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"THE THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE, CHURCH AND WORLD: A THEOLOGY OF INSPIRATION" – A REVIEW

Article by Ormond Rush in *Colloquium* 45/1 (2013) 3-16

A. Introduction: Some notes on the Author

Ormond Rush is a priest of the Townsville Diocese, Australia. He has a doctorate in theology from the Gregorian University in Rome and a Master of Education from the University of Southern Queensland. After ordination in 1975 he served in parishes in the Townsville Diocese from 1975 to 1987. He taught theology at the former Pius XII Provincial Seminary at Banyo from 1991 to 2000. From 1998 to 2001, he was Dean of the ecumenical consortium and the Brisbane College of Theology and, from 2001 to 2006, President of St Paul's Theological College, Banyo. He was President of the Forum of Australian Catholic Institutes of Theology from 2001 and 2006 and President of the Australian Catholic Theological Association from 2007 to 2010. He currently lectures at St Paul's Theological College and Australian Catholic University, Banyo Campus. He is the author of *The Reception of Doctrine: An Appropriation of Hans Robert Jauss' Reception Aesthetics and Literary Hermeneutics* (Gregorian University Press, 1997), *Still Interpreting Vatican II: Some Hermeneutical Principles* (Paulist Press, 2004), *The Eyes of Faith: The Sense of the Faithful and the Church's Reception of Revelation* (CUA Press, 2009) and *The Vision of Vatican II: Its Fundamental Principles* (Liturgical Press, 2019). This article has the stamp of his theological outlook especially his emphasis on *sensus fidei* and Revelation Reception theology in the light of Vatican II proposals.

B. Summary of the author's thesis and proposal in this article

Beginning from a question raised by John Topel in the 2003 Conference of the Catholic Biblical Association of America, the author of this article raised the question: How does faith play a part in the interpretation of scripture, of doctrine, in the light of contemporary praxis, and in reading the signs of the times in the world of today, in the light of the Gospel? (p. 3).

In attempt to answer this underlying question Ormond Rush explores and focuses on two aspects of the nature of Scripture as an ecclesial text: (1) the three dimensions of human communication that condition the biblical texts as a dynamic medium of divine communication; (2) the divinely inspired nature of the biblical text (p. 4). He aims to propose therefore from this double standpoint a theology of inspiration which coheres with the way contemporary biblical scholars understand the nature of the biblical texts and as well as affirm that this text is a sacred and authoritative text, divinely inspired, the written Word of God.

On the first aspect, *the dimension of human communication*, the author highlights that "Human communication generally has three dimensions: the speaker, the message, the hearer - the author, the text, the reader. Thus, effective interpretation of communication takes places when attention is given to all three. Reiterating the language of the philosopher Paul Ricoeur, each of these three elements will therefore correspond to three worlds: the world behind the text, the world of the text and the world in front of the text.

Rush acknowledges that the rich diversity of contemporary approaches to hermeneutics and methodologies among biblical scholars has been by and large roughly clustered around these three elements and/or three worlds. For instance, there are those approaches which examine the world behind the text in order to understand the author and the authors' world as in the historical-critical, social and cultural-anthropological approaches. There are those that focus on the fixed character of the text, on the linguistic-literary elements and on the dynamism of writing. According to him, for the Bible, this is "the world Scripture imagines." Lastly there are those that bring to the fore the often-forgotten third element, the receiver: the one who takes up the text, from a plurality of possible perspective - culture, economic status, gender, and so on - and engages with text within a particular position in the contemporary world. (pp. 4-5). [1]

In another big bloc, the author focuses on *the divinely inspired nature of the biblical text*. He lists three dimensions of biblical inspiration. However, in keeping with his background as a systematic theologian, he presupposes that the doctrine of biblical inspiration is dependent on the doctrine of the Trinity. He states it in precise terms thus: "In classic trinitarian theology, the mission of the Word and the mission of the Holy Spirit in the economy of salvation are inseparable. The Spirit whom God sends enables reception of the Word whom God sends. Without the enlightenment of the Spirit, the Word cannot be received and understood. So too with the inspired written Word of God; *it can only be both written and interpreted* as God's Word with the gift of the Spirit" (p. 5). [2]

In order to explain Divine Inspiration, the author brings a relationship of correlation and synonym between the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti internum* of John Calvin with the *sensus fidei* and *sensus fidelium*. According to him, "what Calvin names the "interior witness of the Holy Spirit" has strong analogies to what is called in Catholic theology the Spirit's gift of *sensus fidei* on all the baptized and the whole community as a *sensus fidelium*, that is, a sense *of* the faith, or better, a sense *for* the faith: a capacity which accompanies the Spirit's gift of faith and which enables faithful understanding and interpretation of divine revelation" (p. 5). Based on this, a comprehensive theology of inspiration can be outlined which brings to the fore this *inner testimony* or *sensus fidei* as the continuum of the Spirit's activity in all dimensions of Scripture as a dynamic text.

