israel had heard the word of Yahweh, Israel's charismatic writers could enunciate the word of

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[268] Ibid, p. 120.
[269] C.f. Murphy, R. E., 'Questions Concerning Biblical Theology', p. 82, Biblical Theology Bulletin, Vol. 30, no. 3, 2000, pp. 81 – 89.

Yahweh. He doesn't think that the distinction between whether the word was written or spoken was as important for a culture such as ancient Israel, in which the spoken word predominated anyway, as it is in today's world. Here McKenzie returns to Benoit's idea that the charism of inspiration can only be considered alongside all the other works of the Spirit in the people of God. McKenzie, perhaps with tongue-in-cheek, accuses the apostle Paul of an inexcusable oversight when he lists, in 1 Corinthians 12:28, the charismatic officers of the Church as "...apostles, prophets, teachers, thaumaturges, healers, helpers, administrators, and speakers of foreign tongues...(but) omitted inspired scribes..."[270]

McKenzie wishes to make it clear that he is not reverting to old theories of verbal dictation. To counter any such accusation, he points out that the term 'word of God' signifies a direct mystical insight and awareness of the divine reality. In no sense is the word of God to be understood in the same way as the word of humans:

> I conceive it...precisely as an experience of the divine reality. When the prophet utters the word of God, he articulates the experience, he responds to it. Such an experience, I conceive...as an effective movement to speak the word of God or to write it. But I would insist once more that the spokesman of God speaks for his society; when he speaks, he speaks not only in virtue of his own personal experience and knowledge of God, but in virtue of the faith and traditions in which his experience occurs and without which his experience would not have meaning.[271]

[270] McKenzie, J. L., 'Social Character', p. 121.
[271] Ibid, p. 121.

McKenzie anticipates the accusation that, in all of this, he equates Inspiration with Revelation, and in part, he accepts the accusation, but with qualifications. In his defence, he pleads that his understanding of Inspiration and Revelation are not exactly the same as that of the conventional terminology. He sees the need to re-assess the distinction between Inspiration and Revelation for this reason: previously, inspiration has been too closely identified with the individual author and with the written word; Revelation has too often been taken to mean a revealed proposition, and certainly not the word of God and the knowledge of God in the Biblical sense, but he does not want to reduce revelation to inarticulate propositions, which can be formulated indifferently one way or another. Direct insight and awareness of God cannot be dismissed as an inarticulate proposition in any case! Rather, Revelation is an experience, one like the experience of pleasure or pain, which cannot really be defined except by being described by the person who has the experience, and there is no problem with having an experience which we cannot define precisely. We can easily distinguish one person from another, but we rarely feel the need to define how we do so; we even struggle to describe satisfactorily someone we have known for many years![272] McKenzie adds that what is said here about the word of God in no way detracts from the human authorship. This indeed is where we can truly identify the hallmarks of human activity – no one who has searched for the correct word in writing will doubt the significance of the choice of words: indeed, literary authorship is best defined as the selection of words.

According to McKenzie, too much emphasis has been given to the distinction between Revelation and Inspiration. Inspiration, he says, is the concrete experience of the word of God, and the knowledge issuing from that experience. He poses the

[272] Ibid, p. 122.

question, since that knowledge varies from person to person, does this not require that we admit of degrees of revelation, and does this not go against Tradition's contention that there are no degrees of Inspiration? I confess that I am not quite sure why McKenzie here changes the word from Revelation to Inspiration. I would suggest that here we have an illustration of why Revelation and Inspiration must be keep distinct form each other. McKenzie is correct in wanting to avoid reducing Revelation to propositions, and he is correct in wanting to free Inspiration from a narrow equation with a single author, or even with the written word (in the sense of divine dictation). But is he not simply confusing Inspiration with 'inspiring'? The model for Inspiration being posited here is of a Spirit-led impulse to respond in writing to Symbolic Revelation. The Magisterial tradition of the Church has never had a problem with degrees of Revelation. As we have already noted, the accepted position is that all Scripture is inspired, but not all Scripture is Revelatory. This seems to me to be the same as saying that all Scripture is the product of a Spirit-led impulse to record in writing a response to Revelation. If the Revelation (Symbolically understood, as we will explore later) has prompted this Spirit-directed, i.e. Inspired response, then we can legitimately call that Revelation inspiring. If a given piece of Scripture (itself capable of Symbolic Revelation) is sufficiently inspiring to prompt a spirit-directed response in writing, the result *may* have been more Inspired writing. Admittedly, this did not happen too often, but a good case could be made for saying that this is precisely what inspired the author(s) - in the widest possible sense of the term – of the Gospel of Matthew to use the bulk of the Gospel of Mark[273] as a basis for the later Gospel. In other words, any symbol capable of mediating Revelation, i.e. Divine self-disclosure, is inspiring – and an admission

[273] One estimate is that Matthew substantially uses 600 of Mark' s total of 661 verses; around 90%. C.f. Stanton, G. M., A Gospel for a New People. Studies In Matthew, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1993, p. 51.

of degree is permissible here. But this Revelation is not the same as Inspiration. When Scripture reveals something of God to its reader, which it can do to a greater or lesser extent (or to no extent at all), it can only do so *after* it has come into existence as a result of Inspired writing.

McKenzie's insights are more important than are the deficiencies in his ideas. His analysis of the interaction of between Revelation and Inspiration is helpful in that it attempts to describe the relation between the word of God and the activity of the sacred writers in terms that express more clearly the humanity of the human artist that instrumental causality ever could. His recognition of the anonymity of the human writer at the service of the communal production of Scripture is particularly interesting and helpful to us for a truer understanding of Inspiration. Later in this study, it will be suggested that many of McKenzie's insights, incomplete as they are in the expression outlined here, can be made to take shape in the light of the hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur. McKenzie's work is still rooted in the quest for the literal sense of Scripture, understood as the meaning which the human author intended. When Ricoeur's assertion that the meaning of a passage is located in the text, rather than in authorial intention, it becomes clearer how a Biblical text can be Revelatory and hence inspiring, and how an author expresses, not what will be the meaning of the text, but his own Inspired response to the Symbol of Revelation which impelled him to write.

In the next chapter, we will turn our attention to the work of scholars who provide us with hints for a way forward in our understanding of Inspiration. These are T. A. Hoffmann, who provides a model which we can build upon, and Walter

Brueggemann and Claus Westermann, whose work on Old Testament texts seem to me to provide Biblical evidence for the operation of Hoffmann's model.

CHAPTER 3

EXPLAINING INSPIRATION -THE BIBLICAL WAY

§ 3.1 INTRODUCTION: A NEW MODEL FOR INSPIRATION AND BIBLICAL EVIDENCE FOR THE MODEL

Chapters 1 and 2 were concerned with providing the background to the doctrine of Inspiration, with identifying scholarly responses to the difficulties in explaining this doctrine, and with providing pointers for a way of taking forward our understanding of that doctrine. This chapter will attempt to present a model for the understanding of Inspiration, which can operate alongside the model of Revelation as symbolically-mediated divine self-disclosure.

An examination of the nature and function of symbol will precede the outline of the model for Inspiration understood as the Spirit-animated response in writing to symbols of Revelation. As we saw earlier, there are clearly problems with the traditional principle of instrumental efficient causality as a way of explaining divine authorship. In this chapter, we will offer Michael Polanyi's explanation of the Principle Of Marginal Control as a model for the concept of animation by the Holy Spirit which does not presuppose divine dictation, but provides us instead with a model that reflects principles operational in our world.

Finally, Biblical evidence will be sought to support the model of Inspiration being proposed here.

§ 3.1.1 T. A. Hoffmann, and the Unique Character of Sacred Scripture

Several of the points raised in the previous chapter were taken up by T. A. Hoffmann,[274] who believes that the problems associated with Biblical Inspiration will never be made to disappear merely by tinkering with scholastic attempts to deduce a theory of Inspiration: this approach has tended to reduce Scripture's use in theology to a collection of irrefutable proofs for theological argument. This approach is, of course, still based on the conviction that the Bible has a special authoritative character, because this Scripture is Inspired,[275] an idea we traced back to 2 Timothy 3:16 in Chapter 1. But how can we determine where the authority in Scripture resides?

Hoffmann suggests we focus on three components that contribute to the uniqueness of Sacred Scripture, rather than on Inspiration alone.[276] An awareness of modern critical study's understanding of the Canon of Scripture is important. The traditional definition of Inspiration is not very helpful to us because it tends to over-emphasise the role of God as the author of Scripture; but the Canon is defined in terms of its books, which is very much the result of human labour. So, Hoffmann asks what gives Scripture its *unique sacred* character, and he suggests three components: Inspiration, Canonicity, and Normativity.[277] Scripture operates as a sacred text within the faith community in virtue of these three. We will concern ourselves primarily with Inspiration.

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[274] Hoffmann, T. A., 'Inspiration, Normativeness, Canonicity, and the Unique Sacred Character of the Bible', Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Volume 44, 1982, pp. 447 – 469.
[275] Ibid, p.450.
[276] Ibid, pp. 453-469.
[277] Ibid, p. 454.

§ 3.1.2 A New Definition of Inspiration?

Hoffmann suggests a model for Inspiration, not a definition. He suggests a way to explore how Inspiration acts *within* Scripture itself, i.e. how the *people* depicted in Scripture, and not just the authors of the texts, were inspired by God. This means we need to move away from the narrow concept of the Divine author guiding the activity of a human instrument, and as noted in the introduction of this chapter, we will turn to Polanyi's Principle of Marginal Control for what I consider to be a more useful aid to comprehending the relation between the divine and the human authors of Scripture. Using Hoffmann's model, I suggest that our understanding of Inspiration for today will be more complete if we allow it to include not just the writing, but also the reading of Scripture within the believing community. Returning to McKenzie's concept of the charisms given for the good of the Church, rather than for individuals, then we could describe Inspiration as an impulse of the Spirit that extends beyond the confines of writing. Inspired writing is one specific example of the wider concept, which also extends beyond the confines of the Canon of Scripture. All of this is derived from an awareness of the activity of the Holy Spirit identifiable in Scripture itself, and this is from where Hoffmann derives his model.

Hoffmann notes that Christian perception of the Holy Spirit came relatively late in the early years of the Church, and grew from a gradual development of the Old Testament's terminology. Two words provide the background for the Spirit - *rûah* in Hebrew, and *pneuma* in Greek, the word taken into the New Testament, where the several meanings of *rûah* are included in *pneuma*. Of the 378 instances of *rûah* in the Old Testament, approximately one third of these are rooted in the meaning of wind or breath. A further third are related to human life, to concepts like emotions, life principles, etc. The final third denote divine influence on humans, as found in

phrases like 'the spirit of Yahweh', or the 'spirit of God', and describes all sorts of influence, from skills, to prophetic utterance, feats of strength and violence, to charismatic leadership.[278] These occurrences call to mind Biblical images: the Spirit in creation (Genesis 1:1, Genesis 2:7); prophetic activity (e.g. Ezekiel 36:26, 37:14); activities which involve the breathing of life itself. More numerous examples are found in the New Testament, e.g. in Acts, where the early Christians frequently experience the activity of the Spirit: Acts 2:1-4; 4:25; 8:34-39; 11:15 (referring back to 10:44-47); 13:2-4. Similar passages include John 20:22-23, and the story of the temptations of Jesus in the synoptic gospels, e.g. Mark 1:12. There is a consistency in the way the activity of the Spirit is described in both Testaments, and this is consistent with the common usage of the word inspiration in English.[279] This leads Hoffmann to his model for Inspiration:

> The first component...that gives Scripture its unique character is an inspiration in this more proper, more literal sense of the word, which I would describe as animation with the Spirit of Christ.[280]

This idea places the concept of Inspiration firmly within the wide range of that human behaviour which is attributable to the influence of the Holy Spirit, not just in Biblical writings, but in the life of the believing community in every age. What distinguishes Inspiration from the other Spirit-animated activities is that, firstly, Inspiration is particular, because it involves a *written* response. Hence, for the rest of this study, Biblical Inspiration will be distinguished from other forms of inspired, i.e. Spirit-animated activity. Secondly, in a point I will develop later, Inspiration of Scripture is about a Spirit-animated written response to what I am going to suggest is

[278] Ibid, p. 457.
[279] see Chapter 1, pp. 5f.
[280] Ibid, p. 457.

Symbolically-mediated Divine Self-Disclosure, i.e. it is a response to Revelation understood symbolically. We will also see later, aided by the work of Paul Ricoeur, that, because of the symbolic nature of written discourse, Scripture can not only be called Inspired, but also Revelatory. However, at every stage of this argument, I will want to stress that Revelation and Inspiration are not to be confused with each other: Inspiration is always a written response to Revelation; Revelation is always about Divine self-disclosure. To say that a text is Inspired is also to open up the possibility to say that once the text we call Inspired is committed to writing, it may itself be capable of the Symbolic mediation of divine self-disclosure, i.e. the Inspired text can itself take on symbolic properties. This is not, however, to confuse Revelation and Inspiration, or to collapse Inspiration into Revelation. A simple analogy may help to illustrate how Revelation and Inspiration are distinct, but interrelated. The action of a golf club being swung to hit a golf ball is not the same as the travel of the ball, once struck. But the two motions are nevertheless related. Further, once the ball has been set in motion, it has the capability of causing the same kind of effect (response) on, for example, an unwary bystander as the club had on the ball in the first place. Hence Revelation symbolically mediated can prompt the Inspired response of Biblical writing. Once the text has been committed to writing, it can itself function as a symbol of Divine self-disclosure. As we noted in Chapter 2, the traditional position is that all Biblical writings are Inspired; they are not all necessarily Revelatory.[281]

More clarification is required, of course, for the phrase 'animated by the Spirit of Christ'. Firstly, we must consider how this definition of Inspiration, expressed as the Spirit of Christ, can apply to those who wrote (and read) these words before the birth of Jesus? Hoffmann answers that Jews and Christians alike invoked Inspiration when

[281] See Chapter 2, p. 66.

forming their respective Canons of Scripture, indicating that both recognised here the presence and action of the Spirit of God.[282]

Secondly, Inspiration so described marks an important departure from traditional expressions, because it allows for the scope of inspired literature to include non-Canonical books. In practice, this may allow wider collaboration between Western and Eastern Catholics, as well as Protestants and Catholics who have differing views on the extent of the Canon. There is nothing to prevent a common understanding and acceptance of the Inspired nature of Biblical and Deutero-Canonical books, even if agreement on the Canonicity of some is not possible.

Thirdly, it allows us to include under Inspiration the activity of the writer *and* the reader. I suggest that this is a necessary addition if we are to have an explanation of how Inspired Scripture can be read in a meaningful way in the Church at any time in history. That generations of readers of Scripture have acknowledged to 'feeling inspired' by what they have read is no new discovery. This was already implied when I drew the distinction between Inspired writings and inspiring Revelation. Traditional definitions of Inspiration have not taken this into account.

Hoffmann thinks that his proposal conflicts with the traditional doctrine of Inspiration, since it clearly allows for the possibility that there exist Inspired, but non-Canonical writings. I believe he overstates his case here. Certainly, Vatican I and *Providentissimus Deus* drew on the scholastic principle of instrumental causality, as we saw in the previous chapter. This principle relies heavily on the single authorship of individual books, and seems to assume that the human authors employed as divine instruments would only be used for the specific purpose of writing Scripture. But

[282] Hoffmann, T. A., 'Inspiration' p. 462.

nowhere does the Magisterium actually limit Inspiration to Biblical books: rather, it insists that Biblical books are Inspired, because they have God as their author. Hoffmann insists that his proposed model for Inspiration - with the understanding that this extends to writings beyond the Canon – integrates well with the way theology has come to appreciate also the role of those who read the written word. Later, Ricoeur's hermeneutical theory will help to explain this. Hoffmann writes:

> If the inspired nature of the literary work consists in its animation with the Spirit, then just as it was the presence of the Spirit in the church in the first place that led it to recognise the Spirit there, so it is the continuing presence of the Spirit in the community...that again makes possible the continuing recognition of the Spirit in the inspired text.[283]

But this is what *Dei Verbum* was saying, when it held that Scripture must be read in the Spirit in which it was written.[284]

If our definition of Inspiration is to be consistent with modern exegesis - 'hermeneutically aware' as the title of this study has it - then does it not appear that a further problem arises? Trent defined in a clear, precise way the books of the Canon of Scripture, and stated that the Canon was contained in the version known as the Latin Vulgate. But the formulation of this statement was an action of the Magisterium, and Trent made no judgement on the value of the Vulgate, other than to point out its use in the Church from antiquity. Vatican II re-phrased the Council of Trent's[285] statement on the role of the Vulgate:

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[283] Ibid, p.457-8. My italics.
[284] *De Verbum*, article 12.
[285] c.f. Neuner, J., and Dupuis J., The Christian Faith, p. 71. *EB 61.*

> Easy access to sacred Scripture should be provided for all the Christian faithful....from the very beginning accepted as her own the very ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament which is named after seventy men, and she has always given a place of honour to other translations... especially the one known as the vulgate. But since the word of God should be available at all times, the Church...sees to it that suitable and correct translations are made into different languages, especially from the original texts of the sacred books.[286]

Although still given a place of honour, the Vulgate is given a new status: an esteemed *translation* from the original languages, one among other venerable ancient translations. Other problems now emerge which the Council did not address. How can we identify the definitive version of Scripture? The answer seems to be that we cannot, because:

i) There are many variant readings of Scripture, depending on which fragments of original texts are consulted. Since no one has managed to identify an autograph text for any part of the Old Testament, we cannot easily appeal to an original, authentic text.[287] We can easily draw our own conclusions from this: the combination of variant readings, and the absence of evidence of authors' labours mean that in practice anything resembling a model for Inspiration based on divine dictation is, for all practical purposes, ruled out.

ii) The Greek Septuagint text (or LXX) is acknowledged by Vatican II as a version of Scripture to be held in honour, since this was the Bible known to the first

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[286] *Dei Verbum* chapter VI, § 22. A footnote in the Abbott translation points out that this was a novel departure in the church – never before, since the earliest centuries, had availability of the Scriptures to all been stressed.

[287] Brown, R. E., Johnson, D. W., and O'Connell, K. G., 'Texts and Versions', 68:10, p. 1085, in Brown, R. E., Fitzmyer, J. A., Murphy, R. E., (eds.) The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1995, pp. 1083 – 1112.

Christians, but there are serious discrepancies between the LXX and the Hebrew (Masoretic, or MT) text. The first reason for this is that it would have been impossible for some Hebrew concepts to be translated directly into the Greek of the centuries before Christ. The second is that, in addition to difficulties with its translation, the Septuagint's production was a complex matter, since it is partly literal translation in Greek, and partly free rendering, more in the style of the *targums* than of translation in the strict sense. These *targums*, partly translation, partly commentary, arose when Aramaic replaced Hebrew as the everyday language, and it became necessary to providing Biblical versions that could be read in the synagogues. Likewise, Jews of the Greek Diaspora lost their knowledge of Hebrew, and translations into Greek were required: "Next to the redactor stood...the interpreter, who gave a free, explanatory translation."[288]

Certainly, we can identify differences between Hebrew texts from the Old Testament, and the Septuagint equivalents in the New Testament, and especially in the Gospels. A well-known example is found in the four gospels, each of which quotes the LXX version of Isaiah 40:3, which differs significantly from the M.T., as can be seen here:

Masoretic Text	**LXX, as quoted by Matthew's Gospel**
"A voice cries: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.'" (Isaiah 40:3)	"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight.'" (Matthew 3:3)

[288] Brown, C., 'SCRIPTURE – Tradition and Interpretation', in The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Pater Noster Press, Exeter, 1978, pp. 485 – 6.

It is clear that the LXX grammatical arrangement better suits a description of John the Baptist's activity than does that of the MT. But then we need to ask, which of the versions of Isaiah must be considered inspired? At first sight, the Reformers' claim in the 16th Century that only Hebrew Old Testament books could be considered Canonical seems reasonable; but does that mean that a previously uninspired LXX text suddenly becomes inspired when it appears in the Gospels? Why is it not inspired in its own right? Similar questions arise when, as we saw at the end of Chapter 2, we consider Matthew's redaction on Mark's text, to produce a new gospel. When Matthew was written, did God correct Mark's original mistakes in the new text? Or, how do we apply inspiration when multiple authorship of John's Gospel is postulated?[289]

Answers to questions like these look as if they will not be reached by asking whether or not each component part, collected, edited, altered, and eventually included in what is now regarded as a Canonical text was Inspired, and therefore I suggest it may be more helpful to proceed along the following lines:

Canonical texts draw from many different types of sources, oral and written. Some of these are clearly religious in origin (earlier Biblical texts, e.g. the gospel of Mark for the gospel of Matthew, the LXX, the Exodus for Israel, the Exile, or the Monarchy. Later, all of these will be described as Symbols capable of mediating Revelation). Other sources may have had secular origins, e.g. the Flood, found in several Ancient Near Eastern writings.[290] Now, it is clear that citations from other Canonical writings are Inspired; but there is in fact nothing to rule out the suggestion that, for example,

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[289] R. E. Brown The Gospel According to John, G. Chapman, London, 1975, for a fuller treatment on the authorship of the Fourth Gospel.
[290] Beyerlin, W., et al, (Editors) Near Eastern Religious Texts Relating to the Old Testament, SCM Press, London, 1978, pp. 89 – 97.

the non-Canonical LXX may also be Inspired. If we adopt Hoffmann's argument that Inspiration is but one aspect of what makes Scripture unique, there is no problem with non-Canonical Inspired texts. However, it does makes sense to limit Inspiration to those sources which originated in the covenant community, whether these belong to the Old or New Testaments;[291] it is difficult to imagine how those outside the covenant people could respond to divine self-disclosure in Inspired writing.

But this does not mean that any source (symbol) can be ruled out *a priori* as being capable of mediating Revelation. The psalms announce that the heavens proclaim the glory of God. Paul spoke of the one in whom we live and move and have our being, and the author of Acts wrote these words down – words originating from a pagan poet. All who were involved in the writing of the Biblical version of the ancient flood experienced something of the God of the covenant in the ancient story, and so on. This wide range of symbols could - and clearly did - inspire ancient authors; that is, all of these could mediate Revelation to people who were moved to commit their response in writing. None of this rules out the possibility that non-Canonical writings were also Inspired by the impulse of the Spirit of God.

The argument so far presupposes the action of the Holy Spirit in the pre-Christian community. Hoffmann's description of Inspiration as animation with the Spirit of Christ is attractive, but at first sight, it does not seem to explain how he can deal with the Old Testament as a collection of books Inspired in their own right, i.e., not seen as only part of the Christian Canon. Hoffmann himself claims that this problem is solved:

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[291] McNamanra, M., 'Inspiration', p. 525, in Komonchak, J. A., et al, The New Dictionary of Theology, pp. 522 – 526, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1987.

> by recognising...(that) the inspiration of the OT is the patent presence in it of the Spirit of God, recognised by Jew and Christian alike. That Spirit is identical with the Spirit of Christ (though only recognisable as such after the Christ-event and then only by those who recognise the identity – an example of the variety and degree of the appropriation of the Spirit).[292]

We can mention briefly Hoffmann's remaining two ingredients for the unique sacred character of Scripture. His second is *normativity* (Hoffmann calls it 'normativeness'), which:

> is necessarily a quality in the book itself, not something the church puts there...What the church does is to recognise the inspiration and the normativeness of a book and to Canonise it...thus giving it official, Inspired and normative status within the church community. It is essential that normativeness be recognised as both intrinsic to the idea of the unique nature of Scripture and a distinct component separate from Inspiration. [293]

What Hoffmann describes in this quotation is another way of presenting ideas articulated by Lagrange, and which we considered earlier: a) books are written under the influence of the Holy Spirit, b) *therefore*, they have God as their author, c) *therefore*, the Church recognises them as Canonical and authoritative.[294] Inspiration does NOT depend on Canonical definition; the Canon consists of books recognised as Inspired, although non-Canonical books are not precluded from Inspiration. Which brings us to Hoffmann's third

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[292] Hoffmann, T. A., 'Inspiration', p.462.
[293] Ibid, p. 460.
[294] Burtchaell, J. T. Theories, p. 135.

component for uniquely sacred Scripture, Canonicity. The question arises: is the number of normative writings coextensive with the present Canon? Is it theoretically possible that a lost epistle of an apostle could still be accepted into the Canon, although the church regards the Canon as closed? Is it possible that a book presently exists outside the Canon, but which could possess the other two components? The history of the Canonisation of the New Testament NT suggests that possibly books such as the Shepherd of Hermas, the First Epistle of Clement, or the Epistle of Barnabas might have been Inspired and Normative, but simply lacked acceptance into the Canon; it is not always clear why some books were not accepted into the Canon.[295] This can prompt some speculation: for example, could a decision of the past to reject a book from the Canon possibly be reversed in the future? Possibly, in theory. On the other hand, could the re-discovery of a long-lost apostolic letter in some future date ever be considered Canonical? Probably not. One of the criteria for Canonisation employed by the council of Trent was that a book had a long history of use in the Church; in practice, that meant it was included in the Old Vulgate Edition of the Bible). That a re-discovered text cannot be described as having a long history of church readership excludes it from possible Canonisation.[296]

Hoffmann offers the definition of 'Canon' as "...a collection of texts accepted as Inspired and normative by a virtually universal consensus of the religious community and by official designation of its teaching authority".[297] He notes the following points:

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[295] Ibid., p.462-3.
[296] Brown, R.E, and Collins R.F., 'Canonicity', 66:90; p. 1052.
[297] Hoffmann, T. A., 'Inspiration', p.464.

1) For three quarters of the Christian era, a real Canon of sacred books existed in the church and in Judaism – a point which virtually no-one denies. It was not absolute, ironclad, unchallenged: that is to say, Canon determination, like the determination of the other two components of the uniqueness of Scripture, was a truly human process as well as being perceived in faith to be a divine one.

2) The act of Canonisation by the faith-community recognises the text as Inspired and normative, but it also confers a third and separate character upon the text: Canonicity. This means that there is no mistake made if the Church happened to fail to recognise and Canonise some book or other which is both Inspired and normative. The Biblical books are Canonical because the Church has accepted them into the Canon; the Church has accepted them into the Canon because she recognised them as Inspired and normative.[298]

Hoffmann's theory helps us to remove the model for Inspiration away from a narrow understanding of a Scripture virtually dictated by God, to a model that is more in harmony with the Biblical descriptions of the activity of the Holy Spirit. However, I believe that he provides us with the possibility of further important insight into the unique sacred character of Scripture with his separation of the components of Inspiration, Canonicity and Normativity. I suggest that one of the obstacles often encountered by scholars when theorising about Inspiration arises from a failure to distinguish clearly between Revelation and Inspiration. An additional problem arises when Inspiration comes to be equated with Biblical Authority. Many of the problems arising here can be avoided if we employ Hoffmann's distinction between Inspiration and Normativity. To extend Hoffmann's model, I would say that whereas both

[298] Ibid, p.464.

Inspiration and Normativity add to the unique sacred character of Scripture, Inspiration is to do with Scripture's Divine origin; Normativity is to do with its Authority. How Inspiration can explain the Divine origin of Scripture will become clearer, I hope when in the next Chapter we turn to the dialogue between Symbolic Divine Self-Disclosure (Revelation) and Spirit-driven Inspired writing. Before we proceed, however, it might be helpful to give a summary of the insights of some of those scholars we have considered so far.

§ 3.1.3 Learning from these scholars

So far in this and the previous chapter we have examined insights into Inspiration provided by Catholic Biblical Scholars writing around the middle of the 20th Century, one dogmatic theologian writing around the same time, and one contemporary Biblical scholar who has drawn from the strengths of the earlier writers, while trying to provide an answer to some of the unresolved questions of the Inspiration question. The results of all of this, in so far as we would want to use them in this study, might best be summarised as follows:

Scholastic deductively reasoned propositions and principles are logically exact in providing an explanation of how Inspiration *might* operate, but they suffer severely for their inability to confront the reality of the Biblical data whose significance has been made more apparent to us by modern research. (B. Vawter).

The Scholastic assumption of a single author for each biblical book cannot seriously be upheld. Any theory of Inspiration must take seriously the highly complex question of multiple authorship over a long period of time, involving not only many individuals, but many different types of art – writing, editing, etc. We need also to

take seriously the fact of the anonymity of these authors (R.A.F. MacKenzie and J. L. McKenzie).

Serious consideration must be given to the idea that the charism of Inspiration is a communal activity. If Rahner is correct, and his views have been influential, the relationship between the writing of Scripture and the existence of the Apostolic Church is important. Even if his handling of the Old Testament in this leaves something to be desired, the production of the Bible as the book of the Church is important. But Rahner does not seem to allow sufficient distinction between Inspiration and Canonisation. On a more Biblical footing, the charism of Inspired writing is well understood if it is considered among the other God-given charisms possessed by the Apostolic Church. When the Church ceased to produce Scripture, the age of the Apostolic Church was over (McCarthy). When the era of the Apostolic Church ceased, the Church received other, more appropriate charisms for its continued existence. (McKenzie).

Inspiration is best understood as one of three components that give the Bible its Unique Sacred character, the other two being Normativity and Canonicity. (T.A. Hoffmann). This allows for Normativity and Inspiration to be identified in books that are non-Biblical, i.e. non-Canonical.

Finally, Inspiration and Revelation should not be confused. McKenzie argued that the distinction between the two should be blurred; I argue the distinction should be maintained. I believe that Hoffmann's model supports this for the following reasons:

Hoffmann writes, as we have seen, that animation with the Spirit gives rise to Inspired texts. Now, the presence of that same Spirit in the Church in the first place

was what enabled the Church to declare that the Spirit was present. Therefore, the continued presence and animation of the Spirit in the community is what again makes it possible for that community to identify the presence and animation of the Spirit in the inspired text. It is the presence of the animating Spirit that renders the text normative.

But surely what makes the Biblical text Revelatory, i.e. a mediation of divine self-disclosure, is what makes it normative. My suggestion, which needs much further amplification from the theory of symbolic mediation, is that the normative (Revelatory) text, which came into being through the Spirit animated Inspiration to commit to writing a response to some other symbol of Revelation, becomes itself a symbol of revelation through the presence of the spirit. The presence of that same Spirit, animating the Church in every age, makes it possible for the Church to pass on from generation to generation, in its liturgy, its devotion, its doctrine, its morality, its entire life, the content of the Word of God, some of which is confined to writing. But this is none other than Vatican II's definition of the roles of Scripture and Tradition; the Word of God assigned to writing, and the way in which the Word of God is communicated in unwritten Tradition. Finally, Rahner has shown that the Bible is the Book of the Church. Therefore, the Church can and does Canonise certain books, which it recognises as Inspired and Normative. And this is the Magisterium, as defined in Vatican II also.