He acknowledges that although, the explanatory model of inspiration that has dominated in the history of the Church has been that of the isolated and directly-inspired individual prophet-like figure, communicating directly God's words, however, critical biblical scholarship over the last few centuries have gradually eroded the dominance of this individual-prophetic model. There has been a significant shift by biblical scholars and theologians to an appreciation of the historically-conditioned nature of the Bible's formation, and so inspiration by the Holy Spirit comes to be attributed, not just to individual human authors, but to the whole social process involved in the

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genesis of the individual biblical writings, as well as the whole process of the formation of the Bible as a canon.

However, apart from general assertions that the Holy Spirit is at work in this whole process or dynamic, and assertions that one's theology of inspiration must cohere with the nature of Scripture as proposed by critical biblical studies, there is still lacking, says the author a coherent theology of the Holy Spirit's inspiration of Scripture that comprehensively covers all aspects of the nature of the Bible as an historical and ecclesial text, and which comprehensively names theologically the specific operation of the Spirit. He criticizes James Sanders for naming just the parameters for such an approach, without offering a detailed theory as to the Spirit's activity. [3]

An adequate theology of inspiration according to the author needs to give attention to three dimensions of the nature of Scripture: (1) the historical process of its production and canonization; (2) its ecclesial function as a fixed authoritative text; (3) its reception in history. Further, such a theology of inspiration needs to account for the Spirit's activity in each of these dimensions. However, while he does not claim to offer such a full systematic theology, he claims to propose a model that names more specifically, in the light of recent biblical studies, the way in which one can comprehensively speak of the inspiration of Scripture.

The author goes ahead to propose three dimensions of biblical inspiration as follows: 1. Inspired Production and Selection 2. Inspired Canonical Texts and 3. Inspired Reception.

1. The dimension of *Inspired Production and Selection* will acknowledge the various approaches that focus on the world behind the text as a process of inspiration. Here the *sensus fidei fidelis* (sense of the faith of each individual baptized believer) in relationship with the *sensus fidei fidelium* (the sense of the faith of the faithful) constitutes the Holy Spirit's inspiration of Scripture because the whole reception-tradition-reception process, from the first encounters with Jesus to the reception of certain works as canonical, is one continual process of ecclesial interpretation and evaluation enabled by the Holy Spirit. He notes that the ecclesial gift of the *sensus fidelium* is the principle of continuity throughout that process. The inspiration of Scripture is, therefore, understood as the Holy Spirit enabling the *sensus fidelium*'s work of reception of the Christ event (p. 7).

2. In the dimension of *Inspired Canonical Texts*, here the author notes that "Inspiration is to be attributed to the canonical texts *qua* texts. They are regarded as authoritative texts, sacred to the wider faith community and revered by them." So, it is not only a question of inspired process but the texts themselves become through that process inspired. And so, the affirmation regarding the inspired nature of the text is a retrospective faith-perception, made in the light of canonical inclusion. The author adds: "The Spirit works through *these* texts in a unique way, once they have been canonized" (p. 8). [4]

Again, he says: "These literary works have been retrospectively recognized, alongside each other, to be inspired senses of the faith, because they have been recognized and approved as faithful witnesses to revelation, as revelatory in the present, as sufficient for the Church's liturgical and catechetical life, and as sufficient for norming moral and doctrinal teaching." The author could be criticized for creating a tension between inspiration and canon which is now better understood as corollaries. Be that as it may, in the end the inspired text is the Word of God – *Palabra de Dios* –

Verbum Dei. And so, the faith-community exclaims: "This is the Word of the Lord!" It is because of this high regard for the texts as inspired that the Bible as a book is sacred to Christians. "The Church has always venerated the divine scriptures as it has venerated the Body of the Lord." Because it is the *written* Word of God, the Bible is the Church's book. [5]

3. The dimension of *Inspired Reception* shows that "the Spirit's inspiration, through the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit, the gift of *sensus fidei*, continues to operate on the level of the Bible's reception. So that as "both a witness to divine revelation and an occasion for divine revelation," the Bible's potential as a revelatory text is realized in its reception (p. 9). Inspired Reception in turn has two dimensions: Spiritual reception and Approbative reception.