For the next section of the argument being offered here, it will be necessary to consider another area, already mentioned, but so far not discussed in much detail, which will be used to complement Hoffmann's model for Inspiration: a study of the ability of symbols to convey meaning. The present study will take Hoffmann's

model, but complement it by the assertion that Inspiration is the partner in dialogue with Revelation, which for our theory is best understood in terms of symbolic Mediation. The proposal is that Biblical Inspiration is the Spirit animated written response to Divine self-disclosure, mediated Symbolically.

Avery Dulles has provided very helpful insight into the usefulness of the model of Symbolically-mediated Revelation:

> The symbols pertinent to divine revelation...may be almost infinitely variable. They may be cosmic objects or natural occurrences, such as the sun, the moon, the wind and the waves. Or they may be particular personages or historical events, such as Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt or Jesus Christ crucified and risen. Or again, the symbols may be artefacts such as a temple or an icon. *Further, they may be words or writings, such as the figurative language of the prophets and apostles or the sacred writings of a religious tradition. A true story, a myth, a parable – any of these can be come a vehicle for divine self-communication.* Strictly speaking, there is nothing which could not, under favourable circumstances, become a symbol of the divine...In speaking of revelation as symbolic disclosure, theologians are generally using 'symbol' in an inclusive sense that would include not only visible or tangible objects but also the 'charged' language of more-than-literal speech.[299]

Dulles does not restrict the possibility of Divine Self-Disclosure solely to the symbolic model, but he does suggest that the very nature of symbols in their diversity

[299] Dulles, A., 'The Symbolic Structure of Revelation', pp. 56f., in Theological Studies, Vol. 41, 1980, pp. 51 - 73. My italics.

make them particularly helpful in recognising Revelation. To begin with, their almost infinite variety permits them to give rise to a multitude of possible meaning. Symbols can be cosmic objects (sun, moon, stars), or natural phenomena (wind and waves); they may be historical persons (Moses, Elijah, Jesus); or historical events (the Exodus, the Crucifixion). But they can also be words or writing (the message of the prophets, the sacred writings, or for that matter, almost any type more than literal writing.). Finally, they can be true (i.e. historically verifiable) stories, or they can be myths. All that is necessary is the favourable condition for these to be used as vehicles of Divine self-communication.

In what follows, we will consider the insights of a range of scholars from various disciplines to assist us in building our understanding of symbols and symbolic Revelation. After we examine various theories of symbol, I will provide examples from two notable Biblical scholars, Walter Brueggemann and Claus Westermann, who demonstrate that, at least as far as certain prophets and the Psalms are concerned, when we read the Scriptures, we read the written, Inspired response of individuals and communities to a variety of symbols which they understood as mediating Divine self-disclosure.

§ 3.2 SYMBOLS AND OUR THEORY OF INSPIRATION

The suggestion was made several times in the previous chapter that Revelation and Inspiration are two poles in dialogue – distinct but connected; Inspiration is the Spirit-motivated response in writing to Divine self-disclosure which is Revelation. This model of Inspiration is taken from T. A. Hoffmann, and I stated that the model for Symbolic Revelation would be offered as best explaining this dialogue. We will explore the concept of symbol and symbolic Revelation with the help of Dulles,

Fawcett, Tillich, Jaspers, and Ricoeur. Later, Brueggemann will help us see how the Biblical texts themselves – in the psalms and in Jeremiah, II Isaiah, and Ezekiel in particular – support the idea of an Inspired written response to a perceived Symbol of Revelation.

§ 3.2.1 Conceptualisations of "symbol" from the past 50 years

This section presents an overview of how some scholars have understood the word (or better, the concept) of symbol. This definition of symbol is taken from a standard English Dictionary:

> **symbol** ('sɪmbᵊl)**1** something that represents or stands for something else, usually by convention or association, esp. a material object used to represent something abstract. **2** an object, person, idea etc., used in a literary work, film etc., to stand for or suggest something else with which it is associated either explicitly or in some more subtle way. **3** a letter, figure, or sign used in mathematics, science, music, etc. to represent a quantity, phenomenon, operation, function etc. **4** *Psychoanal.* the end product, in the form of an object or act, of a conflict in the unconscious between repressions processes and the actions and thoughts being repressed: *the symbol of dreams*. **5** *Psychol.* any mental process that represents some feature of external reality.[300]

Already, we see that symbol may be understood in more than one way. Note, however, that this definition does not include the use of symbol in religious language! Clearly, the term is used in a range of widely different disciplines, in many different ways. Paul Ricoeur has commented on this aspect of symbol. He has

[300] Collins Softback English Dictionary, Harper Collins, Glasgow 1992.

identified three areas of study in which symbol plays an important part, but in each, in very different ways. Ricoeur cites Poetics, Psychoanalysis (following Freud), and Symbolism (following The History of Religions approach of Mircea Eliade).[301] Since the symbol is used in so many different ways by different disciplines, Ricoeur suggests that a better approach is to produce and elaborate a theory of metaphor, which can then be used to shed light in the operation of symbol. We will return to this idea in greater detail below.

Clearly, there is no simple, one-off, all-encompassing way in which to define symbol. Our next step, therefore, is to give an indication of some of the more significant ways that scholars have explained what they mean by symbol: in identifying these various understandings, we can attempt to express more clearly what concepts of symbol can be invoked to explain Biblical Inspiration. Scholars draw our attention to various aspects of symbol: Splett points to the distinction between symbol and sign,[302] which we will expand on later; Drury takes us back to the meaning of the Greek word *sumbolon*, which denoted token or insignia,[303] Happel notes that symbols are produced by the imagination, [304] whereas Naud adds the dimension that symbols are not only representative, but dynamic.[305] This last observation will also receive more attention.

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[301] Ricoeur, P. Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning, The Texas Christian University Press, Texas, 1976, pp. 45 – 69; Ricoeur, P., trans. Buchanan, E., The Symbolism of Evil, Beacon Press, Boston, 1969.
[302] See Splett, J., 'Symbol', in Rahner, K., (ed)., Encyclopaedia of Theology. A Concise Sacramentum Mundi, Burns & Oates, London, 1975, pp. 1654 – 1657.
[303] See Drury, J., 'Symbol', in Coggins, R. J. & Houlden, J.L. (eds), A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation. SCM, London, 1990, pp. 655 – 657 My italics.
[304] See Happel, S., 'Symbol', in Komonchak, J. A., Collins, M., Lane, D.A. (eds), The New Dictionary of Theology, The Liturgical Press, Minnesota, 1990, pp. 996 – 1002.
[305] See Naud, J., 'Symbolism', in Latourelle, R., Fisichella, R.(eds), Dictionary of Fundamental Theology, Herder & Herder,New York, 2000, pp. 1019 – 1022.

From these statements, we can begin to identify some of the characteristics of symbol on which we can build a model for Biblical Inspiration which will work alongside a model of Symbolic Revelation, as outlined by Avery Dulles.[306] Initially, we can say that symbols:

- are vehicles for communication,
- can be verbal or non-verbal,
- are not the same as signs,
- refer to, or represent something other than themselves,
- cannot be created arbitrarily, in the way signs can,
- are complex gatherings of images or ideas which make sense of reality,
- are capable of multiple meanings, and
- invite those who experience them to participate in them.

The authors cited below will enable us to expand on these general observations about symbols; in particular, Paul Tillich and Thomas Fawcett,[307] who have influenced the way many others think of symbols;[308] Schneiders,[309] who was influenced by both Tillich and Fawcett. Daniélou;[310] Lonergan;[311] and Dulles,[312] will help to expand the picture.

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[306] See Dulles, A., Models of Revelation, Gill and MacMillan, Dublin, 1983; Dulles, A., The Craft of Theology. From Symbol to System, Gill and MacMillan, Dublin, 1992; Dulles, A., 'The Symbolic Structure of Revelation', pp. 51-73.
[307] Fawcett, T., The Symbolic Language of Religion. An Introductory Study, SCM, London, 1970.
[308] Tillich, P. Dynamics of Faith; World Perspectives Series, Vol. X, Harper Torchbooks, New York, Evanston and London, 1958, pp. 41-54.
[309] Schneiders, S., Revelatory, note 10, p. 34.
[310] Daniélou, J. The Lord of History. Reflections on the Inner Meaning of History, Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., London, 1958, pp. 130-146.
[311] Lonergan, B., Method in Theology, Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1971, pp. 64-73.
[312] C.f. note 9 above.

§ 3.2.2 Paul Tillich

For Tillich, ultimate human concerns can only be expressed in symbol, because 'symbolic language alone is able to express the ultimate.'[313] He says that every writer who uses the term 'symbol' must explain what he/she means by that term, and he identifies six characteristics:

1. Symbols and signs point beyond themselves to something else. Signs operate conventionally and can be replaced conventionally; e.g. coloured traffic lights. Signs do not participate in what they point to, so they can be replaced if it is expedient to do so. We cannot replace symbols.
2. Symbols do participate in what they point to.[314] For example, a national flag – an example also used by Polanyi,[315] participates in its nation's life; therefore it cannot be replaced except as a result of major catastrophe.
3. Symbols open up levels of reality we are otherwise unaware of. Tillich says: "In the creative work of art we encounter reality in a dimension which is closed for us without such works."[316]
4. What symbols disclose to us is closely related to those dimensions and aspects of ourselves that they unlock within us: a play does not only present us with a new vision of reality; it also opens up otherwise hidden depths of our being.

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[313] Tillich, P. Dynamics, p. 41.
[314] Ibid, p. 42.
[315] Polanyi, M., & Prosch, H., Meaning, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1975, p. 72.
[316] Tillich, P. Dynamics, p. 42.

5. Symbols with a particular communal, political or religious function, are either created or at least accepted by the collective unconscious of the group in which they arise.[317] Individuals cannot consciously create or destroy them.
6. Symbols grow when the time is right, and die when they are no longer relevant. For example, the symbol of 'king' has died in most parts of the world in comparatively recent times, because the symbol ceased to evoke a response from the groups in which it originally found expression.[318]

These characteristics of symbol will all be relevant to the symbolically-mediated Revelation model being developed here.

§ 3.2.3 Symbolic Language

If the Symbol is relevant to the concept of Revelation, and therefore also to Inspired Biblical writing, we must also remember that religious language itself is symbolic. Tillich says that the language of faith is the language of symbols, and Daniélou attributes to symbols an important function in all religious life and thinking; he believes that Biblical texts are "obviously full of symbolism", [319] although he also acknowledges the existence of non-verbal, visual symbols throughout the traditions of both Judaism and Christianity. Daniélou considers that a difficulty with symbols is that they are "always liable to exhibit...a multiplicity of signification";[320] for our model, however, this will be one of the main attractions in building a model for Revelation on symbolic mediation. However, Daniélou does introduce us to something which will be raised more fully in Paul Ricoeur's writings: on the relationship between the world of the symbol and the world of reality, and that there

[317] Ibid, p. 43.
[318] Ibid, p. 43.
[319] Daniélou, J., The Lord of History, p. 130.
[320] Ibid, pp. 132-3.

is in religious symbolism an objective validity which has its roots in the real nature of everything. This enables religious symbolism to provide us with a genuine mode of apprehension of the things of God, since such symbolism is concerned with discovering analogies between the things of this world, and the world of God: "Religious symbolism is essentially a revelation of the divine through the things of the visible creation."[321]

§ 3.2.4 Signs, Symbols and Religious language

Thomas Fawcett believes that signs, unlike symbols, can only operate and be read by convention.[322] Signs are unambiguous in what they represent, indeed, they must not be able to give multiple meanings! In Christian art, signs do not open up new levels of meaning; e.g. the colour blue identifies the Virgin Mary, because this is with whom blue is conventionally associated; but the colour adds nothing to our understanding of the motherhood of Mary.[323] Symbols, however, can open up possibilities closed to signs, because symbols arise out of life and not from human imagination – light and darkness have been seen as powerful symbols for aspects of existence, but humans did not invent light and darkness![324]

Fawcett adds that signs can be transformed into symbols, for example, when a powerful sign, with a wide-ranging appeal, becomes associated with true symbols; he cites the cross as an example. Two consequences arose when the cross became more than a Roman instrument of execution, but instead became associated with images of shedding of blood, resurrection, and kingship, etc. The cross then became a symbol in its own right; but it also became reduced to a decoration, a 'conventional

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[321] Ibid, p. 137.
[322] Fawcett, T., Symbolic Language, p. 14.
[323] Ibid, p. 15.
[324] Ibid, p. 27.

designatory',[325] e.g. on Crusaders' shields, or as a fashion item in more recent times. However, the distinction between sign and symbol should not be pressed too hard, because even as a decoration, the cross can still function as a powerful symbol, of e.g. kingship and resurrection.[326]

Symbols can speak of many things, therefore they can evoke new understandings. But, and I will return to this point later when considering Ricoeur's theory of hermeneutics, this does not mean that symbols have unlimited meanings; their meanings are limited by what they symbolise: "The symbol can only reveal what is present within it".[327]

Undeniably, the cross has mediated many meanings – an instrument of brutal execution, the emblem on a shield, and the powerful symbol invoked by Jesus himself, for whom the cross had many related meanings – as a symbol of total obedience to his Father's will for himself and his disciples; of complete renunciation of self; of a sign raised up for all humanity to see (like the bronze serpent, John 3:13); a symbol of the strange reverse-world of the parables of Jesus;[328] and a symbol of the commandment of love (John 13). But even the symbol of the cross is limited by what is within it. When Fernando Belo[329] produced a commentary on the gospel of Mark which failed to take seriously the central role of taking up the cross in this particular gospel, many commentators could not fail to notice that an account of the gospel which would not take seriously the reality of the cross clearly suffers the lack of that essential and central symbol. The consequences of avoiding the challenge of

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[325] Ibid, p. 24.
[326] Ibid, pp. 26-27.
[327] Ibid, p. 29.
[328] Crossan, J. D., In Parables. The Challenge of the Historical Jesus, Chapter 3. Parables of Reversal, Harper and Row, New York, Evanston, San Francisco, London, 1973 pp. 53 – 78.
[329] Belo, F., trans. O'Connell, M. J., A Materialist Reading of the Gospel of Mark, Orbis , Maryknoll, New York, 1981.

the cross will be the subject for further reflection later; space will be devoted below to several readings of the cross as a central symbol in Mark's gospel, through the lens of writings from various backgrounds, including liberation theology with its roots in Latin America,[330] from Belo's Marxist-Materialist reading of Mark, from some feminist readings of Mark,[331] and from the insights to the meaning of the cross brought by a narrative criticism approach.[332]

Fawcett believes that the symbolic process is most evidently at work in the world of religion, for it is the purpose of the language of religion is to transcend the confines of the visible world's appearance of reality, to the reality that underlies that appearance; indeed, a religion can be described as a structured group of symbols that are interpreted to explain both reality itself and the way in which to live out that reality. The Bible itself "is a vast structure of symbols and sign events which are expressive of the nature and purpose of God." [333] The reason for this is not difficult to detect: in the Bible, little space is devoted to intellectual debate on the nature of God (and this in itself suggests the usefulness of a model for Revelation based on symbolic mediation, rather than on propositions); Biblical writings are more concerned with the dialogic relationship between humanity and God. How this is worked out depends on the symbols invoked to express this relationship: when the symbols are from nature – water, light, darkness, fire, wind – the Biblical texts which respond to them are less an expression of interpersonal relationship; but when symbols of person are invoked – father, king, shepherd – their Biblical takes on a

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[330] e.g. Mesters, C., and various approaches cited by Rowland, C., and Corner. M., in Liberating Exegesis. The Challenge of Liberation Theology to Biblical Studies, SPCK,1990,
[331] e.g. Dewey, J., Malbon, E.S. , c.f. Chapter 5.
[332] e.g. Rhoads, D., Michie, D., Mark as Story. An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1982.
[333] Fawcett, T., Symbolic Language, pp. 30 –31, quoting Wright, G.E., 'History and Reality: the Importance of Israel's 'Historical Symbols for Christian Faith', in Anderson, B., (ed.) The Old Testament and Christian Faith, p. 183, SCM Press, London, 1964 .

more humanly personal relationship. Perhaps in this regard one could compare the two accounts of creation in the early chapters of Genesis – the first evoking the establishment of order over chaos, making use of symbols of light and darkness, water and land, humanity and animals; and the second evoking an intimate relationship between creator and created human before the fall, expressed in God settling Adam in the garden of Eden, which God himself had cultivated! (Genesis 1:1 – 2:2, and Genesis 2:8, 15). Fawcett concludes that this actually highlights an unsatisfactory character of nature symbols – there has been a universal tendency, he maintains, to anthropomorphise these, since it is only really at the level of human existence that we can properly apprehend symbols.[334] I suggest, however, that perhaps it is precisely this capability of nature symbols to be anthropomorphised that enables humans to respond to them as mediation of divine self-disclosure precisely in human terms, since it is only as human persons that we can enter a dialogic relationship with God.

Fawcett's next point seems to support this suggestion. He reminds us that symbols cannot be created or destroyed by intellectual argument; indeed, symbols often persist even when their retention appears to be irrational (perhaps, for example, as anthropomorphised versions of nature symbols?). However, this appearance of irrationality can be deceptive because, to be valid, symbols must be subject to criteria. But these criteria must be existential, and this is demonstrated by the way that certain symbols have consistently operated in history, that is, symbols which humanity recognises as enabling an encounter of the ultimate reality, and which somehow enhance the being of humanity; symbols which lead to human diminution

[334] Ibid, pp. 33-34.

are not retained in use.[335] Therefore, a particular symbol or set of symbols will tend to be rendered invalid when these criteria no longer apply. In many cultures today, the symbol of king would come into this category, as has already been noted.

§ 3.2.5 Myths, Metaphors and Parables; Symbolic Stories that Mediate Meaning

The prevalence of symbol in the world of religion leads us to consider another feature of religious language – the myth. If we are to take seriously to possibility of Biblical language being able to mediate to function as the mediation of symbolic Revelation, then the myth must be taken into account; after all, large portions of the Old Testament at least consist of mythical discourse. Bernard Batto states that: "... myth may be broadly defined as *a narrative (story) concerning fundamental symbols which are constitutive of or paradigmatic for human existence.*"[336]

Tillich connects symbols of faith with 'stories of the gods', which is what the Greek word *mythos* – myth - originally meant.[337] But myths are also symbols of faith combined in stories that describe or depict divine-human interaction. Myths use material from our everyday experience, putting stories of the gods into time and place in a way that reminds us of Fawcett's comments on the human tendency to anthropomorphise nature symbols.[338]

Myths, like symbols, are rich in meaning, are always capable of being reapplied, they are never trivial, because they speak of the meaning of human existence at its deepest level, they can mean many things at once – for example, they deal with the meaning of the highest joy and the lowest despair that a human can experience. We are never

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[335] Ibid, pp. 35 – 36.
[336] Batto, B., 'Myth', p. 698, in Komonchak, J. A., Collins, M., Lane, D.A., (eds.) The New Dictionary of Theology, pp. 697 – 701,The Liturgical Press, Minnesota, 1990.
[337] Tillich, P., Dynamics of Faith, pp. 48 – 54.
[338] Chapter 1, note 39, p. 14.

told the author of a myth; humans do not create myths – or symbols. This reminds us of McKenzie's observation on the anonymity of Biblical authors, seen in Chapter 2. Fawcett maintains that myths are similar to parables in that they 'operate symbols in narrative form'.[339] However, unlike parables, myths are complex, and not simple. Norman Perrin[340] strongly holds that parables are what Wheelwright, whom we consider in the following section, calls tensive symbols, evoking the true myth of Jesus, and therefore are not simple.

Perrin refers to the claimed 'truth' of the myth of Jesus. This myth, like any other, can be called 'true' if, as a story, it tells us about the inner meaning of human existence, or if it puts into words an understanding of human history which may not be intended to be taken literally, but is certainly to be taken seriously.[341] Fawcett notes that it is a contemporary misunderstanding to declare that myths are 'untrue', a misunderstanding based on beliefs that:

i) Myths are fictitious; they provide the un-historical foundation of the ancient literature of e.g. the Greeks,
ii) Western society now sees itself as having evolved from the crudities of understanding found in a pre-scientific age,
iii) There is a tendency to compare them with scientific thinking – usually unfavourably,
iv) Myths embody a religious, not a scientific outlook on the world.

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[339] Fawcett, T., Symbolic Language, pp. 99 – 101.
[340] Perrin, N., Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom: symbol and metaphor in New Testament Interpretation, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1976, p. 198.
[341] Ibid, p. 198.

However, myths are not true or false in the sense that propositions are true or false; they give expression to a faith that we may or may not share with those among whom they originated.[342]

Fawcett has identified some symbolic features of myths, and these observations will provide us with some important background for a later discussion of Ricoeur's suggestions on how to interpret symbols. For example, we have already seen that myths have a similarity to parables; we can add to this that myths also operate in an analogous way to metaphors, and not to similes; therefore, myths should not be treated as though they were allegories; they are not interpreted by identifying some hidden code. If we fail to understand a myth, it is not because we lack the discovery of some esoteric key; it is rather that we no longer understand the original meaning of the words, we no longer are aware of what the myth was originally intended to express.[343]

These reflections provide us with many features of symbol that aid our proposed model of Inspiration as response to symbolically mediated Revelation. In particular, they open to us the possibility of understanding the Biblical text itself, produced as a Spirit-directed written response to a whole range of symbols of varying types, and also as itself capable of functioning as Revelatory in symbolic form. In the next section we will return to the theme of Symbolically-mediated Revelation with the help of Avery Dulles' writings.

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[342] Fawcett, T., Symbolic Language, pp. 95-98.
[343] Ibid, pp. 101 – 102.

§ 3.2.6 Dulles, Polanyi and Wheelwright; Constructing a Model for Revelation from Symbols

Avery Dulles helpfully pairs the contributions of two authors who themselves draw our attention to useful distinctions, namely Michael Polanyi and Philip Wheelwright.[344] The latter, from his background of literary criticism, distinguishes between what he calls either steno-symbols or tensive-symbols.[345] Steno-symbols in his usage, correspond more closely to what other authors – e.g. Fawcett - call signs; they are indicators with an exact relation to what they represent. Tensive symbols, however, are capable of multiple meaning, and they draw from a multiplicity of experiences, which themselves may be only subtly, or even subconsciously, interrelated, to give rise to their range of meanings. Wheelwright explains this from the example of organic life; no organism can live without some sort of 'ceaseless but varying struggle between opposite forces.'[346] Strife can be found in various tensions of which humans may be unconscious, or only partly conscious – tensions between self and others, self and environment, impulses and rational decisions etc. But as a human person tries to express himself/herself, he or she must seek representational forms that reflect the tensions. We will see later that Brueggemann refers to the process in Old Testament literature that runs from Orientation, through disorientation, to re-orientation, a process which, I suggest, enables the apprehension of Wheelwright's tensive symbols. Any language that strives towards adequacy as human self-expression, will show evidence of tension. Wheelwright holds that this is true of language in any sense - musical, artistic, but above all, 'verbal language, consisting of words, idioms, and syntax'.[347] Wheelwright points out, however, that

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[344] Dulles, A., Models of Revelation, p. 132.
[345] Wheelwright, P., Metaphor and Reality, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1962, p. 94.
[346] Ibid, p. 45.
[347] Ibid, pp. 46 – 47.

there is a major difference between the verbal language of poetry, and that of, say, music, no matter how often we can detect similarities in the two. Music, no matter how expressive, is always self-contained; it is self-referring; it does not refer to something else, except in the way that it suggests something else – joyousness, seriousness. Poetic language, on the other hand, not only refers beyond itself; it 'in part creates, in part discloses hitherto unknown un-guessed aspects of What Is'.[348] From this, Wheelwright can define symbol thus:

> A symbol, in general, is a relatively stable and repeatable element of perceptual experience, standing for some larger meaning or set of meanings which cannot be given, or not fully given, in perceptual experience itself.[349]

This definition can cover symbols of very different types, and this is where Wheelwright's distinction between steno-symbols and tensive symbols becomes clearer. He explains the distinction by comparing the mathematical symbol π, the Christian cross, the Grecian urn in Keats' *Ode*, and Abraham Lincoln. The mathematician is free to choose whatever representation he or she wishes for the purpose intended, or for the length of the argument being demonstrated. To be useful, a mathematical symbol must have wide application in the public domain – for the argument to proceed, the chosen symbol must have an exact meaning. This is what Wheelwright calls a steno-symbol; it is indispensable to science, and it does not require repeated explanation.[350] Tensive symbols, on the other hand, draw life from all sorts of associations, and so cannot be said to be exactly stipulative; they do not

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[348] Ibid, p. 51.
[349] Ibid, p. 92.
[350] Ibid, pp. 93-95.

point specifically to one point of reference. This does not mean that they are entirely indefinite in meaning, however. Behind the use of a symbol lies "a poetic choice".[351] Wheelwright cites an example from *Macbeth*; if Shakespeare had set the witches scenes in water, like Wagner's Rhine Maidens, rather than in 'fog and filthy air', he would have created a very different play![352]

Wheelwright, acknowledges that it is not always easy to distinguish between steno and tensive symbols, just as Fawcett insisted the distinction is not always clear between sign and symbol. Interestingly, he suggests that previously tensive symbols can become steno symbols, and an example is that of the cross. While the cross can still be a powerful tensive symbol for believers, for the vast majority of people, among whom he includes many church-goers, it has come to be accepted as matter-of-course object found in churches and such places.[353] He feels that this process takes place because tensive symbols can, in time, either petrify or evaporate. The poet's way with symbols, on the other hand, is to recontextualise them, and give them new life in the process. I would suggest that this is one of the characteristics we would find in the Inspired writing of Scripture. The nature of the Inspired text as poetic will come up for consideration when we come to Paul Ricoeur below.

Finally, at the end of his treatment of the archetypical symbol – on which I shall not dwell here, Wheelwright says the question is not whether we use symbolic or non-symbolic means to apprehend reality; symbols are indispensable in this regard. Rather, it is a question of which type of symbol is to be used and when:

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[351] Ibid, p. 94.
[352] Ibid, p. 95.
[353] Ibid, p. 96.

> ...a straightforward thinker sets out to free himself from symbolic...thinking, what he actually means to do is limit himself to those symbols and rigidified metaphors which have become habitual stereotypes in everyday life. The issue is not between symbolic and non-symbolic thinking, but between limiting one's thought and sensitivities to the plain meanings denoted by conventional symbols and learning to think with a more tensive alertness...Tensive symbols may perhaps offer hints about the nature of things which straightforward techniques must either ignore or distort. *If reality is largely fluid and half-paradoxical, steel nets are not the best instruments for taking samples of it.*[354]

Michael Polanyi's writing on the 'Principle of Marginal, or Boundary Control",[355] will prove to be very important to us later, when we invoke it in support of the idea of a divinely animated, but still totally human authorship in our model of Biblical Inspiration. For the present, however, we are concerned with his treatment of symbols. Here, it will be helpful to consider briefly how he explains in different language, Wheelwright's distinctions between steno and tensive symbols. Polanyi prefers the terminology of indicators and symbols.[356] Words, he says, can function as either, since they can be replaced by road signs, mathematicians' formulae, etc. These are *indicators*. When they are viewed in themselves, their function is to bear on something else. There is little interest to be found in them, says Polanyi.[357] However, there are words and signs for which the subsidiary clues, as Polanyi calls them, do not function merely as indicators of something else. In this second case, the clues themselves are of intrinsic interest to us, in that they open up to us meanings

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[354] Wheelwright, p. 128. My italics.
[355] Polanyi, M., The Tacit Dimension, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1966, pp 29 – 52.
[356] Polanyi, M., and Prosch, H., Meaning. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1975, pp. 69-75.
[357] Ibid, p. 70.

that 'carry us away.' Polanyi, like Wheelwright and Fawcett, cites the national flag as such a sign, which he now designates as 'symbol', and he adds the symbol of the tomb of a national hero as a further example. Both of these conjure up meanings, associations that reach far beyond an indicator of a nation in a coloured banner, or a marble slab indicating the place of burial of a certain historical person.[358]

§ 3.2.7 Concluding remarks on how symbols work

The above paragraphs have taken us through a journey from sign to symbol, to myth, to metaphor, and back again. This is not unintentional! The journey has attempted to show that, although various authors choose to describe and deal with symbols in different ways, and understand the relation between symbol, and sign, myth and metaphor differently, it is necessary to see each of these four categories as somehow involved in what Happel calls the spectrum of communication.[359] In fact, it is now possible for us to simplify the categories somewhat. When we discuss Revelation as Symbolic Divine self-disclosure, it will be clear that we are dealing with something other than mere signs – with signs rather than indicators, if we follow Polanyi's terminology, tensive, rather than steno symbols, if we prefer Wheelwright. But we need to be clear, as is Ricoeur, of the different ways in which symbols operate in different disciplines – psychoanalysis, poetry, and religious language being those he identifies.

Since this study deals with the written Scripture, it will be those symbols encountered in poetics and religious language that are of interest. Hence, metaphor and myth are our concern, and, according to Fawcett myth functions as metaphor. In his "Interpretation Theory", Paul Ricoeur seeks, for reasons that will be explained

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[358] Ibid, pp. 71ff.
[359] see note 304, p. 134 above.

later, a theory of metaphor through which we can understand better symbol. But for Ricoeur, the relationship between metaphor and symbol is even closer. He writes:

> I will say that we must accept two contrary propositions concerning the relationship between metaphors and symbols. On one side, there is more in the metaphor than in the symbol; on the other side, there is more in the symbol than in the metaphor. There is more in the metaphor than in the symbol in the sense that it brings to language the implicit semantics of the symbol. What remains confused in the symbol – the assimilation of one thing to another, and of us to things; the endless correspondence between the elements – is clarified in the tension of the metaphorical utterance. But there is more in the symbol than in the metaphor. Metaphor is just the linguistic procedure – that bizarre form of predication – within which the symbolic power is deposited…The symbol is bound in a way that the metaphor is not. Symbols have roots. Symbols plunge us into the shadowy experience of power. Metaphors are just the linguistic surface of symbols, and they owe their power to relate the semantic surface to the pre-semantic surface in the depths of human experience to the two-dimensional structure of the symbol.[360]

In Chapter 4, we will see that, for Ricoeur, the metaphor provides the key for interpreting the symbol. This in itself will provide us with a useful tool for linking the Inspiration of Scripture to the interpretation of symbols of Revelation, since the Biblical text, metaphoric in its capacity to mediate multiple meaning, itself can be considered as a source of symbolic Revelation.

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[360] Ricoeur, P., Interpretation Theory, pp. 68 – 69.

§ 3.3 FINDING SCRIPTURAL EVIDENCE FOR SYMBOLIC MEDIATION OF REVELATION

In the following sections, I want to examine certain aspects of the symbol in the light of Biblical Phenomena; the proposed model for Biblical Inspiration can only really have validity if we can identify its operation in Biblical writing. The aspects to be considered now will include the multiplicity of meanings associated with symbols, their ability to mean different things at different times, even to the same people, and their ability to provoke a change of world-view in the one who apprehends the symbol. Walter Brueggemann and Claus Westermann are two Biblical Scholars whose work on aspects of the Old Testament will provide the Biblical Studies underpinning for these observations.

§3.3.1 Walter Brueggemann and the Plurivocality of Hebrew Scripture

Brueggemann has been taken to task for launching attacks on the very methodology on which his work is based – historical-critical methodology.[361] There may some truth in this, since Brueggemann – as we shall see with his analysis of response to the exile – reveals profound awareness of historical implications for the texts he examines. Certainly, he opens up a way of reading texts which brings us nearer to people in past ages who apprehended and responded to symbols of Revelation, whether from mythical accounts of events from an unreachable past, real, historical events themselves, or from previously written texts which in turn they apprehended as symbolic mediators of Revelation.

This last point is worth stressing here. It must be remembered that the Scriptures used by the earliest Christians were themselves symbolic mediators of Revelation.

[361] for example, see Gnuse, R. K., 'Words that Testify to God: The Theology of the Old Testament by Walter Brueggemann', p. 94, Biblical Theology Bulletin, Vol. 31, 2001, pp. 91 - 95: "By attacking the Historical Critical Method, (Brueggemann) bites the hand that feeds him".

The Inspiration for the written Scriptures of the New Testament came in considerable part from the sacred texts acknowledged as Scripture by the Jewish community; many major New Testament themes show clear signs of having been themselves Inspired by the Scriptures known to their Christian authors.

Brueggemann aims to read Scripture without having to search for *the* meaning of a text,[362] but instead to consider the troublesome, open-ended and frequently difficult dialogue between God and humanity: dialogue which not only records the dynamic between God and Israel, but which also demonstrates the friction and disfunction in their relationship. This dialogue is typified in three sets of opposites - rubrics - which display its characteristics,[363] These are 1) Covenant and exile, 2) Hymn and lament, and 3) Presence and Theodicy, and they indicate how the symbol of the God of Israel can be apprehended in different ways within those extremes.

1) Covenant defines Israel. It is a symbol of the enduring relationship with God who can be trusted, a symbol that both demands and reassures. But Covenant is counterbalanced by the other symbol of Exile, which challenges the concept of Covenant, which can never be understood in the same way again. Despite consoling prophetic assurances, Israel can never again apprehend the symbol of Covenant as if the Exile had never happened![364]

2) Hymns provide Israel's testimony to Yahweh's goodness, fidelity and power,[365] but they are counterbalanced by lament, a complaint against Yahweh, or Israel's enemies. In the lament, Israel not only refuses to lie to protect its God, but also

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[362] See Brueggemann, W., 'Biblical Theology Appropriately Post-Modern', p. 5, in Biblical Theology Bulletin, Vol. 27, No. 1, Spring 1997, pp. 4-9.
[363] Ibid, p. 6.
[364] Ibid, p. 6.
[365] Ibid, p. 6.

acknowledges that negative experience is a fact of life. Israel, in its testimony, insists that Yahweh share its suffering and its negation. Brueggemann observes that often "Christians are...more inclined to lie and to deny for the sake of 'protecting God'...(but) attention to complaints and laments in Christian interpretative conversations is both required and permitted"[366]

Westermann is also convinced that Christian interpretation of the Bible needs to embrace the lament:

> The Old Testament cannot pin God down to a single soteriology. It can only speak of God's saving acts within a whole series of events, and that necessarily involves some kind of verbal exchange between God and man. This latter includes both the cry of man in distress and the response of praise which the saved make to God.[367]

In the Covenant – Exile, and Hymn – Lament pairing examined so far, we can readily identify features of Old Testament texts which recall features of symbol already described: in symbol, we have the possibility of the mediation of multiple meaning. Clearly this is true of the symbol of the God of Israel, the originator of covenant and exile, and who is praised in him, and railed against in lament. The God of Israel is apprehended as tensive symbol (Wheelwright) – perceived only in the tension of dialogue.[368] Other symbols reveal multiple meanings, through the tension in the dialogue through which the symbols are perceived. In this tension, multiple meanings need to be apprehended; e.g. the Exodus, celebrated in the Hymn of Yahweh's deliverance of Israel, must be balanced by the oppressed's cry of distress

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[366] Ibid., p. 6.
[367] Westermann, C., trans. Crim, K. R., and Soulen, R. N., The Role of the Lament in the Theology of the Old Testament. Praise and Lament in the Psalms, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1981, p. 261.
[368] see pp. 146 f.

(lament) from the 'house of bondage'. The cry of distress is as much part of the Exodus event as is the deliverance from slavery.

3) The concept of 'Yahweh's Presence' is fundamental to Israel's worship, especially in the Temple tradition's assumption of the 'presence of God in your midst.', but also significant is the concept of *Deus Absconditus*. For most of its history, Israel prayed to God whose presence was not clearly felt.[369] Brueggemann considers the Ark Narrative in 1 Samuel, and recognises here Israel's deep need to engage with the shock of the Ark of God in Philistine captivity – Yahweh absent from Israel, in captivity, apparently defeated.[370] This shock was sufficient to cause Eli's death, even though the news of his sons' deaths did not! In this narrative, the Ark of the Covenant has moved from a symbol of Yahweh's strength, to a symbol of Israel's (and Yahweh's) defeat at the hands of the Philistines; again, an example of the same symbol giving rise to many meanings – or at least of the same symbol being interpreted in different ways.

I suggest that Brueggemann's identification of the range of expression of the Biblical text's testimony to the relationship between the Holy one and humanity, helps us identify how Scripture records ways in which humans have responded to the symbols of Revelation – and consequently, how the faith community in any age can continue to seek the way to respond to these and other symbols. Brueggemann's work will also help us understand how different responses can be made to the same symbol, which I express here as Inspired writing being the Spirit-driven response(s) to Revelation mediated through multi-faceted symbols.

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[369] Brueggemann, W., 'Biblical Theology, p. 6.
[370] Brueggemann, W., Ichabod Toward Home. The Journey of God's Glory, Erdmans, Grand Rapids, 2002.

§3.3.2 Claus Westermann: the Psalms; Lament and Praise

This study is concerned with the Inspiration of Scripture, and therefore is obviously concerned with the written Biblical text in its present form. But so many Biblical texts have arisen from a time when the response to symbols of Revelation could not be recorded in writing – or at least, we have no access to the original writings. It is important, therefore, to remember that what became Biblical texts arose from indirect processes. Westermann provides us with some insights into the Psalms that may help us here. He reminds us that the psalms grew out of Israel's public worship.[371] Psalms were not first written, and then sung. As such, they provide us with examples of the response of a believing community to perceived symbols of Revelation. From the first days of the Temple until its destruction and the end of the monarchy, Temple worship was the heartbeat of the community, the nation's centre for all its constituent parts – political, economic and cultural: "Israel could no more exist without worship than worship could exist without Israel."[372] This seems to shed light on why the hymn and the lament are so important in the testimony of Israel, because they express the celebration or the lamenting of real life for the people who acknowledge Yaheweh as their God.

We need not dwell over long on Westermann's classification of psalms other than to recall his distinction between psalms of praise and lament, but it is important to note how he identifies the changing pattern of worship according to Israel's changing historical situation. Thus, nomadic patriarchal society seems to have given rise to a tradition which has come down to us in individual expressions – the patriarchs' prayer reflects their experience of life; they apprehend symbols of God which speak

[371] Westermann,. C. trans. Porter, J. R., The Living Psalms, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1989, p. 4.
[372] Ibid, p. 4.

to them of their wandering existence. When the nation was settled in Palestine, a collective, community identity can be detected in the communal psalms. When the Temple and the monarchy are strong, the prayer life of the nation is reflected in Temple and Royal Psalms, which are not appropriate when the Temple is destroyed and the Monarchy is no more. But never were these sentiments written down immediately. Rather, the written texts were an eventual rendering of the people's apprehension of the symbols of God to which they had individually and collectively responded, according to the circumstances of their lives at any given time. Their worship life is one very clear example of how their apprehension of symbols of revelation, often modified, frequently challenged or even threatened, was communicated through generations. Their worship tradition was, in other words, an effective vehicle for the communication of divine self-disclosure through symbolic mediation. We saw something of this idea in Chapter 1, when examining the Second Vatican Council's understanding of the different roles of Scripture and Tradition in the transmission of Revelation. There, I described the Council's treatment if Tradition as "the growing insight into Revelation, mediated by the Holy Spirit, and given to humanity."[373] Westermann notes how 'successful' psalms have been in the worship of Israel, and also in successive generations of Jews and Christians. He attributes this to the fact that in every age, people have been moved to use them as their own prayers.[374] In the terminology of this study, we can see that psalms, when committed to writing to express joy or grief, are responses which authors have been inspired to make on perceiving symbols of revelation which provoke joy or grief. Thus, psalms have served as potent symbols for the prayer life of worshipping communities down through the ages. If they have resonated with worshippers down

[373] P. 42.
[374] Ibid, p. 7.

through the ages, it is because they have preserved a way of calling on God which is direct and spontaneous, in terms which express what people really think and feel.[375]

Westermann illustrates much of this from New Testament examples of Jesus praying the Psalms, perhaps most notably Psalm 22. Raymond Brown[376] reminds us that in the Gospel accounts of the Passion, Jesus utters the first words of this Psalm in his own language (*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani*?) – the only occasion that - according to Mark - Jesus speaks from the cross (Mark 15:34). Twice, in Mark, Jesus addresses God in his own language. The other occasion is in the anguish of Gethsemane – *Abba* (Mark 14:36), uttered three times in Mark. In quoting Psalm 22, the New Testament places Israel's lament on Jesus' lips.[377] This of course accentuates Jesus' presentation in the gospels as the one who hears the afflicted's cry of distress, e.g. in Mark 6:34: "As he went ashore…he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd…", or Mark 6:54-56: "… people…began to bring the sick…to wherever they heard he was. And…they laid the sick in the marketplaces…and all who touched (the fringe of his cloak) were healed."

There is one other important feature of psalms, however, which I suggest also reflects the ever-deepening awareness of Relevation through tradition. This is detectable in Westermann's observation that there is a progression from lament to praise. This begins from Israel's deliverance from Egypt.[378] This is recalled in the very first commandment (Exodus 1:1ff.): "I am the LORD your God, *who brought*

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[375] Ibid, p. 16.
[376] Brown, R.E., The Death of the Messiah From Gethsemane to the Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives of the Four Gospels, Volumes I and II, Anchor Bible Reference Library, Doubleday, New York, 1998, pp. 1031ff.; pp. 172 ff.
[377] Westermann, C., Lament, pp. 264-5.
[378] Ibid, pp. 259 –280.

you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery"[379] But this deliverance in the Exodus account begins with a cry of distress from the oppressed: "we cried to the LORD, the God of our ancestors; the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression." (Deuteronomy 26:7). The reason for the cry of anguish is not given; there is no explanation as to why they were oppressed – simply the statement that they cried to God and God heard their cry of distress.[380]

Psalms of lament exhibit a pattern stretching from the utter depths: "Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD."), to the God who is seated on high, and who looks into the depths (as in Psalm 113:5-6: "Who is like the LORD our God, who is seated on high, who looks far down on the heavens and the earth?").[381] But there is also a progression from the cry uttered from the depths, to praise of the God who has heard the plea. Westermann observes:

> It is of great significance for what the Old Testament says of God that the account of the deliverance from Egypt in the book of Exodus gives *no* explanation either for the plight of the oppressed or for God's compassion regarding that plight...(I)ts function is to appeal to God's compassion. *All the multifarious forms of human affliction, oppression, anxiety, pain, and peril are given voice in the lament, and thus it becomes an appeal to the only court that can alter their plight.*[382]

The progression from lament to praise each time is important, but the transition is not once and for all. Lament may make way for praise, but lament will never disappear completely, because in the answer to the cry of distress, the God who reveals himself

[379] Ibid, pp. 259-260. My italics.
[380] Ibid, p. 262.
[381] Ibid, p. 262.
[382] Ibid, p. 264. My italics.

does not give a definitive word. Rather, Israel's history is one of a people which grapples with symbols, and which in response lives somewhere between lament and praise, because it must live in a dialogue with the One who reveals himself, in a dialogue that is never static. I want to suggest now that it is perhaps precisely in transition that symbols of Revelation are apprehended, and responded to, and to elaborate this, we return to Brueggemann's analysis of dialogue between Yahweh and Israel.

§ 3.3.3 Brueggemann: A Journey through Orientation – Disorientation – Re-Orientation: Apprehending the Symbols Anew

Brueggemann believes that in the transition from lament to praise, Israel was able to discover the power and the limits of faith, and this is repeated in every generation. Users of psalms in every age share similar concerns, and this allows these texts to speak repeatedly to every generation, even though they are prayed in different contexts and circumstances.[383] Brueggemann turns to Ricoeur and Freud to identify an aspect of human existence he describes by the progression from orientation to disorientation and re-orientation.[384] Disorientation describes dislocations which are expressed in language of extremities, which *may* express hope, but will more likely end in resistance. Human life experiences two important dislocations: the deep reluctance to let loose a world which is no more, and the capacity to embrace a new world which is being offered. Later, we will consider how three Prophets responded to the dislocation of Israel's Exile.

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[383] Brueggemann, W., ed. Miller, P. D., The Psalms and the Life of Faith, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1995, p. 7.
[384] Ibid, p. 8,9.

The Psalms may be described in the sequence of 'orientation – disorientation – re-orientation'.[385] This dynamic does justice to the experiences and feelings that gave rise to the psalms in the first place, and which enable subsequent generations to identify in them a resonance with the world they currently experience. Put simply, the process is about being forced to abandon a previously held world-view, even to concluding that there is no longer a world order that makes any sense; the move from orientation to disorientation. But disorientation can also make way for a re-orientation, a discovery of a new set of values to be embraced.

Paul Ricoeur identifies two types of hermeneutics; one directed towards old symbols, the other towards new symbols which begin to emerge.[386] For Ricoeur, 'situations of dislocation'[387] which bring about a change in interpretation are responsible for a change in the perception of meaning:

> ...an interpretation which began by abandoning the point of view of consciousness does not...eliminate consciousness but...radically renews its meaning. What is...denied is not consciousness but its pretension to know itself completely from the very beginning... We must reach that point...where we no longer know what consciousness means in order to recover the sense of consciousness as that mode of existence which has the unconscious as its other....it is this dialectic relation between the conscious and the unconscious which governs the articulation of a relation between the two hermeneutics.[388]

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[385] Ibid, p.9.
[386] Ricoeur. P., trans. Idhe, D., The Conflict of Interpretations. Essays in Hermeneutics, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1974, p. 117.
[387] Brueggemann, The Psalms, p. 9.
[388] Ricoeur, Conflict, pp. 323-4.

Ricoeur's language can be difficult to penetrate, but here he describes the process of interpretation that he famously calls elsewhere the move from a first, pre-critical naïveté to a second, post-critical naïveté.[389] If we would understand, we need to embrace new symbols, new figures, which cannot simply be reduced to those which were rooted in the original situation. New symbols and figures draw consciousness forward, and allow growth and maturity.[390] Ricoeur writes:

> ...the same play of symbols can support two types of interpretation; the one is oriented toward the emergence of figures that are always 'behind us', while the second is oriented toward the emergence of figures that are always 'ahead' of us.[391]

This is of profound significance for the model in which Inspiration is a Spirit-led response to symbolically-mediated Revelation. If Ricoeur is correct, it is in dislocation that interpretation occurs, and therefore we cannot but conclude that an Inspired response to Revelation can only occur as a result of dislocation, a departure from an old world order, and the open-ness to embrace a newly-perceived world order, symbolically revealed.

It seems to me that this dislocation must be exactly what Revelation-Response is about. Divine Self-Disclosure is about the introduction of a new world-order. Brueggemann[392] believes that the psalms of praise are the least interesting, because he sees them only as endorsing the existing world-order. However, they still praise the greatness of the God who is perceived to be responsible for this orientation: to

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[389] See, for example, Ricoeur. P., trans. Savage, D., Freud and Philosophy. An Essay in Interpretation, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1970, p. 496.
[390] Ricoeur, Conflict, p. 325.
[391] Ibid., p. 326.
[392] Brueggemann, The Psalms, pp. 10 ff.

acknowledge that this comes form God involves a dislocation, even if ever so light, from an unreflective acceptance of everything as is, without the need for the Divine Other.

What Brueggemann has to say about situations of orientation, disorientation and re-orientation clearly resembles Ricoeur's use of the term symbol, and the surplus of meaning that allows for the dialectic that Ricoeur refers to here:

> Symbols call for interpretation because of their peculiar signifying structure in which meaning inherently refers beyond itself. But the explanation of this structure requires the threefold discipline of *dispossession, antithetic, and dialectic.* In order to think in accord with symbols one must subject them to a dialectic; only then is it possible to set the dialectic within interpretation itself and come back to living speech.[393]

Brueggemann's movement through orientation, disorientation and re-orientation equals the struggle to make sense of life. When one's 'orientation', one's sense of 'being at home' is shattered, there are two possibilities: to be deeply reluctant to let go of the world that has passed away, or to perceive and embrace a new world that is apprehended. This is re-orientation, which comes as a gift, not as a personal achievement, and which exhibits both continuities and discontinuities with and from what has now gone. Only when the new situation of re-orientation asserts itself as a convincing alternative to what had been, can it truly be said that that the old orientation has finally been abandoned.[394]

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[393] Ricoeur. Freud and Philosophy, p. 495 My italics.
[394] Brueggemann, Life of Faith, p. 8-9.

The classic Old Testament example of this progression was Israel's experience of Exile; from a sense of 'home' in its own land, the people face disorientation in exile. From this exile, reorientation ultimately takes place in re-settlement. It is abundantly clear from the post-exilic writings of the Old Testament that the new, post-exilic Israel has clear continuities with the old, pre-exilic situation, but that there are serious discontinuities also. Thus, the old orientation has had to be seen as no longer available. Brueggemann sees that the psalms display all three characteristics of orientation, disorientation, and re-orientation:

1.Psalms of Orientation display the attitude of those whose world-view is characterised by orderliness, goodness, reliability etc. The *creation* psalms give clearest examples of this, e.g. in Psalm 104:27-28, where all creatures are perfectly content in the never-ending care of God. But they also contain the theme of *retribution* against any who would transgress the ways of God e.g. Psalms 1 and 119. Other examples include Psalm 37, reflecting undisturbed equilibrium, and instruction on how this equilibrium is to be maintained; Psalm 145, which is an affirmation of God's providential care; Psalms 127, 128, 131, 133, psalms of ascent, which express genuine gratitude and piety for God's blessings. Westermann's 'descriptive psalms of praise'[395] should be included here, since they exude a confidence that things will always remain as they are.

2. Psalms of Disorientation include Individual and Communal Psalms of Lament, and are always concerned with an old order which has completely collapsed.[396] They contain lament according to whether dislocation has been accepted and embraced, or met with resistance and denial. Psalm 42:4 yearns for better past times,

[395] Westermann, C., The Praise of God, pp. 22-23.
[396] Brueggemann, The Psalms, pp. 11 - 12.

whereas others - Brueggemann does not specify – display anger and resentment against the cause of dislocation, whether this be God, or Israel's enemies! They all give the impression that the past is lost forever, that the old orientation can never be retrieved. Psalms of lament are more a protest than an act of resignation. There can be an expectation that God will act. If the lament is protest, then the 'break' between plea and praise becomes significant because:

> (it) reflects an important moment of realism. There is a turn from a yearning for the old orientation, to a recognition that this is gone and not retrievable, and a readiness for a new orientation...[397]

Again, this recalls our idea of symbolic Revelation, and the inspired response to that Revelation. If the old perception of God's self-disclosure is challenged, if dislocation occurs, and especially if realisation dawns that the previously perceived symbol is no longer applicable, then there is there the possibility of a freshly inspired response to the symbol of Revelation. E.g. the model of a God revealed in the symbol of his chosen people is seriously threatened when the Temple is destroyed, the monarchy is no more, the promised land is lost. Until the hope is abandoned that the old order can be restored, there is no possibility of an acceptance of a new order. Brueggemann calls this a "turn from resentful remembering to a fresh anticipation of an equilibrium."[398]

3. Psalms of Re-orientation give testimony to an amazed acceptance of a new order, given rather than achieved: most importantly, the newness is not derived from the old order. They speak of wonder and miracle and amazement, because disorientation had

[397] Ibid, p. 12.
[398] Ibid, p. 12.

given no grounds for hope whatever. Hence, these psalms express celebration, for reversals of fortune deserve to be celebrated (c.f. Luke 15:6-7; 9-10; 22-24, 32):

> The enduring authority of these psalms must surely be found in their ability to touch the *extremities* of human life, extremities we have characterised in terms of disorientation and reorientation. The extremity of reorientation is as shattering as that of disorientation[399]

§ 3.3.4 How Dislocation can lead to a new apprehension of symbols, and how new responses to these can be inspired.

Brueggemann maintains that the experience of disorientation is crucial to the understanding of Israel's history, which is both shaped and interpreted in the cry for help and rescue. I suggest that it is also crucial in the process of apprehending the meaning of symbols of Revelation. The ultimate crisis of disorientation for Israel/Judah was the destruction of Jerusalem, 587 BCE. Even here, Israel in lament, cry, complaint is still confident that it remains in dialogue with God, who is expected eventually to listen and answer. Hans-Georg Gadamer said that a text's interpretation depends on a dialogue between interpreter and text. In order to conduct dialogue, or to hold a conversation, participants must not talk at cross purposes. Therefore, dialogue, or conversation, must consist of question and answer, and to conduct a conversation is to be driven by the subject matter to which the partners in dialogue are drawn.[400] Earlier in this chapter, written language was described as symbolic. Therefore, if Gadamer is correct in applying the principles of dialogue to interpretation, and if our contention holds that inspiration of Scripture is to do with a response to symbols of self-disclosure, then there must be something in the

[399] Ibid, p. 15.
[400] Gadamer, H-G., translated and Revised by Weinsheimer, J., and Marshall, D.G., Truth and Method, 2nd, Revised Edition, Continuum, New York, 1994, pp. 366-7.

inspiration of Scripture which relies on the dynamic of dialogue, of question-and-answer. The dialogue that follows dislocation, demands change: disorientation and re-orientation. This process allows for various interpretations of the revealing symbol, and therefore a variety of response.

Brueggemann considers the responses of three different prophets to the exile: Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and II Isaiah,[401] and he finds three significantly different responses in the books of each of these prophets, and these are briefly considered here.

Jeremiah has a robust view of God,[402] and is not afraid of conflict. This prophet Jeremiah employs many figures of speech for God: an abandoned bridegroom, a fountain of living water, a wounded, betrayed father, a lion, a wolf, a leopard, a potter. Through these, apprehended as symbols, he apprehends God in a host of differing ways; he encounters a God who "is on the move in the midst of a specific social crisis".[403] This prophet's well-known call (Jeremiah 1:4-10) is not a youthful, one-off experience, but a continued reflection on that call, an on-going dialogue (struggle?) with the God who calls. This explains why Jeremiah lives the call in circumstances with ever deeper and more dangerous consequences for him!

Ultimately, Jeremiah's dialogue with God, and his apprehension of the symbol of God leads him (inspires him?) to a response that is full of hope. From his cry of lament, he is able to embrace a new orientation.[404] It is in this dialogue that he comes to the shocking conclusion that God will deliver his people over to the Babylonians

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[401] Brueggemann, W. Hopeful Imagination. Prophetic Voices in Exile, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1986.
[402] Ibid, pp. 10-31.
[403] Ibid, p. 15.
[404] Ibid, p. 29.

(e.g. Jeremiah 12:7-13). This was by no means apparent to Jeremiah's contemporaries;[405] re-orientation comes as a given.

Ezekiel responds to exile very differently.[406] He writes of God who alone arranges his people's homecoming. This God makes promises which are *geographical* (I will take you from the nations...I will gather you...I will bring you to your land...I will sprinkle clean water...), and promises which are *covenantal* (I will give you a new heart...I will put a new spirit in you...I will take out the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh...I will put my spirit within you.). Ezekiel responds to the symbol of a God who acts to protect His holy name: 'It is not for your sake, O House of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name...I will vindicate the holiness of my great name...and the nations will know that I am Yahweh, says the Lord God, when through you I will vindicate my holiness before your eyes.' (Ezekiel 36:22-23). In re-orientation, Ezekiel experiences an unmerited gift; certainly not Israel's achievement. Brueggemann says:

> I regard this as one of the most dangerous and stunning texts in the Bible, for it sets God free, unfettered; sovereignty at a distance from Israel. ...God does not want to be taken lightly, not by Israel, and not by the surrounding nations that watched.[407]

II Isaiah provides the supreme example of liberated poetic imagination in the Old Testament.[408] In exile he uses poetry to evoke images and perceptions as yet unknown to Israel. II Isaiah (Isaiah 40 – 55) is bound by 'the word' at the beginning: "The grass withers, the flower fades; but *the word of our God* will stand forever."

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[405] Ibid, p. 16.
[406] Ibid, pp. 50 – 87.
[407] Ibid, p. 77.
[408] Ibid, p. 96.

(Isaiah 40:8), and at the end: 'so shall *my word* be that goes forth from my mouth. It shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I propose.' (Isaiah 55:11).

In this vision, God's promise cannot be defeated. The word of God is contrasted with the pagan gods *who cannot speak.* Isaiah 41:22-23 taunts the false gods to speak, but they remain silent. Here, speech is power. God speaks, and God's word is effective. II Isaiah interprets the past as a sign of hope, citing Abraham and Sarah (51:2-3), Barren Sarah (54:1-3), Noah (54:9-11), and David as the root of a new covenant, which will be valid for the whole people, just as the old covenant was valid for David (55:3).[409]

Each of these prophets has gone from orientation, through disorientation, to re-orientation, but in different ways. For each, re-orientation has resulted in a new perception of God, reached by apprehending the Symbol of Exile, but a symbol read differently in each case; hence the different responses. And in each case, the dialogue with God has taken place through the dialogue which arises from the dislocation which the symbol signifies.

§ 3.3.5 Conclusions and Consequences for the New Testament Order

The examples given so far are from the Old Testament, but the experiences of the cry in distress and subsequent liberation described above, which provided Israel with a means of self-understanding, are not substantially different from the ministry of Jesus in response to people's needs already mentioned, and ultimately expressed in the cross and resurrection, an expression not limited only to the written New

[409] Ibid, p. 102.

Testament, but also in the liturgical and theological traditions of Christianity. In addition to the cry of Jesus taken from Psalm 22, Brueggemann lists the following:

The blind (Matthew 9:27; 20:31)

The demon-possessed (Matthew 15:23; Mark 5:7)

Peter walking on water (Matthew 14:30)

Notice that in this later case, the lament turns to praise (proclamation of faith) from those in the boat (Matthew 14:29-33).

But there are other aspects. We recognise how the evangelists have drawn on different versions of a story. The usual explanation is that e.g. Luke had access to a different tradition of the story from e.g. Mark. But I suggest that the idea of inspired response to symbols of revelation helps us explain those differences among sources in the first place. Writers of the New Testament engaged deeply with the written symbols of the Scriptures to which they had access. Matthew interprets the symbols of the Jewish Scriptures in his infancy narratives, just as does Luke in his. The new written materials themselves become symbols of Revelation, and this should direct us to another realisation: that the reader of today approaches the symbols of the written text in an analogous way to inspired writer's response to symbols, written or oral.

The parables of Jesus seem to invite dislocation, the transition from orientation to re-orientation, at the price of a serious disorientation, which in the New Testament is called a change of heart. The parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37 opens with an orientation of typecasting for the main characters: the priest and the Levite as pillars of society, the Samaritan as the stereotypical 'bad guy'. As the story unfolds,

those old values are shattered by Jesus' words, and the lawyer, cast as hearer (today, the reader) is invited to embrace the new world-order of the kingdom of God – which must be given, because it cannot be deduced by humans (see the prophets in the previous section). This is also true for Jesus' professed aim of coming on earth, not for virtuous people, but sinners (Matthew 9:13). It is true of the great commandment to lay down one's life for one's friends – not just to love friends and hate enemies (c.f. John 15:13; Matthew 5:43).

However, the greatest example of dislocation must be that announced (three times per synoptic gospel) in Jesus' own Passion Predictions: that the Son of Man must be handed over, put to death, and on the third day rise again (e.g. Mark 8:31). Nothing else can speak so much of the loss of orientation of a previous order, the disorientation experienced on the cross, and the re-orientation of resurrection. And none of this can be deduced from the previous order by humans: all of it comes from God as gift of re-orientation, mediated in symbols of revelation.

This depth of disorientation of death on the cross takes up a theme as yet only implicit in the above – it is the theme that Israel is not afraid to confront and acknowledge the depths of the abyss from which it cries – a depth which at times pointed to the very defeat of God. Brueggemann develops this eloquently in his interpretation of the Ark Narrative.[410] In 1 Samuel 4:11 ff., we are reminded no less than five times that 'the ark of God was captured'. This text is not afraid to embrace the concept of God in defeat. Of course, by the end of the story, we know that the Ark of God is on its way home once more, but to rush too quickly to the triumphal conclusion is to deny the tragedy of 'the ark of God captured', a time during which it

[410] Brueggemann, W., Ichabod, pp. 1 – 52.

seemed that Dagon, the Philistine god, had overpowered the God of Israel. Brueggemann concludes from this that as Christians, we do no justice whatever to the Paschal mystery if we embrace the resurrection of Christ without properly accepting the consequence of Jesus' death on the cross. We too must acknowledge the time it seemed that God was defeated in the destruction of his Son. This is embracing the ultimate in disorientation. Only then can reorientation be accepted as gift. In the final chapter we shall consider the consequences of a failure to engage fully with the Symbol of the Cross, if we want to appreciate the Symbol of Resurrection – from orientation to re-orientation, but through disorientation!

This process of dislocation occurs through each generation engaging in dialogue with the symbols of God's self-disclosure. Animated by the Spirit of God, people can make an inspired response to those symbols. Some may do so in writing. Responding to the symbols through the experience of marginalized people's disorientation, and searching for reorientation, may inspire some to develop theologies of liberation, challenging a world–view which is no longer valid. Some may be inspired to respond in writing. Thus, the writing will be inspired. However, it will not be Scripture. The days for writing Scripture belonged to days past, and one of the criteria for Scripture laid down by Trent was that the Biblical books were not only Inspired by the Holy Spirit, but also "preserved in continuous succession in the Catholic Church."[411]

Having given some Biblical support to the proposed model for Inspiration, the next chapter will seek to provide philosophical underpinning from Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics to explain how the Sacred Text can be Revelatory.