(a) *Spiritual reception* is a dimension of the Spirit's inspiring activity in a fundamental sense: the interpretative dynamic at work in the texts production does not cease in its reception. The history of reception of the Bible over two millennia has inspired a rich tapestry of spiritualities, theologies, saints, religious orders, reform movements, works of art, writings, traditions, identities and styles of Christianity. This rich tradition and history show that no one reception exhausts the full meaning of what was originally given and originally received in revelation: the Christ event. This dimension is anchored on *Dei verbum* 12c's emphasis on the need for an ecclesial reading of Scripture: "Sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted in the same Spirit in which it was written." The author believes that one can even talk about an inspired reading of the scriptures (p. 10).

(b) So, what is *approbative reception* and why is it important? While the author spends few paragraphs discussing spiritual reception, he will need more than a page to justify what he calls approbative reception. The following pages from 11 to 16 could be considered as the most tasking of this article. Here, the author attempts to connect Inspiration, Canon and Interpretation using some densely populated theological concepts. First, he wants to build a bridge between Spiritual reception and Approbative reception and from Approbative reception links up the three important auxiliary rules from biblical interpretation according to *Dei Verbum* 12.

So why approbative reception?

According to the author, Biblical scholarship in the last century has increasingly recognized the significance of *perspective* in the understanding, interpretation and application of Scripture. Different horizons of reception enable faith's engagement with the text: economic, political, ecological, cultural, gendered, colonial, ethnic, linguistic. Acknowledging the Enlightenment's "prejudice against prejudice," one comes to realise how context not only shapes but indeed facilitates understanding, because it is the interpretative framework of the familiar that makes possible understanding of the new and unfamiliar. Understanding always takes place from a certain perspective, and it is that viewpoint which conditions and enables understanding (p. 11). However, *contexts* and *perspectives* not only *enable* interpretation, they also *limit* interpretation. Even though each interpretation may well be a legitimate one, such diversity can lead at times to a conflict of interpretations among believers, and even to such an extent that the unity of faith can be threatened. Some readings may go beyond legitimate diversity. So comes the decisive questions: how does the Church distinguish "legitimate" and "illegitimate" interpretations? How are necessary diversity and necessary unity maintained? How can the faith community evaluate

readings which attempt to liberate the text and the contemporary reader from those limitations embedded in its linguistic and cultural worldview? Answers to these questions affirms the necessity of what this author calls approbative reception.

As the name implies "*Approbative*" from the Latin - *approbativus, approbo* - to assert, accept, confirm - will mean sanctioning something officially, giving authorization or approval of something. The author believes that contemporary spiritual receptions, as *sensus fidei*, need to be evaluated against certain criteria. The community must discern which reception is a reception in the Spirit. In his First Letter to the Corinthians, Saint Paul already talked about the need for discerning "spirits" as part of the Church's mission. The author acknowledges that same criteria of approbation played a major role in the canon process in the 4th century Church and that same process will now guide Inspired reception. He says: "Approbation by the wider community is a dynamic from the very earliest stages of the canonization process, when the perspective of individual transmitters is always under the judgement of a communal process of remembering. This dynamic of communal approbation continues to mark all stages of the traditioning process, as the canonical texts themselves enter into a reception-tradition process" (p. 12).

Ormond Rush proposes that ecclesial approbative reception of Scripture, in the same Spirit in which it was written, should proceed by keeping in equilibrium two sets of enquiries: (1) examination of the three dimensions of production, text and reception; (2) application of the three ancillary "rules" for a genuinely ecclesial reception of Scripture. However, they are not to be understood as independence of each other, but it is a dialogue between these together that constitutes the realization of the Spirit's inspiring work of Scripture. Each, in varying ways, constitutes a test of the spirit, and a test of a genuine "spiritual" reception of Scripture. Since the same Spirit is at work in some way in all, each test must be seen in the light of the others.