[411] The Council of Trent Decree on Sacred Books and on Traditions to be Received (1546), Neuner & Dupuis, 210, p. 70, *EB 57.*

CHAPTER 4:

THE HERMENEUTICALL BACKGROUND FOR INSPIRATION

§ 4.1 PAUL RICOEUR

Having considered in the last chapter how Biblical data supports the model of Inspiration proposed in this study: the Spirit animated response in writing to Symbolic Revelation, we now have to ask the question: can this view be supported by philosophical hermeneutics? This chapter turns to the hermeneutical theory of Paul Ricoeur to provide the necessary philosophical basis for our model.

§ 4.1.1 Ricoeur's Background as an Introduction to a Study of his Thought.

Loretta Dornisch has provided us with two valuable articles,[412] which not only summarise important aspects of Ricoeur's thinking, but which also provide some insight into his background, both professionally and from a confessional point of view. This latter point may seem unnecessary to include here, but it does help us to form a better understanding of an author whose thought is not always easy to follow.

Ricoeur is no professional theologian, nor Biblical exegete, nor literary critic. He is a 'philosopher of interpretation theory or of language'.[413] But not being a Biblical scholar has not proved an obstacle; indeed, through his work on general interpretation theory, he has had an immense influence on Biblical research in recent years. For him, Biblical criticism is in a particularly advantaged place within the discipline of interpretation, since the Biblical field is clearly defined by its formal

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[412] Dornisch, L., 'Symbolic Systems and the Interpretation of Scripture: An Introduction to the Work of Paul Ricoeur', in Semeia 4: Paul Ricoeur on Biblical Hermeneutics, The Society of Biblical Literature, Chicago, 1975, pp. 1-19; and 'The Book of Job and Ricoeur's Hermeneutics', in Semeia 19, The Society of Biblical Literature, Chicago, 1981, pp. 1 – 21.
[413] Dornisch, L., 'Symbolic Systems', p. 2; and 'The Book of Job', p. 3.

object; on the other hand, however, it is a field in which there is great polarisation of its different methodologies.[414]

Ricoeur grew up in the 1920's, within the Liberal Protestant tradition of France, but he was 'reoriented' in 1936 when he read the French translation of Barth's commentary on Romans, and his faith has since been supplemented by theologies of Ebeling and Fuchs.[415] This background will have some significance when we look at the model for Biblical Inspiration in the light of Ricoeur's writings.

Ricoeur does not see different methodologies of Biblical interpretation as contradictory; rather, he feels that, if properly understood, each should converge on the other. He holds that the historical – critical approach as indispensable. At the same time, he recognises two other moments: a semiological model, derived from Barthes, as well as interpretation according to his own developing theory.[416] He continues to develop his own theory through a realisation that the historically-oriented author von Rad actually uses an implicit structural analysis. Therefore, Ricoeur reads von Rad using the distinctions of three levels elaborated by Barthes: the level of function, the level of action, and the level of narrative.[417]

So, how do these three levels converge? What possible relationship can exist between them? Dornisch asks, "What is an exegete such as von Rad doing when he uses an historical – critical or genetic method? What is a structuralist such as Barthes doing in his semiotic analysis?"[418]

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[414] Dornisch, L., 'The Book of Job', p. 9.
[415] Ibid, p. 7.
[416] Ibid, p. 9.
[417] Ibid, p. 9.
[418] Ibid, p. 9.

Ricoeur finds a key in writing, when a discourse is committed to a text. When this happens, four characteristics are found. 1) the intentional meaning of the discourse is inscribed in writing, 2) writing detaches this meaning of the discourse, however, from dependence on the author, and so the text is freed for subsequent time and place, 3) the referential function of the discourse is now changed, i.e. that to which the text refers is now different from that to which the discourse originally referred. This is because the situation from which the original discourse emerged is no longer in existence, and 4) the audience for a written text is anyone capable of reading; unlike the necessarily limited audience for whom the original oral discourse was intended.[419]

It will be useful to add another insight into Ricoeur before we begin to examine his writing in detail. Dornisch refers to the second annual conference, organised in 1969 by the French Catholic Association for the Study of the Bible, and to which Ricoeur was invited to contribute. One of his presentations at this conference allowed Ricoeur to ask: who can interpret Scripture? The philosopher, the exegete, the preacher?...The point seems to lie in the realisation that no single method can be invoked to answer the question; The historical – critical method needs to be 'corrected' by others, to dispel the 'illusions' the former gives rise to: "the illusion of the source, the illusion of the author, and the illusion of the audience".[420] The illusion is in concluding that we are somehow distant from these:

> We belong to the same tradition as the text: interpretation and tradition are the inside and the outside of the same historicity. Interpretation is applied

[419] Ibid, p. 9.
[420] Ibid, p. 11.

to a tradition and makes tradition itself. *The text is the reconstruction of a tradition and the interpretation is the reconstruction of the text.*[421]

As we will see, Ricoeur strenuously opposes any theory of Revelation which is imposed from outside the text – any sort of Divine dictation. He is equally opposed to any interpretation passed on by an ecclesiastical body's appeal to 'tradition'. His own religious upbringing helps to explain where he is coming from on this one – hence its inclusion here. However, the italicised sentence in the previous quote suggests that Ricoeur, in fact, provides us with the basis on which we can revisit a theory of Inspired Scripture, and perhaps at the same time, provide us with further insight into the Vatican Council II's understanding of the role of both Scripture and Tradition in the process of Divine Revelation.[422] The relationship between writing and reading of a text is, I propose, the key to understanding the link between Revelation and Inspiration. Writing Inspired Scripture is, following the suggestion of McKenzie seen in chapter 3,[423] a Spirit-led recording of an interpretation of symbolic Revelation. The task of the interpreter (or reader) of Scripture is to read those symbols that are incorporated in that very inspired text.

§ 4.1.2 PAUL RICOEUR: Using metaphors to understand symbols

A study of Paul Ricoeur's work and life reveals that all of his work is more or less related to Biblical interpretation.[424] We are interested here in his work on the symbol as a key factor in Biblical interpretation. Dornisch traces the roots of his important

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[421] Ibid, p. 11. Here, Dornisch is quoting from Ricoeur, P., 'Esquisse de conclusion', in Leon Dufour, (ed) Exégèse et herméneutique, Seuil, Paris, 1971, pp. 285 – 295. The italics in the quotation are mine.
[422] *Dei Verbum,* Chapter II, articles 7 – 10.
[423] [423] McKenzie, J. L., 'Social Character', pp. 115-124.
[424] Dornisch, L., 'Symbolic Systems', p. 2.

work on symbolism[425] to the work of Karl Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel.[426] It is from Jaspers' three-way categorisation of levels of symbol; 1) primitive language of symbol, 2) the language of myth through which primary symbols are mediated, and 3) speculative symbols,[427] that Ricoeur reaches his own classification of disciplines concerned with interpreting of symbols – psychoanalysis, poetics, and 'history of religions'[428].

But as a result of this classification, Ricoeur realised that the symbol was too complex to be the subject of a study in interpretation. Consequently, he turned to a theory of metaphor, from which he hoped to develop greater understanding of the operation of symbol. Before the steps of this process are examined, however, we need to explore the importance of the symbol for Ricoeur.

His interest in symbol clearly rests on its ability to convey a 'surplus of meaning', which takes it beyond a merely linguistic sign.[429] Originally he:

> directly defined hermeneutics by an object which seemed to be both as broad and as precise as possible, I mean the symbol...I defined it in turn by its semantic structure of having a double-meaning. Today I am less certain that one can attack the problem so directly without first having taken linguistics into account. Within the symbol...there is something non-semantic as well as something semantic...[430]

[425] Ricoeur, P., trans. Buchanan, E., The Symbolism of Evil, Beacon Press, Boston, 1969.
[426] Dornisch, L., 'Symbolic Systems', p. 3.
[427] Ibid, p. 2.
[428] Ricoeur, P. Interpretation Theory, p. 53.
[429] Ibid, p. 45.
[430] Ibid, p. 45.

In Ricoeur's estimation, the metaphor is the best route to take in exploring the linguistic aspect of the symbol, while at the same time shedding some light on the operation of its non-linguistic aspect. But why then is the symbol so important for Ricoeur? Mudge introduces Ricoeur's Biblical Interpretation in an essay that drew Ricoeur's own endorsement.[431] He says that the need for symbol arises because we are deaf in Western Society today to the Word of God, and because we have in general lost sensitivity to symbolic language. Realms of meaning extending beyond the purely literal are dismissed as either full of confusions requiring science and/or logic to clear up, or as emotional ornamentation which intelligent people really should avoid! Consequently, it is difficult in this climate to perceive that the language of Scripture, which is full of symbol, figure, myth, allegory, parable etc., can have a bearing on reality.[432] There is, even, a fear that even to accept that reality can be expressed in symbols would herald the loss of hard-won intellectual freedom and autonomy. Ricoeur frequently refers to a trio of authors who operate what he calls the 'hermeneutics of suspicion': Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, who taught us to suspect that religious language might indeed not at all be what it appears, but might conceal a code for something else we that would rather not know the existence of at all – that religious language may do no more than mask the ideology of oppression that lies behind the class struggle, ideologies perpetuated by its authors – including, of course, authors of sacred Scripture. Ricoeur, then, seeks an articulation of faith that can pass through, and not merely evade, the hermeneutics of suspicion.[433]

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[431] Mudge, L.S., 'Paul Ricoeur on Biblical Interpretation', in Mudge, L.S., (ed), Paul Ricoeur: Essays on Biblical Interpretation, SPCK, London, 1981, pp. 1 – 40; Ricoeur's reply to this, p. 41.
[432] Ibid, p. 4.
[433] Ibid, pp. 4 – 5.

This is where Ricoeur brings in his famous 'second naïveté',[434] achieved through a philosophy of hermeneutics. Ricoeur offers an analysis of metaphor and metaphorical language which allows us to reach this second naïveté. This is to be distinguished from the 'first naïveté', an immediacy with those symbols whose origins are familiar and close to people to whom the symbols belong, and with which they are completely comfortable. But to those of us belonging to contemporary Western society, it is no longer possible to dwell naturally in the world of symbols; we need to approximate that state, but with one very significant difference, because:

> ...the second immediacy that we seek and the second naïveté that we await are no longer accessible to us anywhere else than in a hermeneutic. We can believe only by interpreting. It is the 'modern' mode of belief in symbols, an expression of the distress of modernity and a remedy for that distress.[435]

I suggest that elements of this search for the second naïveté would have been required of the authors of inspired sacred Scripture. They may have been more familiar with the world of symbols than we are today, but they would still have needed to *interpret* the symbols confronting them to be able to write of the things of 'the world of the self-disclosing God' whom they believed was in some way to be found in those symbols. Earlier,[436] I drew attention to Brueggemann's terminology of orientation, disorientation and re-orientation, used to show how e.g. the prophets had to re-interpret their relationships, and the relationship of Israel, with God in the light of the exile. I would suggest that Brueggemann, who acknowledges Ricoeur's influence, is

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[434] Ricoeur, P., trans. Buchanan, E., The Symbolism of Evil, Beacon Press, Boston, 1969, pp 351 – 353.
[435] Ibid, p. 353.
[436] Chapter 3 pp 91 ff.

saying much the same as Ricoeur when the latter invokes the second naïveté when trying to understand symbols. This seems to be at least one illustration of how at least some Biblical 'authors' – I use the terms widely to avoid necessarily equating the task of prophetic utterance with the task of recording that utterance in writing – have been inspired to respond to symbolically mediated Revelation, in this case, the symbol of the Exile.

Mudge explains further how Ricoeur's analysis of symbol can help in retrieving its sense of meaning; however, to undertake an analysis of Ricoeur's philosophical background is beyond the scope of this present study. Suffice it to note – with Mudge - that Ricoeur is not content with a hermeneutic which tries to reduce the symbol to some non-symbolic, myth-less contemporary notion of conceptuality; rather, an analysis which leads to the second naïveté is one that will allow us to a new experience of the fullness and richness of symbolic language. The literal function of the symbol may no longer apply, but that does not mean that symbol is today deprived of meaning.[437] Mudge actually uses the word myth at this point, but we may assume he refers to that understanding of symbol which includes myth, and which includes the insights of Wheelwright, Polanyi, Fawcett et al. This understanding is expressed in Lonergan's definition of symbol:

> A symbol is an image of a real or imaginary object that evokes a feeling or is evoked by a feeling.[438]

and then of symbolic apprehension:

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[437] Mudge, L.S., Paul Ricoeur on Biblical Interpretation, pp. 7 – 8.
[438] Lonergan, B., Method in Theology, p. 64.

> By symbolic apprehension I...shall mean the apprehension of man (sic) and his world that is expressed in myth, sage, legend, magic, cosmogony, typology. The source of such apprehension...is the fact that the pre- historic and pre-scientific thought, while it can draw distinctions, cannot evolve and express an adequate account of verbal, rational, and real distinctions; further, it cannot distinguish between the legitimate and illegitimate uses of the constitutive and effective functions of meaning; the result is that it constitutes its world symbolically.[439]

I would question Lonergan's definition if by it he implies there is something archaic, and therefore useless in symbolic mediation of meaning; if pre-historic and pre-scientific were replaced by non-historic and non-scientific according to Western understanding of historic and scientific, then his understanding of symbolic apprehension is in line with our argument. From what we have seen of Ricoeur, it should already be clear that through symbol, a reality is mediated which cannot be mediated otherwise; the symbol's *function* is to mediate a *meaning* that science and history may fail to understand. Ricoeur, far from classing the symbol as inferior to science, shows that we need to analyse symbol, to withdraw from a first naïveté, and embrace a second naïveté or immediacy on the strength of the philosophical hermeneutic performed on that symbol. Ricoeur also writes that we must discover the literal *meaning* of a symbol before its fuller meanings can be determined.[440] This important point will be returned to later. For the present, it should be remembered that function and meaning should not be confused.

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[439] Ibid, p. 306.
[440] Ricoeur, P., Interpretation Theory, pp. 54 –55.

§ 4.1.3 From Oral To Written Discourse

In the previous chapter, I noted how Ricoeur observed that something happens to discourse when it is put in writing - when it begins a new career, to use Mudge's phrase.[441] The author then no longer has control of meaning – whereas the speaker controls the meaning of oral discourse. When the time separation between writing and interpreting is great, the distance between the author and the reader is also great. Hence, the original function of the images used by the author in writing no longer have the same immediacy to contemporary interpreters. This is where a *distanciation* is required to remove the interpreter from a first, pre-critical naïveté in the face of the written text, to perform interpretation (i.e. to engage in hermeneutics), and then to be able to return to the text with a second, post-critical naïveté. This results in a new *appropriation* of the text:

> To appropriate is to make one's own what was 'alien'...Distance...is not simply a fact, (not) just the actual spatial and temporal gap between us and the appearance of such and such work of art or discourse. It is a dialectical trait, the principle of a struggle between the otherness that transforms all spatial and temporal distance into cultural estrangement and the own-ness by which all understanding aims at the extension of self-understanding.[442]

This is precisely what Ricoeur had been saying about our inability in our scientifically and historically aware Western Society to make sense of symbolic meaning. Now, we can begin to understand the reading and interpretation of a text as analogous to the interpretation of symbols. In both cases, it is distanciation and then post-critical

[441] Mudge, L.S., Paul Ricoeur on Biblical Interpretation, p. 16.
[442] Ricoeur, P., Interpretation Theory, p. 43.

appropriation that allows us to interpret symbols – or texts – whose original function is not readily accessible to us. In fact, this is at the heart of interpretation, because, "interpretation, philosophically understood, is nothing else than an attempt to make estrangement and distanciation productive."[443]

This surely identifies the mediation of the meaning emerging from a text as being symbolic. If authorial intention no longer controls textual meaning, and if the text is therefore capable of multiple meanings (not infinite, as we shall see below), then the mediation of meaning we are dealing with in a written text is clearly symbolic.

These reflections require that the following points be borne in mind. Firstly, Ricoeur rejects any assumption that to identify authorial intention is to understand a written text. Secondly, neither is the key to understanding a text to be found in the meaning which was grasped by its first readers, or even readers who shared the author's cultural environment. Thus: "What has to be appropriated is the *meaning of the text itself*, conceived in a dynamic way as the direction of thought opened up by the text.[444]

§ 4.1.4 Interpreting Symbols Through Metaphors

For Schleiermacher and Dilthey, interpretation meant empathy with the author; for Ricoeur, interpretation means searching for an 'objective explanation'[445] which allows us to emerge with a deepened and enlarged understanding. But, says Ricoeur, there are too many problems attached to deriving a hermeneutic directly from symbol. I referred earlier to the three disciplines he identified as using symbol in very different ways: Psychoanalysis, History of Religions, and Poetics. The diverse ways these use symbols is the first difficulty; in Psychoanalysis, dreams are understood as symbols of deep

[443] Ibid, p. 44.
[444] Ibid, p. 92 My italics.
[445] Mudge, L.S., 'Paul Ricoeur on Biblical Interpretation', p. 16.

psychic conflict; in Poetics, symbols represent images that dominate the poet's works, or the images within the poem itself; and in the History of Religions field, concrete entities such as trees, mountains, labyrinths etc. are recognised as symbol, as are space and time, flight, or transcendence.[446]In time, Ricoeur recognised that there are: 'two dimensions, one might even say two universes of discourse'[447] to the symbol. One dimension is linguistic, and the other non-linguistic. That the symbol has a linguistic character is evident from the fact that we need to interpret it, that we can speak of symbols having first and second order meanings. But it is just as important to acknowledge that there is also a non-linguistic character, and this is shown by the symbol's way of always referring its linguistic component to something outside itself. For example, in psychoanalysis, the dream symbol is invariably linked to hidden psychic conflict; the poetic vision refers to, or represents the world vision of the poet, and in the History of Religions, trees, animals or such symbols refer to, or represent experiences of the Sacred.[448]

Ricoeur recognises that what unites all types of symbol is the relation between its literal meaning and its figurative meaning. The figurative meaning is metaphorical in its operation, and it is the connection between the literal and the metaphorical meaning of a symbol that relates every symbol to a language. Hence, concludes Ricoeur, the metaphor provides us with a useful means of studying the symbol.[449]

Classical rhetoric's classified metaphor as the substitution of one expression for another – a substitution which is possible because of a perceived similarity between

[446] Ricoeur, P., Interpretation Theory, p. 53.
[447] Ibid, p. 53.
[448] Ibid, p. 54.
[449] Ibid, pp. 54 – 55.

the literal and figurative meanings.[450] Ricoeur, however, suggests that a tension theory of metaphor - familiar to us from Wheelwright's category of tensive symbols - is more useful. There is tension between literal and figurative meanings of metaphors, because there is a surplus of meaning: a sunrise in a poem signifies much more than a meteorological phenomenon, and the signification can only exist if we recognise that there *are* two meanings, and we can only understand the metaphor if we can apprehend the literal meaning; otherwise the tension between that and the figurative meaning is lost. To fail to understand that the figurative meaning is *not* the same as the literal is to fail to recognise the metaphor. Ricoeur also notes that the movement only ever runs from literal to metaphorical meaning:[451]

> Symbolic signification...is so constituted that we can only attain the secondary...by way of the primary...where this primary signification is the sole means of the access to the surplus of meaning. The primary signification gives the secondary signification, in effect, as the meaning of a meaning.[452]

Already we can see how this is of significance for the interpretation of the Bible; if Ricoeur is correct, then the repeated insistence of Magisterial Documents[453] about the necessity of determining the literal sense of Scripture takes on a new significance, although careful attention must be paid to what is actually meant in these documents by the literal sense, and notice given to subtle changes that are detectable in its description. This important topic will merit another visit later in this study.

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[450] Ibid, p. 49.
[451] Ibid, p. 55.
[452] Ibid, p. 55 – 56.
[453] c.f. *Divino Afflante Spiritu*,, article 34, *EB 556*; *Dei Verbum*, Chapter III, article 12; Pontifical Biblical Commission Document: Interpreting the Bible in the Church, II.B.2, p. 52.

Substitution may not be a suitable model for metaphor study, but it is still important to recognise the role of similarity in the operation of metaphor, and more widely, in symbol. If there can be a tensive movement from literal to figurative meaning in metaphor, it is because there is similarity, as well as dissimilarity at work. The dissimilarity arises because there is "conflict between some prior categorisation of reality and a new one which has just been born."[454] In the symbol, the extent of similarity may not be too well defined; therefore, Ricoeur prefers to say that the symbol assimilates, rather than apprehends the resemblances between the literal and figurative meanings.[455]

Ricoeur recognises that there is something in a symbol that does not exactly correspond to the metaphor; namely, its non-semantic aspect, and this makes the symbol difficult to penetrate. Ricoeur calls this the 'opacity' of the symbol, and relates it to the 'rootedness' of symbols in the disciplines listed above.[456] The example of psychoanalysis makes this clear: if here dreams are considered as the symbol of substituted and disguised representations, or psychic conflicts, then the symbol is rooted in the world of sleep! Poetic images are 'bound' to the characteristics of poetic writing – its rules, its conventions, and religious symbols would not exist at all if they did not arise from the desire of humans to submit to complex yet specific forms of behaviour designed to draw favour from, or to keep distance from, certain supernatural forces. Thus, he concludes, symbolic activity does not have the metaphor's autonomy, because the symbol is always in some way 'bound', or rooted, whereas the metaphor is

[454] Ricoeur, P., Interpretation Theory, p. 56.
[455] Ibid, p. 56.
[456] Ibid, p. 57.

freely created as part of discourse. Ricoeur gives further extensive examples of how this 'bound-ness' can be demonstrated in each of the three areas already referred to.[457]

By now, it might appear that there are too many differences between symbol and metaphor for the latter to be usefully employed in understanding the former Ricoeur would disagree. Symbols may be bound, and metaphors autonomous, but what makes the connection possible is the way that metaphors signify so many things at so many different levels. We need only think of the Scriptures of the Hebrew people to see examples of the metaphors which support the symbol of the Deity: Shepherd, King, Father, Husband, Lord, Judge, Fortress, Redeemer. As we shall more fully see later, Norman Perrin[458] holds the view that parables are symbols, and that parables operate as metaphors. Hence, we have the metaphors of the Prodigal Son, the Good Samaritan, the Pharisee and the Publican and so on.

I suggest we now see evidence of how this supports the proposed models of Revelation and Biblical Inspiration. In trying to assimilate the world of symbol which the inspired writer believes is of Divine Disclosure, metaphors are sought which expose the similarity and the dissimilarity of the world of the symbol, and the world of the writer. The Inspired writer attempts to express in writing the tension that exists in these similar and dissimilar worlds. The writer does not attempt to substitute one for the other; the metaphor (or rather, the range of inter-signifying metaphors chosen by many writers) expresses the tension caused by the introduction of this symbolic disclosure. *AND* in trying to interpret the metaphor, in order to assimilate the symbol, the reader/interpreter is drawn into the same tension of similarity/dissimilarity.

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[457] Ibid, p. 59 – 61.
[458] Perrin, N., Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom. Symbol and Metaphor in New Testament Interpretation, SCM Press, London, 1976.

To Ricoeur, it seems as though there are, and always have been, certain fundamental human experiences that make up a sort of originary symbolism. He says that everything suggests that symbolic experience requires meaning that stems from metaphor, and that this meaning emerges, at least in part, from networks and hierarchies of levels; further: everything points to symbolic systems being 'reservoirs of meaning, whose metaphoric potential is yet to be spoken'.[459] In other words, there exist in symbols not only multiple meanings, but also multiple metaphors that can give expression to that meaning. Our Inspired Biblical Writer is precisely one of those who assimilate the meaning of symbol through the operation of the metaphor employed in producing the text.

But what of the Biblical text itself? We have already referred to Ricoeur's own Christian background, and of his frequent return to Biblical Interpretation. Our next stage is to investigate how Paul Ricoeur - Christian, Philosopher, reader and interpreter of the Bible - understands the function of the text. This will be done over two sections.

§ 4.2 PAUL RICOEUR: TOWARDS A HERMENEUTIC OF REVELATION

Ricoeur is adamant that the meaning of a text is not to be found in the original authorial intention, but within the text itself. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that, when it comes to providing a meaningful explanation of Revelation, which he identifies as possibly "the first and last question for faith",[460] Ricoeur rejects any role played by Tradition; any meaningful assertion of Revelation will have to be located within the text itself. His view appears quite uncompromising:

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[459] Ricoeur, P., Interpretation Theory, p. 65.
[460] Ricoeur, P. trans. Pellauer,D., 'Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation', p. 73 in Mudge, L.S. Paul Ricoeur: Essays in Biblical Interpretation, SPCK, London, 1981, pp. 73 – 118.

> I begin on the side of revelation and my first remarks will be devoted to rectifying the concept of revelation so that we may get beyond what I have (elsewhere) spoken of as the accepted opaque and authoritarian understanding of the concept.[461]

There is, according to Ricoeur, an 'amalgamation' of three levels of language, brought together in one form of traditional teaching about Revelation, which he does not specify, but which we might find familiar. The first level is that of the confession of faith, where *lex credendi* and *lex orandi* are intermingled. The next is at the level of dogmatic formulation, where an historic faith community interprets for itself an understanding of its faith. The third level, for which he reserves harsh words, is at the level of a body of doctrines imposed by a magisterium as the rule of orthodoxy. Ricoeur writes:

> The particular amalgamation that I deplore and that I am seeking to combat is always made in terms of the third level, which is why it is not just opaque, but also authoritarian. For it is on this level that the ecclesiastical magisterium is exercised and this is where it puts its stamp of authority in matters regarding faith.[462]

So, we must ask: given the direction that the above statements suggest that he will take in working out a hermeneutic of Revelation, can Ricoeur's position be reconciled with a Catholic position on Revelation which is based upon both Scripture and Tradition, and in which the role of the Magisterium is not to be forgotten? I believe it can. In Chapter 2, I outlined the view in Catholic theology that to speak of Revelation occurring through both Scripture and Tradition is not

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[461] Ibid, p. 73.
[462] Ibid, p. 74.

necessarily the same as saying these constitute two separate sources of Revelation. Central as the role of Tradition is for the Catholic understanding of Revelation, its operation in the transmission of Revelation is not our concern at this point. For the present, we limit ourselves to asking how it may be possible to understand the way in which Scriptural texts can mediate revealed truth. This, I believe, can be undertaken without compromising any question proper to Tradition. In fact, Ricoeur himself stresses that he has no problem whatever with the formulation ofdogma, whether at theological or ecclesiastical levels. As someone who does not accept the revelatory concept of Tradition, he naturally affirms that such speculation is subordinate to, or derivative of Scriptural Revelation. Hence, Ricoeur insists that he is going to 'carry the notion of revelation back to its most originary level, the one which...(he will) call the discourse of faith or the confession of faith'.[463] Ricoeur wants to go back to the origins of theological discourse, which, if I read him correctly, means to try to identify those characteristics which every form of scriptural discourse will have with every other: in other words, what is common to the prophets, the psalmists, the law-makers, the historians, the wisdom authors, the evangelists, the writers of epistles, the writers of apocalyptic. He contends that the written text is the common denominator, and he begins here, rather than with:

> a monolithic concept of revelation which is only obtained by transforming these different forms of discourse into propositions...(instead) we encounter a concept of revelation that is pluralistic, polysemic, and, and at

[463] Ibid., p. 74.

most, analogical in form – the very term revelation being borrowed from one of these forms.[464]

Ricoeur considers in turn various types of Biblical discourse, to ascertain how these can mediate Revelation. He chooses prophecy, narrative, prescriptive, wisdom, and hymnic discourse.

1. Prophetic Discourse

We saw in Chapter 2 that Aquinas also chose prophecy as his model for Inspiration - or, rather, prophetic discourse. As we shall see, Ricoeur is sceptical about anything that involves external interference in the production of Biblical discourse. I will suggest that here, however, he confuses Inspiration and Revelation.

Ricoeur's reason for choosing prophecy as his starting point is not difficult to grasp; it is the only form of discourse which claims to made in the name of Another. As such it is the nucleus of the traditional idea of Revelation – the speech of Another behind the voice of the prophet, e.g. Jeremiah 2:1, 'The word of the LORD came to me, saying, 2 "Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem…"'

But Ricoeur thinks that we can arrive at too narrow a concept of Revelation, if we separate prophetic discourse (or any other form of discourse, for that matter) from the overall context that characterises the faith of Israel and the Christian community. This narrowness can be detected in several ways, and the first of these shows itself when prophecy is reduced to a literary genre, and the symbolic images from which the written discourse arose are ignored. The too-rapid assumption that the prophet literally hears a voice behind his own is too limiting for a correct

[464] Ibid, p. 75.

concept of Revelation;[465] when this prophetic 'paradigm' of a voice-behind-a-voice is carried into other forms of Biblical discourse, we are close to a model of Revelation which relies on the dictation of Scripture, or a voice whispered in the ear of the writer, or of a double author of Scripture. Next, I think is where Ricoeur fails to make an adequate distinction between Revelation and Inspiration:

> ...the very idea of inspiration as arising from mediation on the Holy Spirit, is deprived of the enrichment it might receive from those forms of discourse which are less easily interpreted in terms of a voice behind a voice or of a double author of Scripture.[466]

If, however, we manage to keep Inspiration and Revelation separate, while still acknowledging that the two are related and interdependent, we can, from a Catholic theological perspective, agree with Ricoeur's main thrust. If we subscribe to a symbolic model of Revelation - which seems to be exactly what Ricoeur suggests when he speaks of those parts of the discourse less easy to interpret than the direct prophetic utterances on behalf of another - we can happily say, in true Ricoeurian style, that the symbol as mediator of Revelation is both much more and much less than the language of prophecy – more, because it can mediate in more ways than linguistically, and less, because it can be less transparent than language in conveying meaning.

We have admittedly not yet given adequate account of what Revelation might actually entail. Below, it will be presented in terms of Divine Self-disclosure, in a way which is analogous to the self-disclosure humans make in sharing discourse with each other.

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[465] Ricoeur, P. 'Toward a Hermeneutic', p. 76.
[466] Ibid, p. 76.

To repeat something already said: what must be emphasised is that Revelation and Inspiration are not the same. However we understand Biblical Inspiration, it is always a concept which is related to the production of the written text – that is, inspiration has to do with the writing of that which will be, and has been, recognised as Revelatory in nature. Inspiration necessarily precedes any revelatory process that is connected with the text. True, Inspiration is a response to some prior symbol of Revelation, which may or may not have been encountered in written form by the author. Inspired by the Spirit of God, that author has then committed to writing a faith response to the original symbol(s) of Revelation. Ricoeur 'takes up the story' so to speak, at a point after the process of writing has taken place. It is subsequent to this that the text may be recognised by readers as Revelatory. An illustration based on Ricoeur's example of prophetic discourse might help here. The prophet 'X' experiences and assimilates some symbolic experience, which he interprets as the voice of God, or the word of the Lord. He articulates this Word, and he, or some other, inscribed these words in written form. This written form, is, by virtue of its inclusion in the Canon of Scripture, recognised as revelatory, i.e. as Sacred Scripture, with all its attendant consequences for the life of the faith community. The text, this written and accepted, is revelatory; the Inspiration of the prophet/author is the Spirit prompted response to the original symbol, understood as revelatory in itself; the author is the Inspired author, because the author has written the text which, when classified as Canonical, is defined as revelatory. Although I have chosen the example of prophet, I believe the process takes place in any case of Biblical authorship (although I use the term very broadly here), I suggest, when we examine Ricoeur's ideas on "Naming God", that this is where he identifies what I am calling Inspiration. I also suggest that the Biblical author's

Inspired response to the perceived symbols of Revelation is analogous to the Spirit-prompted reader, approaching the written, revelatory text. In this latter case, however, it must be remembered that the reader of the revelatory text may perceive multiple meanings for the text, which are independent of the author's original intention.

We return to Ricoeur's description of the revelatory process in different forms of Biblical narrative.

2. Narrative Discourse

Ricoeur now proceeds to Narrative Discourse, which he identifies in the Pentateuch, the synoptic Gospels and Acts of the Apostles. The first feature that he draws to our attention is that the author is conspicuously absent (back to J. L. McKenzie, see chapter 3), there is nothing autobiographical to be found – in fact, the role of narrator is excluded as well. This prompts us to consider the text itself as the location of the activity of Yahweh, and leads us to conclude that it is through events recounted in the text that meaning is mediated: the election of Abraham, the Exodus, the anointing of David as King, the resurrection of Christ. These events do not simply disappear; they are foundational events, and it is in the accounts of these acts that we find the imprint of God' action. This means that God's mark is encountered in history before it is encountered in speech; it is only ever in speech insofar as the events are 'brought to language' in the act of narration.[467]

Ricoeur maintains that prophecy is included within narrative discourse; prophecy goes beyond the subjectivity of the prophet, and often is a response to an event, an act of God. We can see the very existence of the nation Israel as the best example

[467] Ibid, pp. 77 – 79.

of this: historically established in its own land, in an event interpreted as an Act of God; prophetically challenged with the threat of Exile against violations of the Covenant (c.f. Hosea 8:13). Ricoeur notes a tension between narration and prophecy; the event which the narration presents as foundational is menaced when the prophetic, threatening utterance is made. The very nature of history is caught up in this tension, and Revelation, is implicated in this now narrative account of history, now prophetic interpretation of history. But narrative and prophecy are not the only types of discourse to be found in the Bible,[468] and it is not only in the tension between narrative and prophecy that Revelation occurs. Ricoeur identifies three others.

3. Prescriptive Discourse

Ricoeur sees this discourse as the 'practical aspect of Revelation'. Its symbolic correspondent is 'the will of God.'[469] Firstly, says Ricoeur, it is not without importance that the legislative texts of Israel are placed in the mouth of Moses, and within the narrative framework of the events at Sinai. That this is so emphasises the foundational aspect of the events of the Exodus. Ricoeur has realised that the opening words of the Decalogue provide an essential link between the proclamation of the Law and the narrative of the Exodus: 'I am the Lord, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.' (Exodus 20:2). This indicates that prescriptive discourse is included in narrative discourse, which in turn shows us that the memory of foundational history gives the basis for the instruction.[470]

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[468] Ibid, pp. 80 – 81.
[469] Ibid, p. 82.
[470] Ibid, pp. 82 – 83.

The law, however, is only one aspect of a wider concept; not only election and promise, but also menace and curse. It encompasses all that Covenant represents:

> ...Covenant designates a whole complex of relations, running from the most fearful and meticulous obedience to the law, to casuistic interpretation, to intelligent mediation, to pondering in the heart, to the veneration (expressed by) a joyous soul...[471]

Ricoeur recognises that it is possible for the Law to be revisited in every age, reinterpreted. This points to the evolution of the moral code, and Ricoeur detects this dynamic code in the range from the Decalogue, up to the book of Deuteronomy. Indeed, he cites the well-known passage, 'you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart.' (Deuteronomy 6:5,6). It was the inscription of the laws on their hearts, claims Ricoeur, that prompted certain prophets to proclaim a New Covenant – not in the sense of producing a new set of precepts, but in the sense of a new quality of relationship between God and his people, e.g. Jeremiah:

> Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke...But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel...I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man

[471] Ibid, p. 83.

> teach his neighbour and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

or:

> I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them; I will take the stony heart out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my ordinances and obey them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. (Ezekiel 11:19 – 20).

All of this has consequences that reach into the proclamation of Jesus, who without this 'pulsation of the Torah', as Ricoeur calls it, could not have insisted that the law be fulfilled to its very last iota (Matthew 5:17 – 19), and at the same time have challenged the traditions of the elders (e.g. Mark 7:9 – 13). So there is more than one way in which it is possible to speak of the historical events of God; not only are these events found in the details of Israel's past, but we may also speak of the way the law of the Lord gives orientation to the historical actions we have taken as individuals and as institutions.[472]

4. Wisdom Discourse

Ricoeur identifies here themes of solitude, fault, suffering, and death – which Karl Jaspers called limit-situations - where the misery and the grandeur of human beings are in tension. Wisdom literature goes beyond all frontiers: it surpasses every literary genre, it overflows the Covenant framework, and it goes to a people beyond a single

[472] Ibid, p. 85.

national boundary. Wisdom fulfils a unique purpose; it seeks to unite *ethos* and *cosmos,* but does so through suffering, especially unjust suffering. Wisdom doesn't teach us how to avoid suffering, or to imagine that it is only an illusion, or to deny it altogether; it teaches us how to endure, or how we may 'suffer suffering'.[473] The book of Job provides Ricoeur with the best example of how Wisdom discourse operates. Job is given none of the expected answers to his suffering; no justification from God for his plight, and no indication of how he can summon the courage to conquer it. The symbols invoked in the Wisdom literature through which Revelation is mediated do not provide descriptions of how the world is, or how it should be. Job undergoes a change of heart, repentance, not because he has done wrong, but because he realises his comprehension of the world does not make sense. He has tried to impose an order on God; c.f. Job 38 – 41, beginning with Job 38:1ff:

> Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind: 'Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?...I will question you, and you shall declare to me...Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding'.

The book of Job ends without an answer, or at least, if it does reveal the possibility of hope in spite of suffering in terms of God's design, the design is left undiscovered.

The sage no longer feels the certainty that the prophet felt; no sense that he was speaking God's word. What is revealed is the pre-existence of Wisdom, a gift from God, distinct from the knowledge of good and evil promised by the Serpent (Genesis 3:5). Wisdom is personified by the post-exilic sages, as a 'transcendent feminine figure'. Wisdom has existed from the beginning, and will always exist. This gives a

[473] Ibid, p. 86.

sort of objective quality to the symbol, the counterpart of the subjective Inspiration to speak on behalf of the God attested by the prophet. Bringing these two together, sapiential objectivity and prophetic subjectivity as two aspects of Revelation, explains why the sage, like the prophet, was deemed to be Inspired.[474] Note that here Ricoeur is using Inspiration of prophet and sage in the way that is proposed for our model of Biblical Inspiration.

5. Hymnic Discourse

Hymnic discourse is best exemplified in, but not restricted to the psalms. Since it figures so prominently in Biblical writing, it is clearly not a marginal form of biblical expression. In Chapter 3, we came across Westermann's and Brueggemann's classification of the Psalms according to lament and praise. Ricoeur opts for a triple division: he speaks of hymns of praise, supplication and thanksgiving. However, it could be argued that Ricoeur's hymns of praise and hymns of thanksgiving be linked together, bringing his classification into line with Westermann and Brueggemann. The actual categorisation is not important, but the quality of the literary genre of the hymn certainly is.

Ricoeur says that praise recounts the historic deeds of the Lord, and in so doing, elevates the story and turns it into an invocation. Without the celebratory song, we might never know the story of creation, or the tale of the Exodus. But the song of supplication also recalls the deeds of history, this time with the pleas of those who suffer. The crucial factor is that in the hymn, the discourse is elevated above narrative, because the hymn recognises the presence of 'Other': it is a movement toward recognition of the second person in the discourse. Ricoeur says this finds its

[474] Ibid, pp. 87 – 88.

highest expression when supplication, which must be addressed to a second person, reaches the disinterested level of praise (Westermann = thanksgiving), because now the supplication has been unburdened of every demand, and is converted into recognition. This makes hymn different from narrative, which places God in the third person, by telling his story; or prophecy, which places God in the first person, by claiming to speak in God's name.[475] This two-way relationship, where God is addressed in the second person, is only found in the psalms, and in particular, in the psalms of supplication. Therefore, we cannot say that Revelation is necessarily conveyed in this way. When we considered Wisdom discourse, we saw that the God who is revealed here is a hidden God, who cannot directly be encountered because he is 'masked' behind the course of non-human and anonymous events which are the cause of human suffering. With narrative discourse, and in prescriptive discourse, God is rendered in the third person. For Ricoeur, this demonstrates that no particular form of discourse can encapsulate entirely the idea of Revelation:

> we must therefore limit ourselves to noticing that in passing through the three positions of ...personal pronouns – I, you, he – the origin of revelation is designated in different modalities that are never completely identical with each other.[476]

Ricoeur is careful to point out that if we are going to describe the psalter as Revelatory, it must not be in the sense that praise, supplication or thanksgiving were 'placed' in their respective authors' mouths by God. Here, again, I feel Ricoeur moves from Revelation to Inspiration. He writes:

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[475] Ricoeur, P. 'Toward a Hermeneutic', pp. 88 – 89.
[476] Ibid, p. 90.

> Thanksgiving, supplication and celebration are all engendered by what these movements of the heart allow to exist and, in that manner, to become manifest...The word forms our feeling in the process of expressing it. And revelation is the very formation of our feelings that transcends their everyday, ordinary modalities.[477]

I would say, rather, that the manifestation of supplication, or thanksgiving, or celebration certainly arise from those movements of the heart that Ricoeur suggest, but because their arising in the heart is the result of a response to something which was revelatory – the symbol of e.g. suffering, deliverance from suffering, a manifestation of kingship or whatever. Importantly, if these hymns then prove to be revelatory to future generations, then as Ricoeur rightly says, it is not because God placed emotions of thankfulness, or sorrow, or joy in the authors' mouths, but because the subsequent reader will be moved, in response, to share those emotions of thankfulness etc. The reader may well be inspired to respond to the symbol (this time, in language form); in this case, the inspired response will not be in the writing of Scripture, however. I hope to demonstrate at a later stage that this aspect of an inspired readership may need to be acknowledged if the 2nd Vatican Council's desired aim for Scripture to be accessible to all is to be realised.

Ricoeur stresses the importance in remembering that the originary expressions of faith which emerge from Revelation are caught up in a variety of modes of discourse. However, it is then not enough to treat these as distinct literary genres, and then try somehow to neutralise them to 'extract from them their theological content'; we must not dismiss these genres as some kind of rhetorical façade that can be removed to

[477] Ibid, p. 90.

reveal some core of Revelation which is independent of the mode of discourse in which it arises.[478] Indeed, if the forms of discourse which have been identified are so redolent of symbol, so rich in multiple meaning, then it is simply not reasonable to maintain that Revelation can be formulated in a uniform way; we can therefore scarcely speak of *the* Biblical Revelation.[479] Although he doesn't directly make the reference, Ricoeur seems to speak against a Fundamentalist understanding of Revelation that is equated with the dictated 'Voice of God', heavily dependent on the modality of prophetic discourse. He rightly points out that to do so is to deprive the other forms of discourse of their legitimate revelatory function: he says that we over-psychologise Revelation if we insist on a Scripture that has been dictated in a literal fashion. Rather, it is the force of what is said that moves the writer.[480] I would rephrase this: it is the force of what is said that *Inspires* the writer to write.

Finally, Ricoeur wants to stress that whatever else Revelation is about, it is *not* about knowledge of God. He thinks there is something secret in the idea of Revelation: the one who reveals himself is also the one who conceals himself, and he cites as the very best example of this the 'burning bush' episode in Exodus 3. Noting the tradition that has described this as the episode in which the Divine Name is revealed, he nevertheless points out that the name given is 'un-nameable':

> the name confided to Moses is that of a being whom human beings cannot really name; that is, hold within their language...The appellation Yahweh – he is – is not a name which defines God, but one that signifies, (it is) one that signifies the act of deliverance. Indeed (Exodus 3:15)...(I)n this way the historical revelations signified by the names of Abraham, Isaac

[478] Ibid, p. 90.
[479] Ibid, p. 92.
[480] Ibid, p. 93.

> and Jacob…leans on the secret of the name, to the very extent that the hidden God proclaims himself the meaning of the founding events. The revelation takes place between the secret and the revealed.[481]

For the remainder of his essay, Ricoeur explores hermeneutical philosophy. We, meanwhile, turn to another essay by Ricoeur, and explore the significance of the naming of God.

§ 4.3 PAUL RICOEUR: 'NAMING GOD.'

If Ricoeur's desire is to provide a philosophical hermeneutic that can be applied to Biblical interpretation, it is also clear that he writes as a philosopher who is also a person of faith, as he explores what makes a text Revelatory. In the essay to be considered now, he is, if anything, even more 'up front' about his faith commitment in the Christian tradition. He opens his essay entitled 'Naming God' by stating that he is departing from the project usually held dear to philosophers – that is, to begin an investigation without any presuppositions.

His presupposition is that, if he listens to the Word which is being preached, that is, listens to Christian preaching, he presumes that it has something to say to him; he presumes that examining the content of this preaching will allow him to make the transfer from text to life 'where it will verify itself fully.'[482] Dare we say, he is open to Inspiration?

He begins to explain how to work around, or through, this supposition:

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[481] Ibid, p. 95.
[482] Ricoeur, P., trans. Pellauer, D., 'Naming God', Union Seminary Quarterly Review, pp. 215 – 227, Vol. XXXIV, No., 1, 1978 (Fall).

> Naming God only comes about within the milieu of a presupposition, incapable of being rendered transparent to itself suspected of being a vicious circle, and tormented by contingency. This is the presupposition: Naming God is what has already taken place in the texts preferred by my listening's presupposition.[483]

By pursuing Ricoeur's argument, I hope to demonstrate that any reader of the Bible approaching the text in any age, is approaching the symbolic medium of revelation in a way analogous to that about which biblical writers recorded their inspired response, when they felt moved to commit words to writing. I suggest that it is proper, and necessary, to invoke some notion of inspiration for readership that has its analogy in inspired writing. Later, it will be necessary to ascertain whether there are criteria for assessing the validity of the postulated inspiration of the reader, how these may be identified, and how they are employed in the church today.

In the Essay 'Toward a Hermeneutic of the Idea of Revelation', Ricoeur wrote of the I – Thou relationship that is characterised within the Psalms or other forms of hymnic discourse.[484] Now, interestingly, he expresses reservations about this, which he says is to be opposed, just as was its contrary abstraction of a 'hypostasis' of the text, by which I take it he refers to a dual-authorship that implies divine dictation through a human author. The danger he sees in 'the unilateral apologetic for dialogue'[485] is that it fails to acknowledge what happens to discourse when it passes from speech to writing. He writes:

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[483] Ibid, p. 215.
[484] Ricoeur, P. 'Toward a Hermeneutic', p. 89.
[485] Ricoeur, P., 'Naming God', p. 216.

> By breaking away from the bodily presence of a reader the text also breaks away from its author...from the intention the text is supposed to express, from the psychology of the person behind the work, from the understanding that person has of himself or herself and of his or her relation as author to an initial public, the original target of the text – all at the same time. This triple independence of the text with respect to its author, its context and its initial audience explains why texts are open to innumerable 'recontextualisations' through listening and reading that are a reply to the 'decontextualisation' already contained in the very act of writing, or more exactly, of publication.[486]

This needs a bit of elaboration. Firstly, we note that Ricoeur departs from Gadamer over the question of whether interaction between text and author is 'dialogic. Gadamer[487] asserts that dialogue is an appropriate analogy to use; Ricoeur differs. Secondly, Ricoeur here expresses in condensed form what we have considered earlier – the meaning of a text is to be discovered in interaction with the text itself, and not with the author's original intended meaning. However, we must bear in mind Ricoeur's earlier point that, if we consider the model of metaphor for the interpretation of language, the literal meaning of the metaphor needs first to be understood before the metaphorical meaning makes sense. Meaning arises from the tension that exists in the movement from the literal to the metaphorical meaning. But it cannot be denied that the original author is the one who chose to pair the literal and metaphorical meanings.[488] The importance of identifying the literal meaning will be returned to when we arrive at a consideration of how we determine the validity of a

[486] Ibid, p. 216.
[487] Gadamer, H-G., trans Weinsheimer, J. and Marshall D. G., Truth and Method, Second Revised Edition, Continuum, New York, 1994, pp. 385 – 389.
[488] see p. 29 above, on Pius XII and the literal sense.

particular interpretation – or how that interpretation can be considered as in any way 'inspired' according to the terms that we would need to establish.

We need to keep in mind Ricoeur's insistence that it is vain to try to identify the voice of God from behind the text's author. He strongly contends: "If the word revelation means something, its meaning is to be sought on the side of the issue the texts tell us about, as an aspect of the biblical world."[489]

We saw in the previous section that Ricoeur has written of the importance of the distinct types of discourse found in the Bible –he designates these as prophetic, narrative, prescriptive, wisdom, hymnic. In 'Naming God', he first made the point, which he later returned to, that it is a mistake to reduce these to rhetorical devices which are alien to the content they actually pass on. To make such a mistake, says Ricoeur, is to miss what is unique about Biblical faith.[490]

Ricoeur points out that it is first of all 'a moment of narrative confession' to 'name God, that is, God is named first of all in the thing that happened, the event that is recounted in the narrative. This is easily forgotten when precedence is given to prophetic discourse as the paradigm for Revelation. To give this preference is to assert that Revelation is encountered primarily in word events; Ricoeur maintains that this simply is not true, that God is named primarily in foundational *events* that are recounted in Scripture.[491] But even prophecy is somehow dialectically linked with and dependent upon narrative; unless prophecy is to be locked in the mode of future prediction, its relation to narrative must be maintained. The prophet may look forward to the day of the Lord, but this day consists of a mixture of hopeful

[489] Ricoeur, P., 'Naming God', p. 217.
[490] Ibid, p. 220.
[491] Ibid, p. 220.

anticipation and menace. And the prophet also refers back to the foundational acts of exodus, Exile. Without these to refer back to, the prophet has no framework in which to speak, the no frame of reference for the future restoration or replacement of what was before. How can Ezekiel dream of a new Temple without reference to the old Temple, now in ruins? There is therefore a tensive dialectic between narrative and prophecy, in that there is a tension between the recounting of the foundational deeds, and the menace of the prophetic message. Once more, we are reminded of Wheelwright's classification of symbols into tensive and steno symbols. Once more, it is the tensive symbol in which Revelation is to be found:

> The tension between narration and prophecy thus is expressed in a dialectic of the event, and it gives rise to a paradoxical understanding of history as simultaneously founded in remembrance and menace through prophecy. In this way, even in the prophetic genre, God is named in and through the event and not just as the voice behind the voice.[492]

Ricoeur extends his argument to the other forms of Biblical discourse. If the prescriptive discourse of the Torah is divorced from narrative and prophecy, it is reduced to the level of imperative, due to its origin in commandment. But the Torah is 'organically linked'[493] to the founding events of Israel's history, the heart of which is the Exodus, and so the Torah is linked to the narrative of deliverance. But also attached to that is what Ricoeur calls the 'apprenticeship' involved in the very idea of Covenant, an apprenticeship which is assessed and challenged in prophecy. Further, there is a dialectic, an interchange between the ethical, and the prophetic discourse. The prophetic reaches to a new law, based on the law of love, fulfilled in the New

[492] Ibid, p. 221.
[493] Ibid, p. 221.

Testament. Hence the prophet says, "A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" (Exodus 36:26).[494] Here again, the Naming of God takes place in the tension between the old foundation and the new. This is taken to its extremes in the New Testament, when the narration of the 'evangelical life of the Liberator' - as Ricoeur describes Jesus - carries the new commandment taken up from Deuteronomy, through the remembering of the resurrection and onto the promise of universal resurrection.

Further enrichment can be found in the Wisdom and Hymnic discourses. Wisdom addresses the dialectic between the sense and the non-sense of existence, such as in unjust suffering: "Unjust suffering has a central place here to the extent that suffering itself poses the enigma at the juncture between the order of things and the ethical order."[495]

But now the naming of God is not quite so personalised as it is in narrative or prescriptive discourse. In Wisdom discourse, we are brought face to face with the incomprehensibility of God, the 'hidden-ness of God. This voice is very different from the voice of the narrative (3rd person) or the prophetic (1st person voice), although it differs less from the narrative voice than the others: "At its limit, Wisdom discourse encounters a hidden God who takes the anonymous and inhuman course of things as his mask."[496]

[494] Ibid, p. 221.
[495] Ibid, p. 221.
[496] Ibid, p. 222.

In contrast, however, it is a very personalised God who is revealed in the hymns – songs of supplication, thanksgiving and praise. God is addressed as 'You', by a human 'you'.[497]

The God who is named through narrative, hymnic, prescriptive, prophetic and wisdom discourse is named as much more than being. In these, God is named in ways which recount his acts in a way which implores, gives thanks and celebrates the acts of God, for nation or individual, and does each of these by addressing God in the second person; is named as the source of the imperative; is named in a way that purports to prophecy in the divine name, is named in the 'Wisdom that seeks the meaning of meaning'. The name God, therefore, is what is meant in the way that all of these partial forms of discourse come together.[498]

There are other forms of the discourse of faith that belong more properly to the New Testament, and in particular, to the preaching of Jesus about the Kingdom of God. Here, God is named at the same time as the Kingdom is named, but the latter is only signified through parables, proverbs and paradoxes, no literal translation of which can truly exhaust their meaning. Ricoeur is particularly interested in the parables, through which God is named indirectly, and in which we find a narrative structure.[499] In parables, the narrative does not unfold in large historical epics; rather, it happens through 'little stories of everyday life, whose narrative form resembles either comedy or tragedy', Just as these two dramas always have a plot, or a theme, so too the parable. There is a point to the parable that is signified by this plot, or theme. It is because there is a point and a plot to the parable that it can convey meaning – a

[497] Ibid, p. 222.
[498] Ibid, p. 222.
[499] Ibid, p. 223.

'metaphorical transformation'[500] - about the Kingdom. The parable, then, combines a narrative structure with metaphorical structure. But, this corresponds to the linguistic and non-linguistic aspects of the symbol that we have already met. In the parable, the plot, the point of the story, carries the literal meaning through to the metaphorical. This view completely supports Norman Perrin's already noted contention that parables can only really be understood as symbols – not as concepts.

This movement from literal to metaphorical meaning in parables always involves the introduction of something implausible, insolent, scandalous, subversive, or disproportionate, and it is this that provides the strong contrast between the real world of the story of the parable and the extravagance of the 'denouement that gives rise to the kind of drift by means of which the plot and its point are suddenly carried off toward the Wholly Other.'[501]

Ricoeur claims that the use of hyperbole, exaggeration, and paradox in the parables allows us to introduce a new category, one that he calls the 'limit-expression', after Karl Jaspers.[502] These expressions take the form "God is like...the Kingdom of God is not like..." The parable is the exemplary form of the discourse in which God is named, because it combines a narrative structure, a metaphorical process, and limit-expressions. The parable is, in effect, a summary of the ways in which God is named in Biblical discourse.

Ricoeur adds other dimensions; of interest to us is his assertion that religious language is poetic language, although he is not adding a new literary genre to narrative, prescription, prophecy, wisdom and hymn; rather, he sees in poetic

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[500] Ibid, p. 223.
[501] Ibid, p. 223.
[502] Ibid, p. 223.

language the overall functioning of all these genres. Poetic language displays these characteristics:

> "a) Poetic language breaks with everyday language, and 'is constituted in the crucible of semantic innovation'. b) Poetic language...opens up a new world, which is the issue of the text, the world of the poem. c) The world of the text is what invites the reader, or the listener, to understand himself or herself in the face of the text and to develop, in imagination and sympathy, the *self* capable of inhabiting this world by deploying is or her ownmost possibilities there."[503]

But religious language is more than poetic, and it needs to be differentiated somehow from other types of poetic language; the naming of God distinguishes religious language from all others:

> "Touched by God's 'name', the poetic word undergoes a mutation of meaning that needs to be circumscribed."[504]

This brings us back to ask once more, is this not pretty much what we calling Inspiration? Is it not the fact that the author is inspired that somehow makes it possible for the discourse to be touched by the name of God. As we have seen Ricoeur repeatedly shies from Inspiration that implies a double authorship of Scripture, or a 'dictation'. I am suggesting that such a view is not necessary, and that inspiration which means responding in writing to the prompting of the Spirit of God can exist side by side with all that Ricoeur says of the revelatory nature of the Biblical text. But we need some explanation that will show it is not at all

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[503] Ibid, p. 225.
[504] Ibid, p. 225.

unreasonable to postulate such activity of the Spirit of God. If Ricoeur appeals to the nature of written text to find that wherein God may be named, it is equally necessary for us to seek some mechanism at work in the real world which is analogous with our proposed model of Inspiration. Such a model appears to exist in Michael Polanyi's writings.

In summing up the various aspects of Ricoeur's thought that we have examined so far, there are some conclusions we can draw. To begin with, it is clearly established that Biblical texts share with all other texts the potential of mediating multiple meanings. If we accept Ricoeur's conclusion, we can say that the Biblical text has, been 'rescued' from the problems that remained with concepts of revelation and inspiration, despite the insights introduced by such as R.A.F. MacKenzie, J. L. McKenzie, et al. One question that these theories did not manage to answer was to give an explanation as to how anyone can read the Bible, but not every reader will recognise it as revelatory – or alternatively, not every reader will recognised it as being Divinely Inspired; it should be clear from what I have suggested so far that the two concepts are far from identical. Ricoeur provides at least one important insight into solving this enigma: he strongly asserts that the reader does not perceive the text as revelatory because it claims an inspired authorship.

But we still lack something essential. Without that something, it may be that the problem is only shifted, not solved. We may ask indeed, why is it not easier to recognise the revelatory nature of the Biblical text, if its Revelatory meaning is not a function of the author, but resides in the text itself? Surely it is not enough to say that the reader who fails to recognise revelation in the text has merely 'been unable to find it', or 'has not noticed it'? Ricoeur in part points to the solution when he says

that what distinguishes the religious language of the Bible from other forms of poetic language is that in the revelatory text, 'God is named'.

Ricoeur resists invoking Inspiration to explain how this may be. He will not accept any explanation that limits the role of the author in committing text to paper. This, of course, makes sense, and it has been the aim of those trying to develop a theology of Biblical Inspiration in Catholic circles to ensure that whatever is to be said about God as Divine Author of Scripture, it cannot be at the expense of the completely human authorship at the same time.

But what if the question of 'limitation' is approached in a very different way? I intend now to turn to a principle, or set of principles which will say more about how the process of writing Inspired Scripture might come about – but, it must be stressed, not so much from the perspective of any specific philosophical analysis of the mechanism of writing; rather from an understanding of how the process of communication can take place. The idea to be explored has the additional attractive feature that, according to Michael Polanyi, it is a principle that is constantly at work in reality. I suggest this will allow us to gain more insight into what I have already said about inspiration: my contention has been that authors were inspired, not because God 'made' them write in a particular way', or dictated a certain content, but because they were moved by the Spirit of God to write in response to those symbols which they interpreted as divine self-disclosure (burning bush, Exodus, exile, Jesus' cures and feedings, etc). In turn, it is the reader, prompted by the same Spirit of God, who will, in an analogous way, be inspired to read these texts as revelatory – texts which have been so designated by their community to which they belong in their inclusion in the Canon of Scripture.

§ 4.4 MICHAEL POLANYI: THE PRINCIPLE OF BOUNDARY (MARGINAL) CONTROL

Michael Polanyi is another writer who has crossed the borders of disciplines – this time, a scientist who has turned to philosophy – fellow of the Royal Society of England, former Professor of Physical Chemistry and Social Studies at the University of Manchester, who has written on the subjects of knowledge, and meaning. Following the lead given by Avery Dulles,[505] we will explore some thoughts prompted by Polanyi, covering Inspiration itself, but also the role that Tradition places in the communication of Divine Self-Disclosure.

Polanyi sets out his arguments in a clear, step-by-step manner, and it would be to our advantage to follow the direction of his thoughts in the same way. He takes the example of the operation of a machine as a device that is humanly shaped to produce something else, and he illustrates the hierarchy that operates among systems. He is interested in the types of control that apply at the different levels of operation. The structure of machines, and the workings of their structures are, of course, shaped by humans, even though they are also controlled by the inanimate materials from which they are constructed. Already, we see that there are two principles at operation in the machine - one is controlled by the materials from which it is constructed; the other, the higher principle of the two, by the purpose for which the machine was constructed – its driving force.[506] What Polanyi says here has echoes in the commonly-used expression 'harnessing the forces of nature'; this is precisely what a machine is designed to do. This harnessing takes place when the machine's design, its purpose is combined with the nature of the materials it is constructed from. But

[505] c.f. Dulles, A., Models of Revelation.
[506] Polanyi, M., ed., Greene, M., Knowing and Being, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1969, p. 225.

the harness can be broken: the structure of the machine, and its working, can break down. This does not destroy the forces of inanimate nature that the working of the machine relied on; it merely releases them from the way they were restricted by the machine before it broke down.