(1) examination of the three dimensions of production, text and reception:

In this first set of enquiries, the author acknowledges first and foremost, that an "inspired reading" is tested firstly by reconstructing the meaning of a text in the linguistic and cultural world in which the text was written, that is, taking cognizance of the world behind the text. Secondly, approbation of a particular reading will give attention to the set text and all the linguistic elements that constitute its nature as a linguistic/symbolic mediator of meaning, and this is with reference to the world of the text, where linguistic, narrative and rhetorical approaches must aid a full reading of the text by highlighting the dynamism of the written language in order to sieve out the intended meaning of the original authors (p. 13). Thirdly, approbative reception must take stock of the reader's own context because readers bring to the act of reading their own worldview which both *enables* and *impedes* a reading in the Spirit. Thus, when Scripture is read in such a way that it is *not illuminating, nourishing* and indeed *salvific* and *revelatory*, then the inspiring work of the Spirit has not reached its desired end: salvation (p. 13). In summary, through ecclesial approbative reception, the Spirit brings the light of faith to some blind spots. Thus, approbative reception, in giving attention to the Spirit at work in all three "worlds," seeks to discern those readings which are or are not made "in the same Spirit in which Scripture was written" (*Dei Verbum* 12).

(2) *application of the three ancillary "rules" for a genuinely ecclesial reception of Scripture.*

Here, the author resorts fully to *Dei verbum* 12c which speaks of three overlapping faith contexts within which individual passages of Scripture are to be interpreted namely: (1) the context of the whole Bible; (2) the context of the living ecclesial tradition of the Church's reception of Scripture; (3) the context of the whole of Christian doctrinal belief. [6]

In precise terms *Dei Verbum* 12 states:

But since sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted in the same Spirit in which it was written (*sed, cum Sacra Scriptura eodem Spiritu quo scripta est etiam leganda et interpretanda sit*), no less attention must be devoted to (1) the content and unity of the whole of Scripture, taking into account (2) the living Tradition of the entire Church (*vivae totius ecclesiae traditionis*) and (3) the analogy of faith, if we are to derive their true meaning from the sacred texts.

These three rules are rules of intertextuality, naming dimensions of the ecclesial context within which approbative reception of Scriptures diverse interpretations is to proceed. Each of the three rules is an appeal to three factors that are themselves the products of the Spirit's interpretative activity through the epistemological organon of the Holy Spirit, the *sensus fidei* (p. 14).

Rule 1: the content and context of the whole Bible

This first rule of intertextuality highlights the canonical interrelationship between each of the individual writings of the New Testament, and then, in a wider circle of intertextuality, between the New Testament and Old Testament. It is only as part of the bi-partite canon that each writing is to be considered inspired. Each writing norms the others. The whole norms interpretation of the part; and the part norms interpretation of the whole. In that way unity constantly preserves the diversity; and diversity is normed by the unity. [7]

Rule 2: the living Tradition of the entire Church - *vivae totius ecclesiae traditionis*

This rule places emphasis on attention to the history of diachronic reception of Scripture in church life throughout history, as the Church transmits the faith in various ways within new contexts by applying it to those contexts. This rule according to the author is simply a reiteration of an oft-repeated teaching of *Dei verbum* that **Scripture** and **Tradition** mutually interpret each other, even while Scripture remains the primary norm of the faith (p. 15).

Rule 3: the analogy of faith – *analogia fidei*

The rule of the analogy of faith holds that "any passage of scripture or aspect of faith should be interpreted in the context of the one, whole and indivisible faith of the church" in the precise terms of Gerald O'Collins and Edward Farrugia which the author cites (p. 15). Although Scripture is the *norma normans* of Christian faith, the Church's beliefs provide a hermeneutical lens for the interpretation of Scripture, in a hermeneutical circle of enquiry. In this way, the *fides quae creditur*, the content of the faith, is the "pre-understanding" which believers bring to the scriptural text, as their faith seeks deeper understanding in Scripture. The author remarks that Rule 3 (the whole of Church doctrinal belief) must operate in creative tension with Rule 1 (the whole of Scripture). In the light of this therefore, answers to contemporary questions should not be sought by applying isolated passages of Scripture, but in reconstructing the "spirit" of the

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whole Bible in the light of the question (p. 16). It must be understood therefore that Rule 3 creates a wider intertextual context than Rule 1 for in addition to the whole of Scripture, a wider context of the Church's beliefs will have to be invoked. One encounters here another hermeneutical circle. As such, the doctrinal formulations by the *sensus fidelium* become a framework out of which Scripture is to be interpreted. Doctrine becomes a lens for interpreting Scripture; but Scripture remains the *norma normans* for the interpretation of doctrine.