This two-levelled structure is commonly employed when an experiment is conducted, but there is a very important difference between an experiment and a machine. With the former, the experimenter imposes restrictions on nature in order to observe some aspect under these restrictions, and then to record the results, whereas with the machine, it is its construction, its design that causes the restrictions on nature to take place, with the specific purpose of harnessing nature to a particular goal:

> In the machine, our principle interest lay in the effects of the boundary conditions, while, in an experimental setting we are interested in the natural processes controlled by the boundaries.[507]

Polanyi illustrates this further from everyday examples. Boiling soup in a saucepan is similar to carrying out an experiment in a test-tube, in that in both cases, the process (cooking the soup, controlling the chemical reaction) is bound by the container. We are, in both cases, interested in the contents of the boundaries (the containers). But the reverse happens when we consider a game of chess, for example; now, it is the boundaries that we are interested in, because the strategy employed by the chess player imposes boundaries on the moves of the game. It is the strategy that gives rise to the boundaries, i.e. the collection of moves that exemplify this or that particular game. Similarly, when a sculptor

[507] Ibid, p. 226.

carves a statute, we are interested, not in the material, but in boundary conditions imposed on the material by the sculpture: that is what determines what is done with the material (e.g. marble). Polanyi claims that, in the first of the examples cited, the soup on the saucepan, we have a 'test-tube' type of boundary, whereas in the second, it is a machine type of boundary which is found: i.e. in the first, the boundaries are imposed on the situation, whereas in the second, it is the boundaries themselves which harness the forces at work.

The importance of all of this for us comes in his next assertion:

> all communications form a machine type of boundary, and these boundaries form a whole hierarchy of consecutive levels of action. A vocabulary sets boundary conditions on the utterance of the spoken voice; a grammar harnesses words to form sentences; and the sentences are shaped into a text which conveys a communication. At all these stages we are interested in the boundaries imposed by a comprehensive restrictive power, rather than in the principle harnessed by them.[508]

This illustrates that by changing the focus of attention, we can change one type of condition to another – for language as a whole, we observe machine type boundaries, but at each level, we observe the test-tube variety, where each level creates the boundary conditions for the lower level to operate within: language is the overall principle harnessing all the principles of language formation. Polanyi illustrates this further with the example of giving a speech. Here, he identifies no less than five levels, - placed in a hierarchy of production: 1) of the voice, 2) of words, 3) of sentences, 4) of style, and 5) of literary composition. Each of levels is governed by

[508] Ibid, p. 226.

its own rules, 1) of phonetics, 2) of vocabulary, 3) of grammar, 4) of stylistics, and 5) of literary criticism. But these levels are not random; they form what Polanyi calls a hierarchy of comprehensive entities. This is due to the fact that the principles that govern the operation of each level operate under controls originating in the next higher level. Thus, voice production only produces words under the control of the principles of vocabulary, words are only formed into meaningful sentences under the rules of grammar, and so on. Also, each level is subject to a dual control – firstly a control pertaining to its own elements – e.g. the production of sounds in the vocal chords, and a control pertaining to the level above it, e.g. the formation of sounds emanating from the vocal chord into words, according to the principles of word-formation. Thus:

> the operations of a higher level cannot be accounted for by the laws governing its particulars forming the lower level. You cannot derive a vocabulary from phonetics; you cannot derive the grammar of a language from its vocabulary, a correct use of grammar does not account for good style; and a good style does not provide the content of a piece of prose.[509]

This is how an inanimate object can be said to be under two types of control at different levels, with the principles which govern the operation of the upper level somehow being artificially embodied in the boundaries of the lower level, when that lower level is relied upon to obey the laws of its inanimate nature. That is, it is the operating principles of the higher level that *shape* the boundaries that harness the forces of nature to make possible the object (e.g. a machine) carry out the function for which those forces are being harnessed in

[509] Polanyi, M., The Tacit Dimension, pp. 35ff.

the first place. The upper level principle is, according to Polanyi, the *organising* principle of the level below it.[510]

Polanyi calls the control exercised by the operational principle of a higher level on the elements of its lower level THE PRINCIPLE OF MARGINAL CONTROL.[511] Interestingly, he considers that some human functions can be described by this principle of marginality, and he returns to his example of speech making to amplify this progression, beginning with the lowest level of voice production. Each successive level's organisational principle controls the boundaries which otherwise would be indeterminate on the level below. For example, voice production, which is the lowest level of operation in making a speech, does not determine the combination of sounds that form into words; that boundary is set by the organisational principle of vocabulary, which, in itself, does not control how words are formed into meaningful sentences; this is controlled by the principles of grammar, and so on.

But it must also be true that each level imposes restrictions on the level above it. Unless the production of words is brought under the control of voice production, an uncontrolled flow of random sounds is all that would be heard. Therefore, a higher operation may fail if the level below it 'escapes' from its control.

Polanyi insists that this principle of marginal control can be seen operating in living systems as well. The vegetative system, the static living system, leaves open the possibility of bodily movement by muscular action, which in turn

[510] Ibid, p. 40.
[511] Ibid, p. 40.

leaves open the possibility of organised patterns of behaviour. And such organised behaviour patterns leave open the way for intelligence, which in turn leaves open the possibility of the exercise of still higher principles in those who possess them. He doesn't specify what these higher principles might be, but we can surmise that they might include mathematical ability, artistic appreciation, aptitude for learning languages, appreciation of music, and, surely, openness to that spiritual experience which we call Revelation. This last mentioned may not correspond exactly to the others, but will surely do so at least analogously. In which case, I would suggest that Polanyi has, in fact, given us some justification for appealing to the existence of inspiration as an expression of the human intellect functioning under the boundary control of a higher level – in the case of Biblical Inspiration, under the boundary control of the Holy Spirit, who is, in Polanyi's terminology, the 'organising principle' which harness the capabilities of the writer to commit mediated Revelation to writing.

This is a suitable point at which to return to our examination of Biblical Inspiration. Is it possible that Polanyi has, in his above outline of the hierarchies of marginal control, provided us with a way of solving one of the difficulties that has always confronted the formation of an adequate theology of Inspiration, a difficulty which has to do with how we can resolve the claim that both God and the human writer can both be described as true authors? We saw earlier that Ricoeur repeatedly rejected any notion of a dictated Revelation; we also saw that Ricoeur collapses into each other the separate concepts of Revelation and Inspiration, and how he equally dismisses Revelation which is somehow an 'insufflation'. Ricoeur rightly defends vigorously his contention that Biblical Revelation can only be countenanced in reference to the text itself,

and cannot be found in the intention of the author, or of a 'superimposed meaning'. Clearly he is extremely unhappy about the human author being restricted in writing by some divine activity.

But if Polanyi is correct in his description of the Principle of marginal control, there are two factors we need remember, which seem to add credence to the possibility of Biblical Inspiration. The first is that each level of operation in human functions, as well as in living systems and in inanimate objects, operates subject to the boundaries imposed on it by the higher organisational principle of a superior level. Therefore, it is perfectly in order to speak of a human being, carrying out the function of writing, but under the control of boundaries stemming from some higher organisational plane. On reflection, how else can one describe the style of the author – in literary, geographic, historical or cultural terms? The superior level of culture determined much of the way in which the Biblical writers composed their works; there is logically, then, nothing to prevent the invocation of the same kind of boundary control by the self-disclosing God who reveals. The principle of marginal control, therefore, can be said to work in Inspiring the human author to write Scripture in the same way in which the various levels of speech making control the boundaries of the operation of the levels of those beneath them.

But there is another intriguing aspect to this. If Polanyi is correct, then it may be that we speak wrongly of God controlling the human author: Polanyi maintains that in the operational systems we observe in the real world, it is the lower levels which restrict the upper. If a machine breaks down, it is not because of the organisational principles, but of the lower level which 'breaks free' from the boundaries within

which its superior level had placed it to perform its function. Does this shed another light on Revelation/Inspiration? Polanyi writes:

> each level imposes restrictions on the one above it, even as the laws of inanimate nature restrict the practicability of conceivable machines.[512]

Do we worry too much about how God does or does not control humans, in our attempts to formulate a theory of Biblical Inspiration, and too little about how it is the human author who may be the limiting factor in Divine Self-Disclosure? And yet, that is exactly what we are implicitly acknowledging when we speak of symbolic Revelation – something capable of multiple meanings, which needs to be interpreted, and which several inspired authors (in the case of inspiration as response to previous symbol) have attempted to set in writing. That the symbol is always capable of more interpretation, we have seen in the various versions of certain biblical accounts, such as creation, and various responses – all vastly different from each other – to the Exile.

Chapters three and four of this study have been concerned with developing a model for Biblical inspiration as a response to symbolically mediate Revelation which firstly resonates with the reality of the Biblical text, and secondly, which is supported by modern philosophical hermeneutics. In the ground covered in the investigation so far, it has becomes clear that there is little to support an approach to Inspiration which either demands the invocation of some kind of divine dictation, or equally, one which stresses divine influence on a human instrument to the detriment of a true expression of human labour. As this chapter draws to a close, I suggest that in the hermeneutics of Ricoeur and the Principle of Marginal Control in Polanyi's

[512] Ibid, p. 41.

expression, we have discovered a way in which these problems might be overcome. It is precisely in Ricoeur's theory of the reading of multiple meanings of metaphor that we have the philosophical validation of a theory of Inspiration built on the interpretation of symbolic Revelation. Thus, we can account for, not only multiple readings of symbols such as the many examples cited at various parts of this study, but we have philosophical explanation of how that interpretation process has found expression in the variety of types of discourse, or literary genre which make up the Bible. Further, thanks to Polanyi's helpful identification of the limiting nature of the lower principle upon the higher as part of his explanation of Marginal Control, the idea of Inspired Scripture need no longer invoke the God who dictates, or who reduces the human to a mechanical instrument; indeed, it is the human author, precisely in the act of writing in an authentically human way, who in fact impose control on the Divine Author. I suggest this is further explanation for the multiple responses in writing that Scripture gives us in (Inspired) response to Divine Self-Disclosure.

Chapter 1 of this study gave, among other things, an account, and short evaluation, of official statements from the Church on Biblical Inspiration. The remaining Chapter will return to the most recent Magisterial statements, and re-examine them in the light of the Biblical and Philosophical perspective which has been developed here.

CHAPTER 5

THEORY SUPPORTED IN PRACTICE

§ 5.1 INTRODUCTION: DRAWING IT ALL TOGETHER

Chapter 3 of this study set out to support the theory of Biblical Inspiration as a Spirit-animated response to Symbolic Revelation. Chapter 4 offered the support of philosophical hermeneutics. The final chapter will attempt to draw this investigation into a possible model for Biblical Inspiration to a conclusion, by testing the theory on two levels. Firstly, we shall try to assess whether the model will satisfy those requirements for the doctrine of Inspiration that are laid down in the Magisterial documents of the Catholic Church; secondly, we shall consider if and how the theory can have real practical relevance today for reading the Bible, in the academic context, but also in the pastoral context of worshipping communities.

An important way to ascertain the validity of the theories so far proposed will be to examine their implications in the light of the Catholic Church's most recent important pronouncement on Scripture: the Pontifical Biblical Commission's 1993 document, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*.[513] It will also be useful to refer back to earlier documents, reminding ourselves of the extent of the Catholic Church's official stance in each of the relevant areas. In Chapter 1, we surveyed these documents to identify progression in magisterial teaching. In this chapter, we will return to the Magisterium's presentation of doctrine, examining this under the headings of Revelation, Inspiration, Tradition and Magisterium respectively, but this time beginning with the encyclical *Providentissimus Deus*. The relevant texts are presented in the Appendix at the end of this study.

[513] The Pontifical Biblical Commission, The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church, 1993, ed. Houlden, J. L., S.C.M. London, 1995.

§ 5.1.1 Revelation

Throughout this study, the model proposed for Biblical Inspiration has been of the Spirit-prompted written response to Symbolic Revelation. It is important, therefore, to determine whether Magisterial teaching supports such a concept of Revelation. Of course, we will not find any explicit Magisterial endorsement of a symbolic or any other model of Revelation: the Magisterium's function is not to decide on theories or models: it is to lay down the parameters within which a doctrine may validly be understood. Furthermore, if the Magisterium supports the symbolic model, this does not imply that other models are thereby rejected. Dulles identifies five models for Revelation in addition to the symbolic, recognising that Revelation can be mediated by history, doctrine, inner experience, dialectical presence and new awareness,[514] although his view is that these can be summed up in the symbolic model:

> ...I do not advocate a symbolic model in place of the other five...all (of which) can accord a certain role for symbolic communication in revelation, but the concept and function of symbol varies according to the model.[515]

From what we saw in previous chapters about symbols being capable of mediating multiple meanings, it is, I think, clear that the symbolic model of Revelation can incorporate Dulles' other five models: doctrine, inner awareness, history of Israel can all present symbolically Divine Self-Disclosure which is Revelation.

In the Second Vatican Council Constitution on Revelation *Dei Verbum*, article 7 (Appendix quotation **[e],** p. 277) has been cited as the foundation on which the

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[514] Dulles, A., Model s of Revelation, pp. 36 – 128.
[515] Ibid, preface to the 1992 edition, p. vii.

Council builds "its teaching concerning the transmission and communication of the Word of God."[516] *Dei Verbum* did not settle the debate about the 'fonts of Revelation' and whether this meant one or two sources of Revelation (a debate which had run since the Council of Trent, and which was discussed in Chapter 1). What it did achieve, however, was to free the theology of Revelation from the grip that had held it for four centuries. This was achieved through bypassing the question of whether Scripture and Tradition constitute separate sources of Revelation, and instead by recognising the Word of God as *the* source of Revelation.[517]

Chapter 2 of *Dei Verbum* is about the *transmission* of Divine Revelation, which reaches its completion in Jesus Christ, who commanded his apostles to hand on his Gospel to all peoples; the Gospel he himself proclaimed. [518] *Dei Verbum* Chapter 1, article 2, states that this Gospel *is* Jesus Christ, communicated in words and deed intrinsically bound up with one another.[519] Neither words (Scripture) nor deeds (Tradition) can be sufficient in themselves to transmit this Gospel; therefore the Word of God is not contained in written words nor in deeds (Scripture is the Word of God committed to writing; Tradition is the way in which the word of God is passed down[520]).

The purpose of this chapter is not to elaborate the role of Scripture and Tradition in the transmission of Revelation; it is to examine whether the transmission of Revelation as described in *Dei Verbum* will support a theory of symbolic mediation of Revelation, and the answer seems clearly to be in the affirmative. If the Gospel which is Christ (already, we seem to be into symbolic language) is communicated in

[516] Fisichella, R., '*Audiens*', p. 85.
[517] Ibid, p. 86.
[518] Ibid, p. 88.
[519] Ibid, p. 89.
[520] C.f. Ratzinger, J., 'The Transmission of Divine Revelation', p. 194.

word and deed, we can surely say *at least* that we find in Revelation a concept that will not simply reduce to the level of propositions; Revelation transmitted in word and deed implies some symbolic content.

Dei Verbum is also concerned with the reception of Revelation. The Church receives Revelation through, for example, historical events. To use the terminology of this study: the Church, inspired by the Spirit, responds to Revelation mediated through the symbols of, among other possibilities, historical events. This process of receiving Revelation is now described in such personal terms that Vatican II introduced some terms unknown to earlier Conciliar pronouncements, such as 'friendship' and 'dialogue'. Eric de Moulin Beaufort identifies Henri de Lubac as one of the key players in the genesis of *Dei Verbum,*[521] and he tries to encapsulate de Lubac thus:

> Revelation is not given only in propositions, whose level of logic we would then strive to improve. It is realised in events, gestures, and words, which culminate and find themselves recapitulated in the great Event of Christ – the expression flows often from de Lubac's pen. Hence the fundamental conviction which guides (his) reflection, and which underlies the equilibrium of the conciliar constitution: 'The *Evangelium Christi* is the *Evangelium de Christo*: every attempt to dissociate them is fatal to the one and to the other.' The Gospel is Jesus himself.[522]

De Lubac does, however, acknowledge in one sense that Scripture and Tradition function as two sources, but only in this sense: there is only one ontological source of Revelation – Christ. But we can speak of two sources of Revelation, Scripture and

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[521] de Moulins-Beaufort, H., 'Reader', pp. 669 – 694.
[522] Ibid, pp. 674 - 675. The quotation from Henri de Lubac is from *La revelation divine,* p. 124. De Moulins-Beaufort does not give fuller details of publication of this.

Tradition, in the sense that the theologian has two instruments in order to know the Christian faith.[523]

Here again, we appear to find some support for the assertion that Revelation may be mediated symbolically. The deeds through which the Gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed can clearly be designated symbolic, but so can the words proclaimed and subsequently recorded in Inspired Scripture. The extensive treatment given to different types of symbols, and of metaphors and myths in chapter three should have served to illustrate just how rich the concept of symbolic mediation can be. Now, given that the totality of Revelation is defined as the Gospel of Jesus Christ in all its richness, I would suggest that, not only is symbolic mediation wide enough in its scope to contain all that is required if Revelation as divine self-disclosure, the very nature of Jesus Christ as the totality of Revelation appears almost to demand that we somehow invoke s symbolic model for the mediation of Revelation.

It is, therefore, understandable that so many theologians have turned to symbol as the preferred model for understanding Revelation;[524] Dulles, of course, includes himself in this company, but he also notes that since the 17th Century down to the present, many theologians have insisted that 'supernatural revelation' is communicated in propositional form.[525] Their contention is that Revelation expressed in propositions is necessary if humans are to be able to assent to Revelation. Of course, there is in itself no great problem with this: clearly, Revelation can be communicated by propositions. However, to restrict all Revelation to proposition is surely to restrict its formulation to a mode altogether too abstract, and too narrow; to do so would be to deprive Revelation of its ability to elicit dialogue ('friendship' – see p. 227 above)

[523] Ibid, p. 681.
[524] Dulles, A., 'The Symbolic Structure of Revelation', p.55.
[525] Ibid, p. 52.

with the Inspired respondent. Dulles claims that the symbolic model somehow incorporates the others;[526] I suggest that in fact the very nature of Revelation as Divine self-disclosure demands something of the symbolic to protect the dialogic element that *Dei Verbum* insists belongs to Revelation.

A cautionary note is required, however. There may be a strong field of theologians who favour a symbolic model for Revelation, but was this not precisely the approach which was condemned in the aftermath of the Modernist crisis at the beginning of the 20th Century? Well, yes and no. Yes, Pius X's encyclical letter *Pascendi* (1907) condemned the opinion that all representations of the divine were merely symbolic. Dulles cites the example of Marcel Hébert, who had reduced every article of the creed to a 'symbolic' statement of everyday experiences.[527] This version of symbolism is what Pius X's encyclical condemned: one which deals with the 'not really so'. Symbolic mediation as understood in this study, however, is concerned with an understanding of what is real but which cannot be expressed in a single, simple meaning. Interpreting Dulles, we might say that a symbol is a reality which gives rise to multiple meaning.

§ 5.1.2 Inspiration

Ricoeur's hermeneutics present no barriers to a Catholic understanding of Revelation; but what about Inspiration, which Ricoeur seemed to have such difficulty in accepting? I have suggested already that Ricoeur apparently fails to distinguish sufficiently between Revelation and Inspiration. Revelation is a communication of meaning which stems from the written text, and not from a text that is somehow dictated by God. But, we have also noted that Biblical Revelation is a consequence

[526] Ibid, p. 73.
[527] Ibid, p. 58.

of the text having been written; Inspiration, on the other hand, has to do with how the text was written in the first place. This is an aspect that does not concern Ricoeur, since his philosophy is hermeneutical. Inspiration is not concerned with the art of interpretation; rather, it has to do with the art of writing.

The question here, however, is: can we reconcile what has already been said about Inspiration with what is required by the Magisterium? In Chapter 1, we considered the commentators who turned to Pope Leo XIII's definition of Inspiration (Appendix, quotations **[a]** and **[b]**, p 276), and noted that this definition was given more to preserve the concept of Inerrancy in Scripture than to provide a way to explain Inspiration. According to the definitions of the Magisterium, therefore, all that is required for Inspiration of an author is that, not only is it possible, but necessary to assert the dual authorship of God and the human writer. Traditionally, this was defended by an appeal to the principle of instrumental causality. Chapter 2 highlighted the reservations that theologians have expressed about the usefulness of this approach.[528]

I suggest that our model of Inspired written response to symbolic Divine self-disclosure fits the requirements of magisterial statements on both Revelation or Inspiration; *Dei Verbum* merely asserts that God chose those who, while using their own abilities and aptitudes, consigned to writing those things so desired by God for our salvation. (appendix, quotation **[i]**).

The model of Inspiration adopted in this study is based on a theology of Revelation that depends on symbolic disclosure. If we extend Ricoeur's theories on interpreting symbols, we can, by analogy apply them, not only to the reading of Scriptural texts,

[528] Vawter, B., Inspiration, gives an in depth analysis of theories of inspiration, pp. 95 – 155.

but also to the prior reading of symbols taken by Biblical authors *before* writing. Therefore, I suggest, it appears that the Inspired writer interprets symbols of Revelation (creation, burning bush, exile, already existing texts – Biblical or non-Biblical – shepherd, king, nation, etc.) in an analogous way to how a believer interprets the Revelatory Biblical text. When a reader of today, last century, or three millennia ago, accepts a text as Revelatory, the expected outcome is that the reader undergoes some sort of internal change, a new understanding of oneself, Ricoeur calls it. For Ricoeur, it is of the nature of poetic language to open up a new world, a world that is the issue of the text:

> the world of the text is the world that incites the reader, or the listener, to understand himself or herself in the face of the text and to develop, in imagination and sympathy, the *self* capable of inhabiting this world by deploying his or her ownmost possibilities there.[529]

Religious language is in this sense poetic; but of course, religious language is more: it makes possible the naming of God. It is in this that I think Ricoeur is writing of something rather close to what I mean by Inspiration, because it is the naming of God in his deeds, his word, which is surely the human response to Revelation, especially Revelation as understood in *Dei Verbum*. It is precisely in his words and deeds that Jesus, as the Word of God incarnate, proclaimed his Gospel. It is precisely in his words and deeds that Jesus invites the self-understanding of his hearer/reader to deploy his/her 'ownmost possibilities.' In Gospel terminology, this is a call to repent and believe the Good News (Mark 1:15). When a 'wicked generation' calls for a sign, they are rebuked and told the only sign they will have is the sign of Jonah,

[529] Ricoeur, P., 'Naming God', p. 225.

who was a sign for repentance for the Ninevites, just as the Son of man is for his generation. (Luke 11:29-30).

For Ricoeur, there is a step beyond the 'naming of God'; this is the step for action; these texts:

> intend a world, which calls forth on our part a way of dwelling there. It is part of the work of poetics to 'remake' the world following the essential intention of the poem.[530]

But this is what the author is doing when writing Inspired Scripture. Indeed, the author's response to the poetic expressions of the symbols of Revelation is made, precisely by committing the response in writing.

There is another aspect to the question of Inspiration that reaches beyond Ricoeur's level of interest. As we saw earlier, Michael Polanyi's principle of marginal control appears to 'clear the way' for recourse to a higher level of influence in human actions. According to Polanyi, throughout the natural world, we observe the phenomenon that a hierarchy of levels of operation are encountered. In these situations it is the higher level's organisational principle that sets boundaries for the way in which the activities of its immediate lower level are harnessed. In Polanyi's illustration of the hierarchical levels of operation found in living systems, he leaves room open for faculties above the level of intellect, which may bound the working of the human intellect. I suggested that this would include higher levels such as artistic appreciation, musical and literary creativity etc., and suggested that if this were true, inspiration of the Holy Spirit could easily be considered as part of this process.

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[530] Ibid, p. 226.

Further, since the higher levels are somehow limited by their immediately lower levels, we may also be able to use Polanyi's principle to explain some of Scripture's apparent 'shortcomings', where we see the all too evident limitations of the author's skill, in grammar, in gaps of his knowledge of history, or even the need to revisit themes already covered in other biblical texts (e.g. why we have so many accounts of creation, why Deuteronomy re-presents the law, why we have three Canonical synoptic gospels etc.).

There is one more point to raise: how do we describe the content of Revelation, as Divine Intervention, or self-communication? If Inspiration does not equate with divine dictation, how does Divine Self-disclosure take place? James Van Beeck certainly prefers to think of Revelation as divine self-communication, because in so doing, he can draw from what we know about communication between humans.[531] that is, by using our own experience of the specifically human phenomenon of inter-personal communication we can begin to construct a model for the operation of Revelation (and, I suggest, for Inspiration). Van Beeck's argument rests on two assumptions: that language about God necessarily uses metaphors from human experience, and that Divine Revelation is a form of communication.[532]

The first assumption is that communication between persons involves more than content transfer; there must also be interpersonal exchange, 'awareness of mutual presence, of actively and receptively being with one another.'[533] If content is to be transferred between persons without distortion, both parties must be involved in interpersonal exchange. The content and the encounter are intrinsically related;

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[531] Van Beeck, F. J., 'Divine Revelation: Intervention or Self-Communication?', Theological Studies, Volume 52, 1991, pp. 199 – 226.
[532] Ibid, p. 208.
[533] Ibid, p. 209.

otherwise we could never distinguish between distorted and undistorted communication. The content not only carries the encounter, but actually shapes it.[534]

The second assumption is that, whenever content is shared between persons, those involved always share more than the content:

> In...communication-situations, there is...a surplus value, a reality that (mostly) remains un-stated; for in whatever we do and say, we also express our own reality. Thus in communicating, we always do more than just exactly what we do, always say more than just exactly what we say; for in and beyond what we do and say, we convey ourselves, albeit symbolically.[535]

Van Beeck is restating what we have already discovered about symbolic disclosure; however, he introduces us to an important personal element which helps us see more clearly how Inspiration is part of the two-way interpersonal communication, the other part of which is Divine Revelation; namely that it is in the nature of symbol not to disclose everything about itself. Therefore if symbolic communication reveals a person, it never completely gives the person away.

Persons must communicate, says Van Beeck, because not to communicate is to cease to be a person. Likewise, to be a person is of necessity to invite communication. That is, communication between persons must be a process of invitation and response.[536]

Ricoeur was clear that reading a text is not the same as holding a conversation, and yet, his writing suggests that there is some interaction between the person and the

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[534] Ibid, p. 210.
[535] Ibid, p. 210.
[536] Ibid, pp. 211-212.

symbol with which the person engages. This is implicit, for example, in his treatment of what he calls 'naming God'; this 'naming God', which happens in response to a symbol – an example of which I have suggested is the writing of Inspired Scripture – demands we take seriously the 'other half' of the Revelation-Inspiration dynamic. If the naming of God in texts that are in turn narrative, prophetic, hymnic, prescriptive and wisdom, is not to be reduced to an abstraction, it will require a response to the self-communication which is Revelation.

When we examined Michael Polanyi's concept of marginal control, we noted it had the advantage of applying by analogy a phenomenon found in living systems, including human persons. The description of Revelation as divine self-communication has the same advantage; it derives from something inherent in human nature. Van Beeck says:

> Communicating our selves (sic) and inviting the self-communicating of others…is not something we can suspend at will; it is inherent in our existence as persons.[537]

§ 5.1.3 Tradition

Once again, *Dei Verbum* give us the appropriate reference for the relation between Scripture and Tradition in the Transmission of Revelation (appendix, quoation **[f]**) Here, Scripture is defined by what it *is* - the Word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing, whereas Tradition is described by what it *does*: it hands on God's word.

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[537] Ibid, p. 213.

It is clear that, if we employ the proposed model for Revelation, there are by far more numerous and more varied non-written symbols of Revelation than there are of the written, Scriptural variety. Without those non-verbal symbols that invited written response from the Biblical authors, much of the Scriptures could not have been written. We may ponder on what would have been left to write about without the symbols of creation, slavery in Egypt, Exodus, crossing the Red Sea, Promised Land, Monarchy, Chosen People, Exile, Kingdom of God, miracles, the cross, the resurrection…? That people saw in these the communication of God, and that they responded is clear – otherwise the Judeo-Christian religious system would not have existed – and would not exist today. That these symbols gave rise to a written account in what we call Scripture is self-evident, but I am not so sure that the role of Tradition in the response to non-verbal symbol has been given as much attention as it might need. As we have seen, Van Beeck suggests that non-written symbols appear to be ideal as the medium for self-revelation, as well as for partial self-concealment. He also adds that in communication, there is always more potential for self-disclosure than actually occurs. I suggest this helps us to see why there are so many non-verbal symbols of Revelation:

> No matter how much content communicates, it is never exhaustive: I could have thought of a different gift; to the handshake I could have added a kiss; I remember that I left an important part of information to my partner's imagination…the very limits of what we make manifest in communicating suggest that the many goods not shared and the untold

> things that remain unstated...also serves to symbolise the content that remains recessive.[538]

So, we can acknowledge an inspired response to the Tradition that is the vehicle for the transmission of Revelation through non-verbal symbols. Does this mean we speak of an Inspired Tradition as we do of an Inspired Scripture? I think the answer is no, for one simple reason: if Scripture is Inspired, it is because it is the product of the response of an individual to symbols of Revelation. Inspiration produces a response that leads to the creation of something - a written text, a gospel-prompted lifestyle, or a biblically motivated act of heroism. But non-verbal symbols are, by definition, not consciously created by a human being, therefore they are not Inspired in the way a written text might be. Tradition is therefore not inspired in exactly the same sense as Scripture. However, a response to Tradition, as the means in which non-verbal symbols are made available in every age, may well be animated by the Holy Spirit, and therefore inspired. Examples might clarify the distinction here. Tradition, according to *Verbum*, has the function of a vehicle for the passing on of Revelation. Tradition passes on Revelation is many ways within the life of the Church – the liturgical tradition is a good example. Liturgy may be inspiring, i.e. it may communicate to us yet more symbols of Revelation. Is it inspired? I think not, in the sense that Scripture is Inspired, because liturgy is not in itself a Spirit-directed response, although it may very well be the vehicle through which Symbolically–mediated Revelation is apprehended, which may result in the Inspired response of renewed religious fervour, missionary zeal, reform of some aspect of personal life, or whatever. I do not suggest for a moment, of course, that the liturgy, or any other aspect of the Tradition of the Church is not Spirit-directed. But I am suggesting that

[538] Van Beeck, F. J., 'Divine Revelation', p. 211.

the result of the activity of the Spirit in the celebration of the liturgy does not result in the kind of specific outcome that was produced by the Spirit-led Inspiration of Scripture. As a result of the animation by the Spirit, Tradition provides us with a vehicle that can facilitate further symbolic Revelation to which we may respond. Tradition, like Scripture, belongs to Revelation; but of the two, only Scripture can be described as the results of an Inspired response. I believe this distinction is important, just as I have maintained that it is important to protect the distinction between Revelation and Inspiration. Scripture is capable of being Revelatory; I have suggested that this happens because Scripture itself displays Symbolic characteristics. Scripture is complementary with Tradition; insofar as it is the written response to Symbolic Revelation, it has a direction from the Spirit that is different from that of Tradition.