The author concludes by acknowledging that any interpretation of Scripture must be grounded on this doctrine of biblical inspiration and a theology of inspiration brings to greater light the role of God's Spirit in the production and reception of revelation. Every theological interpretation must be borne at the heart of the Church (faith community) and such interpretation helps that community in its proclamation and witnessing role to the Gospel in her present context and society.

C. What Horizons are proposed in the article in relation to traditional visions: what conception of Revelation is presupposed; With which other subjects related to the Theology of the Scripture (Canon, Revelation, Church, methods of Understanding the Scripture, methodology of the human sciences) is this proposal linked; What novelty can it offer and in what part of the inspiration or the revelation, etc.

The author acknowledges some of the models of inspiration that have been proposed over the years. He jumps over the important *theory of instrumental causality* as well as the *prophetic model of inspiration* and settles for a contemporary model of inspiration that takes account of inspiration in the various levels and processes of the biblical formation.

In proposing a theology of inspiration as the best way to understand and interpret the Bible as evidence in his article's theme: "*The Theological Interpretation of Bible, Church and World: A Theology of Inspiration*" the author brings a relive and bridge of relationship between revelation, inspiration and interpretation. As a matter of fact, this is the best model today in biblical scholarship. [8] Today, Revelation-Inspiration-Canon-Interpretation can no longer be understood as independent concepts but correlatives. The title of Denis Farkasfalvy's 2010 work: *Inspiration and Interpretation: A Theological Introduction to Sacred Scripture* already captured this contemporary understanding. In this model Revelation is the broadest concept while Inspiration-Canon-Interpretation now attempts to reveal the written testimonies of Divine Revelation in human history with the conception that Jesus Christ is the fullness and completion of that Divine Auto-revelation. [9] Thus, Inspiration-Canon-Interpretation relates to the *written* Word of God. These texts are inspired by God's Spirit in their various stages, through the same Holy Spirit, they have been recognized and accepted by the Church for what they are – God's *written* Word. And this same Holy Spirit guides the process of reception and interpretation yesterday and today in the concrete life of the community.

Denis Farkasfalvy already made such a presentation in chapter 10 of his work which he titled: "Inspiration, Canon, and Interpretation: A Systematic Presentation." He calls it an attempt to propose a "theology of Scripture." He acknowledges just as Ormond Rush that at the basis of such

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a pretension must lie a formidable theology of Inspiration. In fact, a theology of Scripture is not even possible without a theology of Inspiration. The affirmation that *God is author of the Scriptures* (*Deus Auctor Scripturarum*, or *Deus auctor Scripturae*) although not biblical is the foundation of any model of the theology of inspiration. [10]

Like Farkasfalvy, Rush predicates the theology of inspiration on the theology of the Trinity. However, the former will also talk about the Christological framework and the Incarnational principle. The entire Inspiration-Canon-Interpretation trajectory leads to the all-important theme of not only the sacred character of the scriptures but its truth, veracity and inerrancy. In a classic formulation, Michael Graves states this logic thus: "If the Scripture is inspired by God, it must be useful for teaching" and "If Scripture is inspired by God, it cannot be deceptive." [11] Theology of Inspiration thus has the theology of the Truth of the Scripture as an important corollary.

The author conceives Revelation as God's "self-communication." In this conception therefore, the Sacred Scriptures becomes not just a mode of transmission of Revelation but also a place of encounter and dialogue with God who reveals Himself. [12] This is the conception present in Vatican II's *Dei Verbum*. In talking about the relationship between Revelation and Its Transmission, Joseph Ratzinger noted that: "the concept of "revelation" always forms part of the receiving subject: where no one perceives the revelation, there has not been any revelation, because there nothing has been revealed. The very idea of revelation implies a person who enters into its possession." In other words, a revelation that is not transmitted does not last either. The revealing "event" historically belongs to the past, it is not transmitted: what is transmitted is what is revealed.

The author also signals very well the place of the Sacred Scripture in the tradition of the Church. As such, apart from the role of the 4th century Church in fixing the canon, through the Holy Spirit ever present in the Church, what he calls approbative reception as part of Inspired reception is an ecclesial reception. He signals therefore in line with *Dei Verbum* 12c the three important rules for such reception which includes above all, the *analogy of the faith* and the *living Tradition of the Church*. Throughout the article, the author does not fail to signal this relationship between the Scripture and the Church: The Sacred Scripture is *an ecclesial text* (p. 4), The Bible is *the Church's book* (p. 9). And so ecclesial interpretation must proceed given this principle of *analogia fidei* from a hermeneutical circle of Scripture and doctrine (p. 16). Vicente Balaguer puts this relationship that must exist between Sacred Scripture and Tradition bluntly thus: "The Scripture becomes alive in the Tradition. The Scripture, by its condition of writing, is merely letter; If nobody reads it, it's a dead letter." [13] However, while in Protestant theology, Tradition plays only an interpretive function, for Catholic theology it has also a constitutive function. The present author as a systematic theologian situates himself in the Catholic tradition.

The author's novelty is clearly seen in his proposal of a triple dimensions of biblical inspiration as follows: 1. Inspired Production and Selection 2. Inspired Canonical Texts and 3. Inspired Reception. However, a closer look at these three dimensions show an incorporation of the proposals of earlier authors. As such, it is not just the prophets, nor the apostles or the hagiographers, that were inspired but also the editors and translators and the various councils that recognized them as inspired and accepted them as authoritative text-canon. More so, the

reception-tradition down the ages can only be attributed to that same inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In his three dimensions, one can see harmonized even though he never spelt it out clearly, the various inspiration theologies over the ages from the charism of the prophets to the famous Instrumental causality and the now popular contemporary social process theory.

D. Personal critique and appraisal

The author is very conversant with recent development in the history and evolution of the theology of Biblical Inspiration in biblical scholarship. As a systematic theologian he builds on these available resources from biblical research to arrive at his theological conclusions. This is a very important step as the Church's magisterium always lay emphasis on the relationship that should exists between exegesis and theology between the biblical experts and the dogmatic theologians. [14]

However, it is not the mark of a good author to criticize another author without concretely proffering solution to that which was criticized. This is the impression one gets from the author's critique of James Sanders. In footnote n. 13, the author quoted Sanders thus:

"the Holy Spirit [is] at work all along the path of the canonical process: from original speaker, through what was understood by hearers; to what disciples believed was said; to how later editors reshaped the record, oral or written, of what was said; on down to modern hearings and understandings of the texts in current believing communities."

After dismissing the above as not being able to account for a concrete action of the Holy Spirit in each process of the biblical formation, Rush however writes: "This article does not claim to be such a full systematic undertaking, but it does claim to propose a model that names more specifically, in the light of recent biblical studies, the way in which we can comprehensively speak of the inspiration of Scripture." In this way, the author puts the reader in a state of pessimism and despair. If others could not account for the specific Holy Spirit's activity in this tripartite process of the biblical formation and you are not claiming to fill up that lacuna, then it is either that an elaborate and complete theology of inspiration is not possible, or the reader should keep on searching. Either positions places so much pressure on the reader. In my opinion, the author is right in aiming at an elaborate and comprehensive theology of inspiration. However, the insufficiency of his own presentation when compared to other presentations like that of James Sanders and Denis Farkasfalvy which the author would possibly dismiss as faulty makes such a comprehensive task appear utopic. A combination of this author's presentation together with James Sanders and Denis Farkasfalvy in my opinion will be enough to offer one a comprehensive theology of Inspiration.

However, the author must be credited for placing enough emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in the three levels or dimension of his Doctrine of Inspiration: In the Production and Selection (The Holy Spirit inspired what was produced and what was selected); In the Canonical Texts themselves (The Holy Spirit inspired the respective texts and so via the Canon [a work of the Holy Spirit also], the Church recognized and received these texts for being so inspired) and in its Reception both yesterday and today (the Holy Spirit has guided and inspired a spiritual reading of the Scriptures as seen in the web cycle of spiritualities it has inspired cf. pp. 7-12). He is very clear in outlining the explicit role of the Holy Spirit in the various processes of the Biblical

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formation. In other words, without the Holy Spirit, one cannot even talk about the Inspiration of the Scripture nor its sacred character.

There seems to be an apparent contradiction in the author's conception of the relation between inspiration and canon. In one place he says: "The Spirit works through these texts in an unique way, once they have been canonize," (p. 8) in another he says: "These literary works have been retrospectively recognized, alongside each other, to be inspired senses of the faith because they have been recognized and approved as faithful witness to revelation..." (p. 8). A critical reader will ask: so, which one came first: Inspiration or Canon? And which is dependent or consequent upon the other? Is the text inspired because it has been canonized or is it canonized because it is inspired? In any case, these tensions are resolved when one reads further down the subsequent lines in the article.