This is an appropriate point to add another aspect to the Catholic understanding of Tradition: a Living Tradition, not a preservation of things of the past. De Moulins-Beaufort reminds us that Tradition is much more than the transmission in oral form of truths that have been conceptually shaped.[539] He quotes de Lubac:

> The idea of Tradition expounded...flows from the idea of Revelation: all that the Church has received, she transmits 'in her doctrine, life and worship'; what is involved is not only an 'oral tradition,' but a concrete and living tradition which bears fruit within time, such that in keeping the revealed truth, it actualises this latter according to the needs of each age.[540]

[539] de Moulins-Beaufort, H., 'Reader', p. 683.
[540] Original French from 'La Révélation Divine', p. 173.

So, Tradition is a part of the entire life of the Church, not just its doctrine or its discipline. Once again, the symbolic model for Revelation seems appropriate; the liturgy and the sacraments, the organisation and the activity of the Christian community, the apostolic works in which it is engaged, the moral code by which its members live their lives, the beliefs which give the Christian community its identity – all of these have symbolic significance in that all of these play their part in providing ways in which Tradition continues to transmit the Word of God, always living and active (c.f. Hebrews 4:12), to every age.

Ricoeur says nothing about how or why certain of the possible meanings of a text are apprehended by the reader, to the exclusion of others. This is presumably neither his field of interest, nor within the scope of his work; it does not really come within the scope of this investigation either. I suggest that the role of Tradition with its various forms of expression in the life of the Church as listed above, will play a part in 'awakening' the reader of faith to the meaning contained in the revelatory text; it would therefore be inaccurate to suggest as Ricoeur does, that the very concept of Tradition plays an invalid role in the revelatory text of Scripture. In fact, Tradition plays no role in the revelatory function of the Biblical text *EXCEPT* in so far as the non-written tradition was in existence before the written word came into being. But here again we are back to the concept of Inspiration. The prophets, the apostles, the other Scripture writers could not have written Scripture if they did not have behind them a religious Tradition which transmitted to them the symbols of Revelation to which they could respond in inspired writing.

§ 5.1.4 Magisterium

It should be clear from the previous section that the model of Tradition being explored here does not support the often-aired objection that Tradition is synonymous with ecclesiastical monitoring and control of acceptable interpretations of the sacred Scriptures. The model presented is concerned with the transmission of Revelation, and not the control of its response. It is appropriate, therefore, to consider the role of the ecclesiastical teaching authority, the Magisterium, in reading and interpreting Sacred Scripture, and in the process, perhaps make clear some points of confusion relating to the role of this Magistrerium.

Appendix quotations **[h]** and **[j]** (pp. 278f.) are from those passages in which *Dei Verbum* considers the role of the Magisterium. The first point to note is that the Dogmatic Constitution stresses the relation of the Magisterium to the Word of God:

> The teaching office is not above the word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on, listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously, and explaining it faithfully by divine commission and with the help of the Holy Spirit...[541]

This statement challenges the opinion that the Church intends that its Magisterium, its teaching function, is used to control how the word of God is read and interpreted. From the above quotation, it is clear that the Magisterium is, if anything, more concerned with the interpretation of those non-verbal symbols of Revelation that are part of the non-written Tradition. Raymond Brown writes that the Magisterium of the Church has *seldom, if ever* pronounced on the interpretation of Scripture, in the sense that the Magisterium's role is to pronounce on matters of faith and morals:

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[541] *Dei Verbum*, article 10.

> ...when we come to the actual exegesis of Scripture – something that could be a matter of faith and morals – in regard to 99 percent of the Bible, the Church has not commented officially on what a passage does or does not mean...When the Church has spoken on a particular verse, most often it has done so...by rejecting certain interpretations as false because they constitute a threat to faith or morals.[542]

We should follow this by commenting on how the Magisterium *has* actually operated in the past. Brown cites the example of the series of Pontifical Biblical Commission statements issued between c. 1905 and 1915, which most scholars, and even the present day Biblical Commission, would now prefer to pass over in silence. No matter how these were phrased, or how seriously people took their disciplinary nature, they were never pronouncements on matters pertaining to faith or morals. Even when dogmatic pronouncements have been made, for example, with the definition of the Assumption of Our Lady by Pius XII in 1950, the official documents do not claim that any part of Scripture 'proves' the dogma being defined, merely that it can receive support from Scripture.[543]

Brown notes that Magisterial decisions are only reached after consultation with theologians and Biblical scholars – to do otherwise would be imprudent:

> Trent and Vatican I consulted the best Catholic exegetes of the time. We are close enough to Vatican II to know that when exegetes pointed out that Scripture was being misused, such interpretation was dropped from the Conciliar documents.[544]

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[542] Brown. R. E., and Schneiders, S. M., 'Hermeneutics', 71:82, p. 1163.
[543] Ibid, 71:81, p. 1163.
[544] Ibid, 71:86, p. 1164.

These comments on Magisterium have all been defensive, but its role is also positive. In Chapter 2, we considered how the gospels came into existence, and we noted the significance of the 1964 Instruction on the Historical Truth of the Gospels, from the Pontifical Biblical Commission. [545] We saw that the first stage was the proclamation of Jesus in word and deed; next, the apostles were commissioned to pass on that same gospel as witnesses to the words and actions of Jesus; and only then is the gospel committed to writing at some later stage. The idea that the gospels in written form arose through the various stages also reminds us of the role the Church played in the production of those texts. Oral traditions that gave rise to the written gospels were in circulation within the Church. Ultimately, it was the same Church that made the decision about the versions of the written texts, in either Testament, which were to be considered as authentic Scripture – the determination of the Canon of Scripture was thus made. Hence, *Dei Verbum* could identify the role of the Magisterium in ensuring that Scripture is "read and interpreted according to the same Spirit by whom it was written".[546]

Since Revelation is, in Catholic understanding, transmitted through Scripture and Tradition – which involves the entire life of the church; faith, liturgy, dogma, morality etc. –the guardianship of Revelation is therefore carried out by the Church. Interestingly, the paragraph quoted also says that Scripture is to be read in the same Spirit in which it was written; this is exactly in keeping with earlier remarks that interpretation of revelatory Scripture is analogous to the interpretation of sometimes verbal, but mostly non-verbal symbols of Revelation to which the Inspired Biblical author responded in writing. The writing of Scripture takes place within the context

[545] See Chapter 2, pp. 85 – 89.
[546] *Dei Verbum*, article 12.

of the faith community (this of course applies to the Old Testament as well as to the New, although to a different degree in each); therefore it is reasonable to claim that the reading of Scripture takes place in the context of the believing community. Therefore, if the Christian community can determine which of its religious writings are Inspired, or Canonical (the terms are not identical), then in an analogous way, the same community can make judgement as to which readings are 'inspired' and 'acceptable'.

Although Ricoeur insisted that revelatory qualities are to be located in the text itself (by now it should be clear that this, as applied only Scripture, as Ricoeur had intended, does not cause a problem to the Catholic position), he does not imply that this gives unlimited mediation of meaning to the text; texts have multiple, but not infinite meanings; and each text is limited in the number of meanings it can mediate. Further, a text may not mean whatever its reader wants it to mean. This point is rooted in Ricoeur's adoption of metaphor as a model for symbolic mediation – the literal meaning of the metaphor must be understood before its metaphorical meaning can be understood. So, the question then becomes: how can the literal meaning be understood? The next section will take us to an examination of the literal sense, but before that we consider how we may assess the validity of an interpretation of Scripture.

Schneiders feels that it is possible to identify criteria by which the 'authenticity' of an interpretation can be judged,[547] criteria more closely related to the world of the arts than the world of science; the example of a musical performance might help to explain her point. There are many ways to interpret validly a musical score; an expert

[547] Schneiders, S. M., 'Faith, Hermeneutics and the Literal Sense', p. 731 Theological Studies, Volume 39, 1978, p. 719 – 736.

musicologist may be needed to judge the finer points of musical theory to decide between *this* very good performance and *that* equally good, but slightly different performance, but any listener, especially one who is familiar with the work, can differentiate between good and bad renditions. At a more sophisticated level of expertise, those appropriately trained in the art can pass judgement as to whether *this* atypical interpretation is groundbreaking in its difference, or is simply so eccentric that it scarcely can be described as 'actualising' the score in any meaningful way. This does not seem to be too far away from understanding the correct role that the Magisterium would legitimately play in determining whether a particular reading of a text reflects the Tradition of the Christian community as expressed in its life and worship, whether it suggests an interesting new series of insights into how the faith of the community may be expressed, or is simply too eccentric to be considered part of the tradition at all.

In practice, the Catholic Church has set out principles by which the Bible is interpreted within the church in the Pontifical Biblical Commission's document *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (1993). Peter S. Williamson[548] has helpfully provided an analysis of these principles, identifying twenty of them, classified under six headings. Williamson states:

> Although the Biblical Commission did not intend to define principles of interpretation, a careful reading of *IBC* (= Interpretation of the Bible in the Church) reveals that the Biblical Commission makes its judgements

[548] Williamson, P. S., 'Catholic Principles for Interpreting Scripture', Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 65, No. 3, July 2003, pp. 327 – 349.

on the basis of consistent principles. Sometimes these principles are explicit... At other times, they are implicit...[549]

I'm not sure that 'principles' is the best word to describe what Williamson lists - these seem to describe a range of categories, from what are certainly principles, to requirements for a study of Scripture in the Catholic tradition, characteristics of the Catholic approach to the study of Scripture, and a critique of methodologies currently being used to study the Bible. For convenience, I have selected and combined certain groups of 'principles' to help identify criteria whereby interpretations of the Bible may be evaluated:

a) Catholic exegesis should be carried out in a way that is as critical and scientific as possible (III).
b) Scripture is the word of God in written form, therefore linguistic and literary analyses are indispensable (I.A.); Philosophical hermeneutics can correct some misleading tendencies of historical criticism, however, because of their philosophical presuppositions, some hermeneutical theories are incompatible with the message of the Bible. (II.A.).
c) Catholic interpretation requires the guidance of the Holy Spirit for the correct understanding of the Bible (II.A.). The correct context for the Spirit-led reading of the Bible is the community of Faith. (III.B).
d) Catholic exegesis seeks to interpret Scripture in the tradition of the Bible itself (III.A.); Catholic exegesis places itself within the contest of the living Tradition of the Church. (III.b).

[549] Ibid, pp. 330-331.

e) The literal sense is what is expressed directly by the human author.[550] (II.B.1.c); The spiritual sense is the meaning of texts when they are read under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. (II.B.2.b).

f) The historical-critical method is indispensable in ascertaining the literal meaning of a text. (I.A.4.g; I.A.a); (but) interpretation occurs in all the ways in which the church uses the Bible – liturgy, prayer, theology, pastoral activity, ecumenism, etc. (IV).[551]

The 1993 document is strictly speaking not Magisterial, but had the approval of Pope John Paul II, who warmly received it and praised it for 'its consistency with previous teaching of the papal Magisterium on the interpretation of Scripture'.[552] It interesting in that it is perhaps unique as a major text on the Catholic interpretation of Scripture, produced, not by bishops, but by Scripture scholars who have the confidence of the Holy See, and who can speak with the authority of their professional expertise.[553] As such, it provides a useful insight into the contemporary working of the Magisterium of the Catholic Church as far as Biblical interpretation is concerned. It is worthy of note that the document does no more than endorse the kind of practice that is recognised as part and parcel of the way Catholic exegetes conduct their study of the Bible. There may be specific areas in which exegetes who are not Catholics may not accept as readily – the role of Tradition is presumably an example of this, those who are not Christians will not accept the central role of the Paschal Mystery, but can any serious exegete object to an exhortation to use all appropriate methods –

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[550] I'll return to the significance of this expression of the literal sense in the next section.
[551] Ibid, pp. 332-348 References in brackets are to the passages in the English version of the text of the PBC document.
[552] Williamson, P. S., 'Catholic Principles', p. 329.
[553] Ibid, pp. 329-320, footnote 8.

historical, literary, rhetorical or whatever kind of criticism? Can anyone seriously object to a religious body insisting on the need for exegetes to identify also the religious meaning of a text? In this most recent example of a document on the interpretation of the Bible in the Church, it is re-iterated that the Magisterium does not wish to place itself above the word of God, but rather to be at its service (*Dei Verbum* § 10).

§ 5.1.5 'Literal Sense'

That recent documents have identified the quest for the literal sense of Scripture as the first task of the exegete has caused some commentators severe misgivings. For example, Lewis Ayres and Stephen Fowl are far from happy at the way the document *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*[554] handles the literal sense of Scripture, calling it 'idiosyncratic and overly restrictive'.[555] They note that the document concedes that an acceptance of contemporary hermeneutic theory makes it difficult to assert that any text has a single, stable meaning. But, they say, this is contradicted in the same document, which defines the literal sense of Scripture as the precise meaning of 'texts as produced by their authors' or as 'that which has been expressed directly by the inspired human authors'. They say that this means that:

> Attention to this meaning then determines scriptural interpretation even if hermeneutical theory prevents us from believing that texts have only one meaning. As the text later states, 'one must reject as unauthentic every interpretation alien to the meaning expressed by the human authors in their written text.'[556]

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[554] Hereafter referred to as PBC Document (1993).
[555] Ayres, L. and Fowl, S. E., '(Mis)reading the Face of God: The interpretation of the bible in the church', p. 513, Theological Studies, Vol. 60,. No. 3, 1999, pp. 513 – 528.
[556] Ibid, pp. 518 – 519.

However, it appears that it is Ayers and Fowl who are idiosyncratic and restrictive in their reading of the significance of the literal sense. They are correct in noting the document's insistence on the importance of identifying the sense expressed by the author, but they are not correct in claiming that the document implies is that there is only one meaning attached to the text, and that is the meaning expressed by the original author. Indeed, the document itself acknowledges that the text, even in its literal sense, can mediate multiple meanings:

> One should be especially attentive to the dynamic aspect of many texts… Historical-critical exegesis has too often tended to limit the meaning of texts by tying it too rigidly to precise historical circumstances. It should seek rather to determine the direction of thought expressed by the text; this direction, far from working toward a limitation of meaning, will on the contrary dispose the exegete to perceive extensions of it that are more or less foreseeable in advance.[557]

Rather, the way the PBC Document (1993) defines the literal sense seems to be consistent with modern hermeneutic theory; according to Ricoeur, it is essential to identify the literal meaning of the metaphor before one can begin to understand the metaphorical meaning. This is why Ricoeur maintains that a text has multiple, but not infinite meanings; possible meanings of metaphorical language are limited in that they must emerge from a clear understanding of the literal meaning set down by the author. The PBC document is perfectly in order in asserting that meanings that do not correspond to that of the literal sense are to be rejected.

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[557] The Pontifical Biblical Commission, The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church, p. 53.

What Ayres and Fowl seem to be unaware of it is the significance of the new insights the PBC Document (1993) introduces to the understanding of the literal sense.

Williamson points out that the PBC Document (1993) identifies the literal sense as *that which was expressed directly by the author* (see appendix quotation **[k],** pp. 279f.) This, of course, is quite different from the *intention* of the original author. As Ricoeur and others have insisted, the meaning of a text is not determined by authorial intention, and the PBC document does not claim any role for such intention. Further, the PBC Document (1993), in recognising the 'dynamic aspect' of the literal sense, invites exegetes to explore multiple valid re-readings of the literal sense. Williamson quotes a member of the Pontifical Commission, who uses this analogy: the dynamic aspect of the literal sense is like the conical beam of a flashlight, which grows wider, the further the beam shines from its point of origin.[558]

But is this understanding of the literal sense not quite different from that of earlier documents? Definitely, but as Raymond Brown[559] has pointed out, there never really has been a single way in which the term literal sense has been used. In his doctoral thesis,[560] Brown notes that the most common use of literal denotes the most basic sense of Scripture – the sense of the words themselves, according to ancient Greek usage; although the term is now used with more precision, there is still some confusion about its definition, with the debate (at least at the time of Brown's thesis) centred around whether the literal sense means only that intended by the divine author, or whether the sense intended by the human author is also required. The former seems to be the one most favoured by Scholasticism, and certainly appears to

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[558] See Williamson, P. S., 'Catholic Principles', p. 329, where he quotes Brendan Byrne, member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, in conversation with the author.
[559] Brown, R. E, Critical Meaning, pp. 24-34.
[560] Brown, R. E., *Sensus Plenior*, pp. 2 – 9.

be that favoured by Aquinas, whereas a view current around the middle of the 20th Century tended to define the literal sense as that intended by both the divine and the human author.[561] It is this latter which is implied in *Divino Afflante Spiritu* of 1943: "Wherefore the exegete…must search out and expound the literal meaning of the words intended and expressed by the sacred writer…"[562] There could be no question in Catholic understanding of Inspiration that the literal meaning would concern only the intention of the human author; from 2 Timothy 3:16, the position has always been held that every word of Scripture is inspired.

Brown noted some twenty-five years later that: "the equation of the literal sense with what the (final) human author intended is too narrow".[563] His point is that trying to identify the intention of the author will of necessity involve the quest for the input of the many people apart from the author who had a part in producing the Biblical text that we now possess. This makes the quest for the original author's intention quite futile; the production of the Canonical text might well have 'undone' the author's intent.

Hence the subtle way in which the PBC Document (1993) re-casts the concept of literal sense. In stating that the literal sense is: "that which has been expressed directly by the human author", the focus is removed form the intention of any particular author, or person involved in the production of the text, since these individual intentions may never be identified, and instead, the emphasis is now laid on the final text, and it is form this text that we can locate *that which has been expressed*, rather than that which was originally intended. And what has been expressed in the writing of a text takes us neatly back to Ricoeur and the need to

[561] Ibid, pp. 3 – 4.
[562] *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, article 26. *E.B. 552* c.f. appendix quotations **|c|** and **|d|**, pp. 276f.
[563] Brown, R. E, Critical Meaning, p. 30.

apprehend the literal meaning of metaphor before we can understand the metaphorical meaning.

Of course, this is a clear example of what Brown identifies as the way in which Vatican documents are phrased:

> Essential to a critical interpretation of church documents is the realisation that the Roman Catholic Church does not change her official stance in a blunt way. Past statements are not rejected but are requited with praise and then reinterpreted at the same time. It is falsely claimed that there has been no change towards the Bible in Catholic Church thought because Pius XII and Vatican II paid homage to documents issued by Leo XIII, Pius X, and Benedict XV and therefore clearly meant to reinforce the teaching of their predecessors. What was really going on was an attempt gracefully to retain what was salvageable from the past and to move in a new direction with as little friction as possible.[564]

One suspects that the subtlety of the change of emphasis where the literal sense is concerned has escaped the attentions of Ayres and Fowl. Far from being idiosyncratic and confused, the PBC Document (1993) has taken an important step forward in presenting a more coherent understanding what the literal sense of Scripture might be, and hence has raised its profile once more. When the literal sense is presented in this way, its quest once more become credible – it is in the identification of the literal sense of a passage that the multiplicity of meanings can become more apparent.

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[564] Ibid, p. 18, footnote 41.

Ayres and Fowl are not arguing primarily with the definition of the literal sense as the PBC Document (1993) presents it. Their argument is with the document's championing of the historical-critical method as pre-eminent among methods of interpretation:

> In general, it is fair to say that *Interpretation* as a whole represents the most developed and prominent apology for the *necessary* priority of historical-critical exegetical methods yet offered by Roman Catholic scholars.[565]

Ayers and Fowl see the prominence given to the quest for the literal sense simply as a vehicle to defend the historical-critical method that is clearly far from their favourite. Williamson gives a different slant on this altogether, consequent upon his consultation with various members of the Pontifical Biblical Commission itself. If Williamson is correct, then what the authors of the document *expressed* is substantially different from what Ayres and Fowl think they *intended*! Citing PBC members Brendan Byrne, Albert Vanhoye, and Joseph Fitzmyer, Williamson writes:

> Many readers interpreted (the PBC 1993 document) as an unqualified endorsement of the historical-critical method. However, my research shows that (it) recognises valid criticisms and, in some ways, redefines and 're-dimensions' the historical critical method that it endorses. Commission members Albert Vanhoye and Brendan Byrne confirmed that this was intentional.[566]

Williamson elaborates:

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[565] Ayres, L. and Fowl, S. E. '(Mis)reading the Face of God', p. 515. These authors refer to the document by the abbreviated title *Interpretation*, as in the passage cited above.
[566] Williamson, P. S., 'Catholic Principles', pp. 343-344.

> Commission members Brendan Byrne...considers 'one of the most significant features of the document' to be 'its relativization of the historical-critical method, while insisting on its necessity and...according it a place of privilege.' Vanhoye...acknowledges that the document intends to defend the historical-critical method from those who would reject it, but also...to defend the method against its own temptations, namely, historicism and getting lost 'in the sands of hypercritical analysis.'...In an interview, Vanhoye comments, 'The document as a whole "redimensions" the position and function of the historical-critical method, affirming its value, but denying its sufficiency'...Joseph Fitzmyer...confirms the accuracy of the...presentation of the commission's position...[567]

The first part of this Chapter has been concerned with demonstrating that the model for Biblical Inspiration being put forward is one which is in harmony with those aspects of the doctrine of Inspiration which is defined in the Church's Magisterium. The remainder of this study will be concerned with the model's practical applications and relevance to the lives of today's readers of the Bible in various contexts.

§ 5.2 DRAWING CONCLUSIONS, AND SUGGESTING PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

A debate considering questions about the correct definition of the literal sense of Scripture, or the correct role of the historical-critical method, has to be more than theoretical: the clarification of these issues is urgently requested by Carlos Mesters, for the communities in Brazil. Mesters describes in detail how the poor in these

[567] Ibid, p. 344, footnote 23.

communities read (or have read to them) the Bible, using what he calls 'popular exegesis.'[568]

Firstly, the people treat the Biblical text with a certain amount of freedom, which comes from 'the almost natural fruit of communal, lived experience'.[569] These are people who experience who value the symbolic in their lives and its events; unlike those in the West, they did not need to rediscover the value of symbolism, because they had never lost it: they do not need Ricoeur's second naïveté in order to encounter symbol. However, their apprehension of symbol is not always from a naïve, pre-scientific, or uncritical understanding; the people in these communities are already beginning to understand that not everything can be understood symbolically. Secondly, the people display a familiarity with the texts they use – not a familiarity of someone who can recite the Bible from end to end, but the familiarity of those who feel at home with the Bible text: "Gradually, the Bible is ceasing to be for them a strange book which belongs to 'others'...it is *their* book..."[570] This freedom creates a space in which the Spirit can act; Mesters reminds us that this is what Vatican II sought: "holy Scripture must be read and interpreted in the same Spirit in which it was written. (*Dei Verbum* article 12)".[571] The third feature is fidelity. The people are not really interested in trying to interpret the Bible; rather, they are dedicated to interpreting life in a way that shows fidelity to Biblical injunctions:

> The people...try to be faithful, not primarily to the meaning the text has in itself (the historical literal meaning), but to the meaning they discover in the text for their own lives. *The growing interest (they reveal) in the*

[568] Mesters, C., trans. McDonagh, F., Defenseless Flower. A New Reading of the Bible, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1989.
[569] Ibid, p. 5.
[570] Ibid, p. 7 My italics.
[571] Ibid, p. 8.

> *literal meaning grows out of the concern to reinforce or criticise the meaning they have discovered in the bible for their lives and struggles.*[572]

Mesters observes that the people in these communities have a growing desire to learn the historical details of the ordinary people in Biblical times, of the conditions of the people that Jesus spoke to, the class divisions prevalent at the time, etc. They don't much want to know about the problems the professional exegetes think are important. Mesters challenges the professional exegetes to provide scientific knowledge that will help the people to grapple with the problems they encounter in their own lives as they read their Bible, because he recognises the danger that distortion can arise if popular exegesis lacks proper roots, because:

> ...(f)or too long exegetes have tried to shape and alter the people's vision of the Bible, rather than using that vision as a starting point. When exegetes...have managed to throw the people's vision of the Bible out of focus, darkness has fallen upon the living word of the biblical text.[573]

Mesters believes that for a proper and authentic use of the Bible in the communities, three forces have to work simultaneously. He names these in different ways; sometimes as people, exegesis, church, but more frequently as pre-text, text, and context. Perhaps the first triad of terms makes it easier to see what he means by the second. The first force, people, arises from the problems that confront people who come to read the Bible. In the communities that Mesters works with, these problems are poverty and oppression, issues of land, justice. The next force, exegesis, is concerned with how the exegetes have presented the meaning of the Bible, and the

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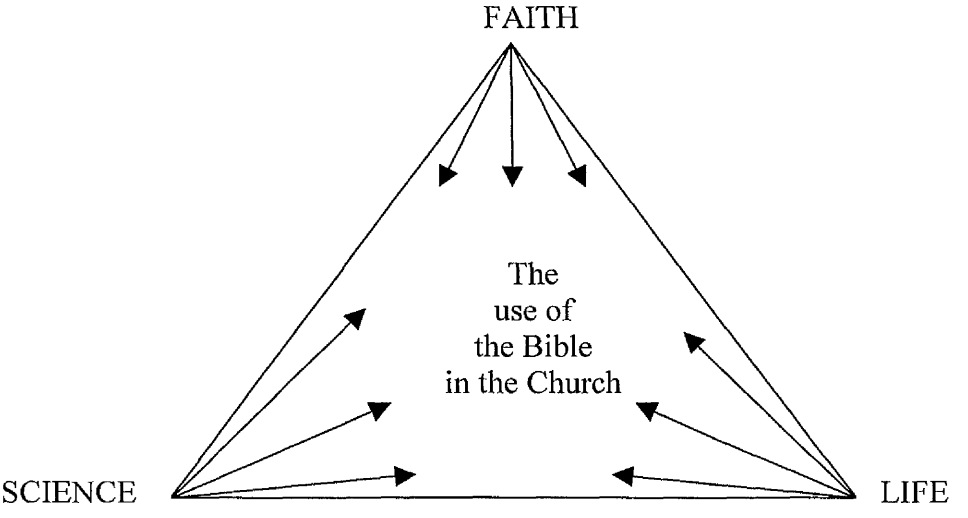
[572] Ibid, p. 9 My italics.
[573] Ibid, p. 11.

third is the Church as it is experienced by those who read the Bible. A third triad, corresponding to the other two, is life, science, and faith. These three forces exist in tension, each attempting to pull away from the other, like forces arranged in a triangle:



When one of these forces becomes over dominant, the balance is lost, and the reading of the Bible is incomplete. When exegesis provides knowledge which, instead of bringing the liberation of the gospel to the poor, adds to their oppression by making them more aware of what they do not know, the Bible becomes yet another tool for oppression. Mesters thinks that this happened as a result of the European education many of Brazil's exegetes have had, including those who began the Biblical movement there:

> They brought here the new wind which was blowing over there...The great majority of the work published in Brazil were translations of European authors or inspired by them...(But) these days a certain weariness can be felt in European exegesis. The resources of the method adopted have been exhausted. There has been a constantly increasing specialisation, which,

> however, does not see to meet the demands of people living out their faith in the crises of a changing society.[574]

The problem can arise in a too complex application of historical-critical methodology that only creates distance between the people and the method; the people then do not analyse the historical situation in which Jesus lived, and as a result they can end up drawing conclusions with no objective basis:

> (they) jump without any difficulty from the first century to the twentieth, as though the incident (they are reading about) had occurred yesterday or the characters in the biblical story lived in the next block.[575]

Mesters admits that he challenges exegetes without really offering suggestions on how they might achieve what he seeks: a scientific study that means something to the people. But it seems to me that, at least in part, the answer might lie in what might seem to those in Brazil the most unlikely source – the PBC Document (1993)! The possible answer comes in two parts, I believe.

The first part is in the re-definition of the literal sense. If this is no longer defined as being about the author's intention, but rather is about what the author has actually *expressed* in the Canonical text, then the problem becomes less one of historical investigation into the exact circumstances of the text's origin and production -- which will probably never be uppermost in the interest of the 'ordinary reader of the Bible', wherever such a reader may be found.

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[574] Ibid, p. 159.
[575] Ibid, p. 88.

The second part is in the 'relativisation' of the historical-critical method that the document advocates, and its insistence that, despite its importance, this is but one of many methodologies to be employed in interpreting the Bible.

This seems to be happening already. Commentators in Latin America with a background in Liberation Theology, as well as a number of Feminist writers, have found Narrative Criticism helpful.[576] In these cases, the narrative may be examined in the light of the plot, the characters, the settings, and the rhetoric.[577] For example Elizabeth Struthers Malbon considers the gospel of Mark's story of the poor widow putting money into the Treasury (Mark 12:41-44), from the context of the narrative.[578] Malbon notes that although many readings of this passage have been given, most of them set the context just before and just after the passage; she, however, suggests that there are at least six different narrative contexts that are relevant to this passage.[579]

The context of the Biblical narrative is also important for the hermeneutic theory of Clodovis Boff, who has developed his theory of the Correspondence of Relationships. It is too easy, says Boff, to construct a simple relationship between, for example, the situation in Jesus' time, and the situation in Latin America today: he calls this simple equation the Correspondence of Terms, and he depicts this mathematically thus:

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[576] This methodology is at least implicit in Mesters' writing; it is the methodology used by Myers, Belo, C. Boff; among feminist writers, J. Dewey, and E. Struthers Malbon. See the following notes for examples.

[577] C.f. Malbon, E. S., In the Company of Jesus. Characters in Mark's Gospel, Westminster John Knox Press, Kentucky, 2000, pp. 9 – 21 for an analysis of a structuralist view of narrative.

[578] Malbon, E. S., 'The Poor Widow in Mark and Her Poor Rich Readers' in Levine, A-J. with Blickenstaff, M. (eds), A Feminist Companion to Mark, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, 2001, pp. 111 – 127.

[579] This particular verse will be important when we look at the readings it has received at the hands of Joanne Dewey and Fernando Belo below.

$$\frac{\text{Jesus}}{\text{His Political Context}} = \frac{\text{Christian Community}}{\text{Its Political context}}$$

Boff's preferred representation acknowledges that we only gain access to Jesus through the Scriptures, because much what we know of Jesus' political and social situation is given to us through the gospels. Therefore, it is the task of exegesis to assist our attempts to replicate, at least analogously, the situation of the early church, to interpret Jesus' words and actions.[580] Hence, the equation is re-written:

$$\frac{\text{Scripture}}{\text{its context}} = \frac{\text{ourselves (a theology of the political)}}{\text{our context}}$$

It is interesting to note, in this context, that Ernesto Cardenal,[581] who compiled the series of interpretations emanating from community reading of the gospel in Nicaragua, would often provide some historical-critical input to the discussion when he thought it was required to bring the discussion of a passage back into focus.

I have cited these examples as illustrations that, in different ways, offer support for Ricoeur's insistence that the revelatory nature of a text must be found *in the text itself.* BUT if this force is either over- or under-developed, the balance of the three forces of Mester's triangle depicting the use of the Bible in the Church is lost. In the remaining triad of terms coined by Mesters, he refers to this simply as TEXT.

But the other forces in operation must be taken seriously as well. The situation of the life of the readers is equally important. This is the PRE-TEXT. When this is missing,

[580] Boff, C., trans. Barr, R. R., Theology and Praxis. Epistemological Foundations, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1978, pp. 132 – 153. C.f. also, Rowland, C., and Corner, M, Liberating Exegesis. The Challenge of Liberation Theology to Biblical Studies, SPCK, London, 1990, pp. 52 – 65.

[581] Cardenal, E., trans. Walsh, D. D., The Gospel in Solentiname, Vols 1 – 4, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1977 – 84.

the people can no longer read the Bible to interpret life, or the situation in which they find themselves. To illustrate the role of pre-text, Mesters takes us to the early Church, trying to live faith in the resurrection of Jesus. Their pre-text was the world of 1st Century Palestinian Judaism, which they had to confront, and eventually from which they had to separate. But for the growth of the early church, the pre-text had to be confronted. When the pre-text is ignored, the balance of the three forces at work in the use of the Bible in the Church are again thrown out of balance.

The pre-text has been, and continues to be ignored, and there are several reasons why this should happen. One reason is fear, from concerns of what might happen when the pre-text is taken into account – in the early church, to confront their Judaism pre-text was to run the risk of persecution, a risk that became a reality. In Brazil, to admit the pre-text of the oppressed poor is to run the risk of unleashing political activity that the authorities do not want. A second reason is the inward-looking, enclosed attitude found in those who do not want to confront their pre-text: this finds expression in the view that everything 'on the outside' is evil; therefore, it must be ignored or avoided.[582]

The recognition of the reality of pre-text seems to make connections for us with the situation in which the writers of Scripture responded to their situation – in response to the symbols of revelation that were apparent to them in their own real situations (Exodus, Exile, Resurrection etc.). Is Mester's pre-text the place in which, in the framework of this investigation, we locate Inspiration as the Spirit-prompted response to models of Revelation? I believe so. The writer who records the Exodus, or the Exile, the early Christian who lives a post-resurrection existence in the faith

[582] Mesters, C., Defenseless Flower, p. 115.

community of the early Church, the person who today reads Scripture from a very specific pre-text (and not necessarily that of the developing world) are all responding in a Spirit-led way to that divine self-disclosure, symbolically mediated, which we call Revelation.

It now looks as though we are finding in Mester's triangle another expression of those concepts that are crucial to this study – Revelation and Inspiration. In the TEXT, we concern ourselves with the Word of God consigned to writing; in the PRE-TEXT, I suggest we are looking, if not at the phenomenon of Inspiration itself, at least the locus in which Inspiration might be located. Can we call the PRE-TEXT the 'source' of Inspiration, in the sense that it is somehow the provider of the background which enabled the author/early Christian, contemporary Christian to be open to the revelatory divine self-disclosure? Source is not a good word; impetus might be better. The PRE-TEXT is the stimulus for an inspired response to symbols of revelation, particularly in the use of the Bible. This can be demonstrated further by a consideration of *what* made the Biblical authors respond to symbolic Revelation in writing, by taking a few well-known examples. The book of Exodus tells how, from the burning bush, Moses was told by Yahweh that He had heard the cry of his people in their distress. The PRE-TEXT here is the distress of Israel at the hands of their Egyptian captors. Similarly, the PRE-TEXT of Ezekiel's vision of the New Temple is the destruction of the old one; Isaiah's vision of a great banquet which the Lord of hosts will give on his holy mountain, at which he will destroy death forever is the misery of a people faced with the 'death' of exile. And so on. The pre-text of the psalms of supplication and lament are the cause of suffering of the individual, or of the nation. The pre-text is what makes it possible for the Spirit-led person to write

Scriptures (when the inspiration was to write Scripture), or to respond in action as a result of reading, also Spirit-led.

But Mesters also alerts us to the danger of what happens when too much prominence is given to the PRE-TEXT, and the balance is once again lost. When this happens, there is the danger that the text is hi-jacked in the service of an idealogy. When this happens, not enough scope is allowed to the TEXT, and its proper exegesis, or the CONTEXT, which is the community of faith in which the Bible is read, and used in liturgy, catechesis, pastoral activity etc. It should come as no surprise in this to find that the third force affecting the reading of the Bible in the Church, the CONTEXT, seems to correspond to the role that Catholic theology assigns to Tradition, as the way in which the Word of God is passed on in unwritten traditions. It is clearly within the life of the Church, the worship of the community of faith, the practical living out of the gospel, that the Word of God is passed on, that Revelation is mediated in any given age. This seems very close to the living Tradition that de Lubac insisted was intended by Vatican II. In the context of the community, the Bible is read in the same Spirit in which it was written.[583] Of course, the debate will then turn to what is the correct expression of the Church – a debate which we cannot dwell on here, except to say with Mesters that when the equilibrium between the three forces is lost, due to an imbalance in one or other of those forces, the community itself, and not just the community as CONTEXT for reading the Bible will suffer. Mesters notes that the community must be strengthened, if the CONTEXT is to be allowed to function. He notes that frequently the criticism is levelled that efforts to strengthen the community in the face of the pre-text from which it emerges is tantamount to manipulating the Bible to serve an idealogical

[583] *Dei Verbum* §12, see appendix, quotation [j], p. 279.

system which wants to overthrow the political order responsible for the repression of the poor; that liberation theologians are guilty of reducing the text to the scale of their own social action programmes.[584] Mester's response to this is that the CONTEXT, the life of the community, cannot be reduced to a mere instrument, a means to another end.

Perhaps the CONTEXT suffers most when it is deprived of its proper role because undue prominence is given elsewhere, or when distortion is introduced into the operation of the other forces.

This is all too evident in the following examples. In each of these, I detect a distortion of the PRE-TEXT, and a distortion of the TEXT as a result. Both examples come from different perspectives; one from a Marxist Materialist reading of the Gospel of Mark, the other from a Feminist reading of the same Gospel. Before entering into a brief discussion of these readings, I want to acknowledge the many insights that both writers have brought to the study of the gospel of Mark – a cursory examination of what I think are flaws in the arguments of the authors should not detract from the contribution they have both made to the study of the New Testament. For example, despite being a very difficult read for anyone not familiar with the structuralist approach of Roland Barthès, Belo's commentary has become more widely included in the bibliographies of recent studies in Mark's gospel.[585]

Belo is one of those commentators who recognise that the gospels are products of social conditions. He feels that it is possible to lay bare some of the details of the writers' world through an opening up of the 'material of the text' – hence his

[584] Mesters, C., Defenseless Flower, p. 118.
[585] C.f., for example, Rowland and Corner, Liberating Exegesis, p. 53.

materialist reading of the gospel of Mark.[586] Belo refuses to follow conventional exegetical practice, which he feels uncovers more about the social conditions of the early Christian community than it does about the social conditions that Jesus encountered. To reveal these, Belo employs an elaborate set of codes relating to characters (adversaries, disciples, Jesus, actants, zealots), plots, strategies, topography, symbolism, mythology, texts, chronology, as well as social and strategic codes.[587]

Belo sees the class division of Judaism, based, he maintains on the Levitical and the Deuteronomic codes, as the platform on which the gospel of Mark is acted out. These represent two distinct legal systems to be found in the Torah. He labels the Levitical strand the 'pollution system'; it has to do with ritual purity, and pollution of the non-pure. The other system is the Deuteronomic, which he labels the 'debt system'; this was to do with social equality and justice, rather than division based on caste distinctions. The Canon of the old Testament testifies to the prominence of the Levitical system – the privileged classes of the Levitical priesthood became the socially dominant class, and their power was given a string basis is the biblical narratives and laws. Belo presents Mark 8:31 – 9:1 as the basis for a confrontation between Jesus' adversaries from the levitical system, the scribes, the elders, the chief priests; these will intervene in the narrative only in Jerusalem:

> The major sequence that begins here will in fact be about the ascent of Jesus and the Disciples to Jerusalem…The 'being rejected' enables us to

[586] Rowland and Corner, Liberating Exegesis, pp. 94 – 101.
[587] Belo, F., Translated by O'Connell, M. J., A Materialist Reading of the Gospel of Mark, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1981. At the very beginning of the book, Belo gives a list of abbreviations for each of the codes he refers to in the text.

read the ascent to Jerusalem as a *confrontation* between Jesus and the Adversaries.[588]

What strikes most readers of Belo's commentary is the strange way in which he dismisses the cross as having been given a post-paschal significance by the gospel writer. The cross, writes Belo, was the Roman instrument of punishment for Zealots.[589] Therefore the confrontation that will take place in Jerusalem carries with it the danger of the cross. But that was not the reason why Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Rowland and Corner stress that Belo argues Jesus did not go up to Jerusalem to die, he went up to restore the economic system to its original state.[590] Jesus' execution, according to Belo, initially lacked theological content, but the narrator changed this, giving us a text that is charged with theological significance.

Somehow, this just does not seem right. If Rowland and Corner read Belo correctly, he suggests that Jesus' act of going to Jerusalem shows the priority of liberating praxis over theological reflection; it is only in a later, post-paschal phase from which the written gospel has emerged, that the priority has been reversed. And theology takes precedence over praxis. Surely this is where we need the CONTEXT of the present day community, the Tradition of Christian belief, for which the taking up of the cross is essential to the Messianic role of Jesus. Belo appears to have begun from the PRE-TEXT, demanding a political praxis, on which he seems to project back an exegesis of Mark's text. No matter how valid is his identification of the background for Jesus' action – and this is surely questionable in itself – the fact is that the Canonical text, the one that transmits to every generation a revelatory content, speaks to us of the *necessity* of taking up the cross. An over-statement of PRE-TEXT,

[588] Belo, F. Materialist Reading, p.157.
[589] Ibid, pp. 158 – 159.
[590] Rowland and Corner, Liberating Exegesis, p. 98.

coupled with a questionable reading of the TEXT have tended to ignore the role of the CONTEXT whereby the Canonical status of texts was established, and in which in continuation of the same tradition, the Canonical texts are read as revelatory.

Let's now look at a more conventional exegesis of the same passage. Ernest Best[591] has provided an analysis of the nature of discipleship as given in Mark's gospel. Best remarks that it is generally accepted today that the section of Mark's gospel from 8:27 – 10:45 constitutes the centre of Jesus' instruction on discipleship. The section is preceded, and followed, with Jesus miraculously restoring sight to blind people – between these episodes of sight-giving, the lack of insight of the disciples is thrown into relief. The whole section is presented in the context of Jesus' journey form Caesarea Philippi to Jerusalem. Further, Best agrees with the general consensus that Mark 8:27 – 9:1, for which we saw Belo's reading above, is divided into three units: 8:27-30; 8:31-33; 8:34 – 9:1. There is a progression of ideas from unit to unit. In the first, Peter appears to confess Jesus' Messiahship; in the second, the inadequacy of his statement 'you are the Christ' is shown in his refusal to accept that the Son of Man *must* suffer, die, and rise again.[592] As we saw, Belo insists that Jesus' journey to Jerusalem was to confront perpetrators of the economic and social system that he wanted to challenge; the cross was his fate in falling foul of the authorities – not a necessary part of Messiahship. For Belo, such an interpretation of the death of Jesus on the cross came with a post-resurrection community. Using structuralist tools, he tries to go below the surface of the text to identify what happened in the life of the historical Jesus. Best tries to get beneath the surface of the text as well, with an analysis of the use of language in the gospel, and with appropriate historical

[591] Best, E., Following Jesus. Discipleship in the Gospel of Mark, Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Sheffield, 1981.
[592] Ibid, pp. 15 – 28.

methods; he asks which of the versions of the Caesarea episode in the three synoptic gospels is the oldest, but he comes to very different conclusions from Belo. As to which is correct, we might reserve judgement until yet another reading of the section is introduced – Joanne Dewey.[593] For the present, we return to Best's analysis, moving on to the third unit, 8:34 – 9:1.

Verse 34 importantly introduces the cross of Jesus, but also importantly, introduces the conditions of discipleship –a) call to discipleship b) denial of self, c) taking up of the cross, and d) following him. Statements a) and d) are equivalents.[594] b) and c) require some further investigation. What does denial of self mean? Best notes that it should not be understood in the sense of self-denial that is so often associated with asceticism:

> it is not the denial of something to the self, but denial of the self itself. It is the opposite of self-affirmation, of putting value on one's being, one's life, one's position before man or God, of claiming rights and privileges peculiar to one's special position in life or even of those normally believed to belong to the human being as such (e.g. justice, freedom). Self denial thus involves the willingness not to affirm any right to life when faced by the persecutor, though it cannot be confined to this since by itself it does not contain any idea of literal death.[595]

Dewey attaches a very different significance to denial of self, as we will see shortly. But first, there remains the question of what can taking up the cross mean? Like

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[593] Dewey, J., '"Let them renounce themselves and take up the cross" A Feminist Reading of Mark 8:34 in Mark's Social and Narrative World', in Levine, A-J, and Blickenstaff, M., (editors) A Feminist Companion to Mark, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, 2001, pp. 23 – 36.
[594] Ibid, p. 34.
[595] Best. E., Following Jesus, p. 37.

Belo, and Dewey, Best recognises in the cross the very specific means of execution employed the Romans. As such, its reference would be well understood in 1st Century Palestine:

> Since the condemned criminal was expected to carry the crossbar for his cross to the place of execution, and since crucifixion was then so common a punishment, the vividness of the imagery would be directly appreciated by Mark's readers.[596]

But taking up the cross surely is not meant to be taken literally. Too many disciples, including John the Baptists, the one who prepared the way for Jesus, failed to die by the cross. Add the apostle Paul, and presumably the vast majority of the crowd who are linked with the disciples for this gospel episode, and the implication is that the meaning must be metaphorical. Here, we have an example of Ricoeur's insistence of how the literal sense of a metaphor must be understood before its metaphorical meaning can be apprehended. Metaphorically, taking up the cross must involve death, but not necessarily literal crucifixion. Best notes that the Lukan version of the pericope adds that the cross must be taken up 'each day' – an impossibility, if taken literally.

And this takes us back to the denial of self. However more fully can one deny self than to the extent of dying voluntarily? And this does not detract from the force of Jesus' words, even though he literally took up the cross, and most disciples do not:

[596] Ibid, p. 38.

> That the disciple's cross-bearing need not be literal as Jesus' was does not affect this since Jesus' cross-bearing is symbolic of all his loving activity.[597]

Best clearly understands the cross of Jesus to be the essential aspect of his messianic role. The gospel of Mark, and especially this section, portrays the disciples in the failure to take up the cross. Within this section, we see the failure of the community of disciples to appreciate this in the way they are jockeying for positions of power within the kingdom (9:33 – 37; 10:35 – 45), the rich man is told to sell his possessions and give the money to the poor (10:17 - 22), Peter remonstrates with Jesus for even mentioning the cross, and is vehemently rebuked for his pains (8:32b – 33).[598]

Best, like Belo, wants to understand the structure of the narrative, because he is convinced that Mark must have arranged his material according to some organisational principle. But there is a major difference in the two approaches of these writers. The difference may be seen in the light of Mesters' triangle of forces at work in the reading of the Bible in the Church. Both Belo and Best carry out an exegesis of the gospel, so both are giving the TEXT is proper place (although it should be noted that, even among those who laud his efforts, there is a recognition that Belo's exegesis is often faulty, however[599]). But is there not a sense in which Belo grossly over-states what he understands to be the PRE-TEXT? In order to accommodate the pre-text that he thinks he has identified, Belo seems to have lost sight to some extent of the CONTEXT – this time the context in which the gospel

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[597] Ibid, p. 39.
[598] Ibid, p. 9.
[599] c.f. Rowland and Corner, Liberating Exegesis, pp. 101 – 102; Myers, C. Binding the Strong Man. Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1990, pp. 13 – 14.

was written, and which has produced for us the Canonical gospel, which has been, and is, read and interpreted in the Tradition of the Christian community. One must ask, in what way does Belo's reading of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem as NOT being to suffer, die and rise again, help us to appreciate the revelatory nature of the gospel text? It seems that, of the two, it is Best who respects more fully the CONTEXT of writing and reading of the gospel text, as transmitting the divine self-disclosure that the Son of Man *must* suffer, die, and on the third day rise again, and that if anyone would answer his call to discipleship, the denial of self and the taking up of the cross – albeit metaphorically – are inescapable. To avoid these, to insist on Jesus' political journey, is to distort the PRE-TEXT; it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the reading is shaped to fit the ideology that it is being required to support.

There is no doubt that Belo and other writers promote – or provoke – more searching questions for exegetes to ask of the text. This is of immense value to interpreters. But if the text is to be read in the community of faith, the text as we have it must be read to discover its Revelatory content. Ricoeur, we noted earlier, has an abhorrence of any external influence being brought to bear on the interpretation of a text: it is the text itself that must yield to Revelatory mediation. If this is true of dogmatic statements of literal interpretation from ecclesiastical authority, it must also be true of ideological insertion of meaning into the text.

Joanne Dewey also challenges conventional readings of Mark. In particular, she takes to task the conventional understanding of the challenge of Jesus to deny self, a reading that she thinks is fundamentally a misreading.[600] She notes that the in-breaking of the kingdom of God by Jesus proclaims the victory over suffering – he

[600] Dewey, J., '"Let them renounce" p. 23.

cures the sick, the lamb, give sight to he blind etc. Further, it is necessary, she maintains, to understand the 1st Century view of suffering, if the command of Jesus is to be understood. Suffering, she maintains, was a normal, if unpleasant fact of life. People had no control over suffering, and they did not expect it to go away; therefore, it had no good or redemptive function in their lives.[601] Mark uses the words 'to suffer', 'suffering' three times in his gospel (Mark 5:26; 8:31; 9:12); in each case, the construction means 'to endure many things'. The first refers to the woman with the haemorrhage, and the other two are about Jesus' approaching passion. In the first case, Jesus alleviates the suffering of the woman; in the other two, Jesus has to endure much at the hands of the powers that be. She notes:

> the narrative sharply distinguishes between general human suffering, which is to be cured or alleviated with Jesus' inauguration of God's rule, and persecution, which is the lot of those who persevere in following the way of God as long as this age lasts.[602]

Dewey then argues that in chapters 1 – 8 of Marks gospel, Jesus alleviates the sufferings of people – casting out demons, feeding hungry crowds in the desert, stilling storms at sea. Furthermore, those who are part of God's realm do likewise. According to Dewey, it is only after God's rule is clearly established in the destruction of the power of suffering that Jesus throws down the challenge of discipleship, and reveals the cost of following him.[603] To follow Jesus will be dangerous – the threat of the cross begins to loom over would-be disciples. Like Best, Dewey acknowledges the powerful image of this brutal form of execution, and the effect its mention must have had on would-be disciples. To take up the cross is

[601] Ibid, p. 30.
[602] Ibid, p. 31.
[603] Ibid, p. 34.

literally to carry the cross-beam. No ancient audience could miss the significance of taking up the cross, and no ancient listener would see the cross as a reference to all human suffering. But the cross is avoidable:

> unlike human suffering in general (the cross) is easily avoidable. All one has to do is renounce Jesus – renounce the new age. It is only because one persists in following Jesus…that one is persecuted. In Mark 8:34 and following, the narrative attempts to prepare the disciples – and the gospel's audiences – for this persecution and to encourage faithfulness in face of it.[604]

So, we might react with a 'yes, but…' The 'but' arises from a sense that Dewey, like Belo, has departed from the Christian Tradition that the Son of Man suffered and died, not just because he was persecuted, but because it was his destiny as Messiah to do so. Dewey does highlight quite a range on interesting new angles form which to examine this narrative, but once again, it begins to look as if the text is being read from the PRE-TEXT of a situation of power over the underdog. This time, the issue is a liberation perspective in the shape of feminism. For me, the confirmation of a distorted PRE-TEXT comes in what follows, and that is to do with Dewey's proposed misreading of the whole concept of denial of self. Like Best, she opposes any sense of self-denial as conventionally practised. So far, so good; but her next step seems to be quite a leap. Dewey notes (presumably perfectly accurately) that the only context a person could safely identify with in Biblical times was the context of relationships within the kinship unit. To step outside of this was effectively, she claims, to renounce self:

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[604] Ibid, pp. 32-33.

> to step outside of one's kinship unit...was not only a rejecting of one's means of earning a living. It also put one outside of the accepted social political order...[605]

Dewey maintains that this claim can be backed up in two ways. The first is an appeal to the Gospel of Thomas and 'similar sayings in Q'.[606] The second is in Jesus; insisting on the rejection of kin as a condition of following him (Mark 10:29-30).[607] However, if Dewey had troubled to take the rest of this saying into consideration, houses and fields are also mentioned in these verses, and that the whole conversation stems from the need to renounce *riches*, it would be clear the renunciation of family ties is but part of the greater renunciation of all possessions; otherwise, it is easier for the proverbial camel to go through the eye of a needle!

Renunciation of kin may well be part of the total renunciation required of a disciple, but in itself, surely it does not amount sufficiently to taking up the cross – an association with Jesus himself at the level at which he met his fate as the Messiah. Dewey's aim is to read the text as an attack on the patriarchal structure found in every aspect of ancient society – even in ties of kinship. To renounce kinship would appear to provide a very appealing way for a woman disciple to break free of the strictures imposed by her male dominated society. There is surely much merit in the argument that the Good News of the kingdom extends to those oppressed by any means – patriarchy, political tyranny, hypocritical practice of religion. But Mark 8:34 is about the call to discipleship. It requires that one renounce self, and take up the cross. No matter how many verses Dewey cites to support her argument, there are still more to support the need for self-renunciation: in the section on discipleship we

[605] Ibid, p. 35.
[606] Since the Q hypothesis is just that, no Q sayings can surely be identified with certainty!
[607] Dewey, J., '"Let them Renounce", p. 35.

have been considering, there are three clear cases; Mark 8:34; 9:35 ff; 10:40 – 45. To be a disciple means to renounce self, to be like a child (who could not survive outside the kinship structure), to be like one who is servant of all.

I have used these readings as practical illustrations of what I think Mesters means by his triangle of forces in operation when the Bible is read in the Church. If any one of these forces – all of which must work in some kind of tension with each other – is lacking, or if any one of them is too dominant, something is lost in the reading of the Bible.

§ 5.3 AND FINALLY.

Most of what has been written here has been concerned with more or less technical considerations of the reading of the Bible, but Mesters reminds us of a very important point: whatever hermeneutical theory is employed, the Bible must be able to disclose Revelatory content to anyone who is open to such Revelation. Not only is this important to people of today, who may have more familiarity with the Bible than those of the past, thanks to the results of Vatican II's appeal that it be made more available to all; it is also significant if we will recognise, as surely we must, the validity of people's attempts to read the Bible ever since it was written – or at least, since it was adopted as the Canon of Scripture for the Church. Mesters reminds us that those who have no access to academic hermeneutical approaches still require an opening of the text, and understanding of their pre-text, and the context of a believing Church.

I have tried to show in this study that a symbolic model of Revelation, coupled with a Spirit-inspired interpretation and response to symbols of Revelation, provide us with a way of comprehending how the Bible can be read in a way which is analogous

to how it came to be written. A sense of Tradition, and a teaching authority that can discern the validity of a reading in the light of the Tradition that continues to transmit Revelation, help readers to place their interpretation of Revelation in the context of the community of faith in which the Biblical texts came to be composed. Such a model is needed if we are not to be accused of dismissing the reading of the Bible that took place for more than three quarters of Christianity's history, as hopelessly naïve, pre-scientific, or whatever. Whichever model of Revelation/Inspiration we use to support the reading of the Bible, it must be able to recognise the validity in any age of readings that allow what Ricoeur calls the 'naming of God'. If God can legitimately be named in a text, then it has been read under the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, under whose Inspiration it was written.

In short, I have tried to provide a model for Revelation and Inspiration which makes it equally possible and equally valid for everyone and anyone in any age to pick up and read the Bible, being open to respond (inspired) in whatever way prompted by the Holy Spirit, to the Revelatory qualities of that Bible. I suggest that the above investigation, with its exploration of symbols and their multiplicity of meaning, of their ability to disclose something beyond themselves, of their capacity to be interpreted, whether they be in written or non-written form, supports the adoption of a symbolic model of revelation. I have suggested that the recognition of 'The Other' in that Symbolic Revelation, which I would call Inspiration when it results in a prompted response, driven by the Spirit of God, and which Ricoeur calls the Naming of God, is the corresponding movement of Revelation. The academy will address the task of devising the appropriate and most effective methodology for interpreting the symbols, producing a suitable hermeneutic theory, but the reader will always be able to engage with the text, because the meanings of the revelatory text, while not

infinite, are multiple. The reader who reads within the CONTEXT of the Christian community, within the Tradition of that community, taught by the principles of that community's teaching office, or Magisterium, which will worship the God who reveals through the Revelatory Word, which lives its message in community and individual living, will be equally at liberty to read the text with a view to interpreting life (Mesters' PRE-TEXT), no doubt greatly assisted by the insights provided by philosophical hermeneutics and linguistic and other theories, but will not be prevented from engaging with the meanings mediated by the symbols of Revelation through a lack of facility in employing technical methodologies of interpretation. I would go so far as to suggest that the proposed model of symbolic Revelation and Inspired readership is essential, if the Second Vatican Council's desire for Scripture to be made accessible to all is to be realised.

APPENDIX: Selections from Magisterial Documents, 1893 – 1993

i.) Pope Leo XIII *Providentissimus Deus* 1893

[a] …supernatural revelation, according to the belief of the universal Church, is contained both in unwritten Tradition, and in written Books, which are therefore called sacred and Canonical because, 'being written under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, they have God for their author and as such have been delivered to the Church.' (article 1; *EB 81*).

[b] Hence, because the Holy Ghost employed men as His instruments, we cannot therefore say that it was these inspired instruments who, perchance, have fallen into error, and not the primary author. For, by supernatural power, He so moved and impelled them to write-He was so present to them-that the things which He ordered, and those only, they, first, rightly understood, then willed faithfully to write down, and finally expressed in apt words and with infallible truth. (article 20; *EB 125*).

ii) Pope Pius XII, *Divino Afflante Spiritu* 1943

[c] …let the Catholic exegete undertake the task, of all those imposed on him the greatest, that namely of discovering and expounding the genuine meaning of the Sacred Books…let the interpreters bear in mind that their foremost and greatest endeavour should be to discern and define clearly that sense of the biblical words which is called literal. Aided by the context and by comparison with similar passages, let them therefore by means of their knowledge of languages search out with all diligence the literal meaning of the words…so that the mind of the author may be made abundantly clear. (article 23; *EB 550*).

[d] ...Catholic theologians...have examined and explained the nature and effects of biblical inspiration more exactly and more fully than was wont to be done in previous ages. For having begun by expounding minutely the principle that the inspired writer, in composing the sacred book, is the living and reasonable instrument of the Holy Spirit...impelled by the divine motion, he so uses his faculties and powers, that from the book composed by him all may easily infer 'the special character of each one, and...his personal traits.' Let the interpreter, then...endeavour to determine the peculiar character and circumstances of the sacred writer, the age in which he lived, the sources written or oral to which he had recourse and the form of expression he employed. (article 33; EB 556).

iii) Second Vatican Council: Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation; *Dei Verbum*

[e] Therefore, Christ the Lord, in whom the full revelation of the supreme God is brought to completion (c.f. 2 Cor 1:20; 3:16; 4:6), commissioned the apostles to preach to all...that gospel which is the source of all saving truth and moral teaching, and thus to impart to them divine gifts. This gospel had been promised in former times through the prophets, and Christ himself fulfilled it and promulgated it with His own lips. This commission was faithfully fulfilled by the apostles who, by their oral preaching, by example, and by ordinances, handed on what they had received from the lips of Christ, from living with Him, and from what He did, or what they had learned through the prompting of the holy Spirit. The commission was fulfilled, too, by these apostles and apostolic men

who under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit committed the message of salvation to writing. (article 7).

[f] ...there exists a close connection and communication between sacred tradition and sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring...into a unity and tend toward the same end...sacred Scripture is the Word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit. To the successors of the apostles, sacred tradition hands on in its full purity God's word, which was entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. Thus led by the light of the Spirit of truth, these successors can in their preaching preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known...it is not from sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed...sacred tradition and sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of devotion and reverence. (article 9).

[g] Sacred tradition and sacred Scripture form one sacred deposit of the word of God, which is committed to the Church. Article 10

[h] The teaching office is not above the word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on, listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously, and explaining it faithfully by divine commission and with the help of the holy Spirit....therefore...sacred tradition, sacred Scripture, and the teaching authority of the Church, in accord with God's most wise design, are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others, and that all together and each in its own way under the

action of the one Holy Spirit contribute effectively to the salvation of souls. (article 10).

[i] In composing the sacred books, God chose men and while employed by Him they made use of their powers and abilities, so that with Him acting in them and through them, they, as true authors, consigned to writing everything and only those things which He wanted. Therefore, since everything asserted by the inspired authors or sacred writers must be held to be asserted by the Holy Spirit, it follows that the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching firmly, faithfully, and without error that truth which God wanted put into the sacred writings for the sake of our salvation. (article 11).

[j] ...holy Scripture must be read and interpreted according to the same Spirit by whom it was written,...(therefore) the living tradition of the whole Church must be taken into account along with the harmony which exists between elements of the faith....For all of what has been said about the way of interpreting Scripture is subject finally to the judgement of the Church, which carries out the divine commission and ministry of guarding and interpreting the word of God. (article 12).

iv) Pontifical Biblical Commission: *Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* 1993[608]

[k] It is not only legitimate, it is also absolutely necessary to seek to define the precise meaning of texts as produced by their authors that is

[608] Strictly speaking, this is not a magisterial document, being a product of the Pontifical biblical Commission; nevertheless, it has received Papal approval, and is sometimes classed as a quasi-magisterial document.

called the "literal" meaning...the literal sense is not to be confused with the "literalist" sense to which fundamentalists are attached. It is not sufficient to translate a text word for word in order to obtain its literal sense. One must understand the text according to the literary conventions of the time. When a text is metaphorical, its literal sense is not that which flows immediately from a word to word translation...but that which corresponds to the metaphorical use of these terms...When it is a question of a story, the literal sense does not necessarily imply belief that the facts recounted actually took place, for a story need not belong to the genre of history but be instead a work of imaginative fiction. The literal sense of Scripture is that which has been expressed directly by the inspired human authors. Since it is the fruit of inspiration, this sense is also intended by God, as principal author (I.B.C.; II. B. I.).

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