By attempting to draw some relationship between what John Calvin calls *Internal Testimony of the Holy Spirit* and the Catholic Church's *Sensus fidei*, the author shows his openness for ecumenical dialogue not only in doctrinal issues but also in the area of biblical scholarship. This is a welcome attitude and disposition from an author who is a Systematic Theologian.

In the end, the author knows and wants to remind his readers that we all must approach the Sacred Scripture from the ambience of faith experience. Without Faith, Sacred Scripture is either reduced to a mere literature or a theatrical stage for endless debates.

The article is very advanced and theologically dense, it is not an article for beginners but for experts. The author signals the article's original context in footnote n.1 and that context justifies this evaluation. However, a hardworking and serious student of theology and biblical studies can benefit from the author's theology of inspiration proposal but must be disposed to read it with an open mind together with other sources. On the overall, it is a well scripted article and makes for a worthwhile reading.

END NOTES

[1.] While this is not totally out of place, it must be noted that in George T. Montague, *Understanding the Bible. A Basic Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, New York, Paulist Press, 2007, there is possible extension into four worlds: the world of the text, the world behind the text, the world around the text and the world in front of the text. According to this conception, while the first deals with the textual criticism of the texts, the second deals with the text's prehistory, the third with community and canon and the fourth with the reader response (cf. pp. 129-200).

[2.] Italics are mine for emphasis. It is interesting to see how this author fine tunes his theology: Theological Interpretation is dependent on Scriptures being Divinely Inspired but also the doctrine of biblical inspiration of the Scriptures is itself dependent and consistent with the doctrine of the Trinity.

[3.] James A. Sanders, *Canon and Community: A Guide to Canonical Criticism*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984, p. xvii.

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[4.] Here, one could see some theory of dualism which could pop up so many questions such as: Is a text regarded as inspired because it has been canonized? Is it not rather supposed to be the other way round: that is canonization as the ecclesial perception and recognition of these texts as inspired and as such beneficial for Church's use as pointed out by Saint Paul in 2Tim 3: 16?

[5.] Vicente Balaguer, a biblical scholar, in his Lectures on the "Sacred Character of the Bible: Inspiration and Truth" makes clear the distinction between the Sacred Scriptures and the Word of God. The Word of God encapsulates both spoken and written Word of God both through history and even now in the living conscience of the Christian people. The Sacred Scriptures though only an aspect, *written* Word of God is an important aspect for it is from there that the Church draws most of her teachings and practice.

[6.] Here, the author provides a bridge between Inspiration and Interpretation in the light of *Dei Verbum* 12. Having been recognized as so inspired by the Church, the Sacred texts must be interpreted as such and in that same spirit. The Holy Spirit becomes the *fons et origo* of Sacred texts.

[7.] Brevard S. Childs' Canonical Approach placed a very great emphasis on this rule of intertextuality. The various re-readings of the OT texts by the OT itself and the OT by the NT makes this rule so important and critical for reception of the Scriptures.

[8.] Contemporary introductory texts on Sacred Scriptures always treat these two as corollaries. Example of this can be readily found in Michael Graves, *The Inspiration and Interpretation of Scripture: What they Early Church can teach us*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014; Denis Farkasfalvy, *Inspiration and Interpretation: A Theological Introduction to Sacred Scripture*, Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010 among others.

[9.] Cf. *Dei Verbum* 2.

[10.] Denis Farkasfalvy, *Inspiration and Interpretation: A Theological Introduction to Sacred Scripture*, pp. 203 – 235.

[11.] Michael Graves, *The Inspiration and Interpretation of Scripture: What they Early Church can teach us*, pp. 3-5.

[12.] Vicente Balaguer signals three important conception or models of revelation: The Epiphanic, The Theoretical-Instructive and the Self-Communication models.

[13.] In his Lecture notes on "The Revelation, Sacred Scripture and the Church," Vicente Balaguer making use of the best theories of Tradition for instance those of Yves Congar, J. A. Möhler, J. H. Newman, together with the concept of *memoria colectiva* in cultural anthropology demonstrates how this relationship is not only important but necessary.

[14.] Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction Donum Veritatis* on the ecclesial vocation of the theologian, May 24, 1990, n. 6.

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