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## RAHNER AND MCKENZIE ON THE SOCIAL THEORY OF INSPIRATION

In 1956 Karl Rahner published his article 'On Scriptural Inspiration'<sup>1</sup> which has since been hailed by David Stanley as 'a landmark in the study of biblical inspiration.'<sup>2</sup> It is a landmark because it no longer treats inspiration as a topic of interest only to exegetes, but relates it to all the fields of theological inquiry. Its scope is enormous, as it covers the nature of God's causality in the world, the material sufficiency of Scripture, the nature of the Apostolic Church, canonicity, and many other problems.<sup>3</sup> Its direction is that of contemporary theologians, who locate all their thought in the social context of the Church as Mystical Body and Kingdom. Precisely because it unites so many fields and touches on so many others, we would expect Rahner's thought on inspiration to be appearing in all fields of theology. The fact that it has not<sup>4</sup> can only be attributed to one thing: the implications of his position have not been fully appreciated.<sup>5</sup> And so this

<sup>1</sup> Karl Rahner, S.J., 'Über die Schrift-inspiration,' *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie*, LXXVIII (1956), pp. 127-68. This was expanded into a book under the same title published in 1958 at Freiburg as one of Herder and Herder's *Quaestiones Disputatae*. In 1961 appeared the English translation of Charles H. Henkey: *Inspiration in the Bible, Quaestiones Disputatae I* (Herder and Herder, New York). In this article page numbers in parentheses refer to the English edition.

<sup>2</sup> David M. Stanley, S.J., 'The Concept of Biblical Inspiration,' *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America* (1958), p. 84. This article contains excellent summaries of the recent theories of Pierre Benoit, Joseph Coppens, Karl Rahner and Bernhard Brinkmann.

<sup>3</sup> Rahner is happy that the work has so many ramifications: 'For if one single theological problem can stir up the whole of theology, we may be sure that it has been correctly asked' (p. 34).

<sup>4</sup> The exegetes have been well aware of the importance of Rahner's work (as indicated by the many references to it in *New Testament Abstracts*, especially vol. IV). Yet *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* from 1956-62 published but a single article expanding Rahner's theory: John L. McKenzie, S.J., 'The Social Character of Inspiration' (April 1962). Other journals exhibit the same lack. Rahner certainly did not advance his theory as the final solution, but as a stimulus to other theologians. The response has been limited, to say the least.

<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the main reason for this lack of appreciation is the undecipherable character of Rahner's German. The English edition of Herder has helped to solve this difficulty, although the translation is extremely inept. First, on the level of clarity, the translator's inability to choose the correct English word interferes with the communication of Rahner's thought, as on p. 49: 'They [the Scriptures] are the sediments [Niederschläge] of that which in her has, [sic] been transmitted and preached. . . . 'Sediments' here is hardly English. Secondly, the translator sometimes changes the meaning of the

article undertakes a simple exposition of what is admittedly the difficult doctrine of a theologian never noted for his clarity. For a clearer understanding of the doctrine, two methodological notes will be helpful by way of introduction. The first is Rahner's emphasis on the Church. He bases his approach not on exegesis, but on the statements of the Church's magisterium. This formal reliance on the Church as teacher is matched by his reliance for his matter on the Church as focal point and guiding force behind inspiration. Thus, whereas Franzelin began with the concept of 'author,' Benoit with the concept of 'inspiration,' Rahner begins with the Church, and is immediately immersed in the social context of inspiration. Consequently he does not concern himself with exactly how God communicates His inspiration to the individual author. Thus there need be no conflict between Rahner's social theory of inspiration and Benoit's individual theory.<sup>1</sup>

The second note indicates the plan of Rahner's book. In chapter I he considers certain significant problems with the nature of inspiration. Then in chapter II he elaborates his theory, and in chapter III he shows how this theory answers these same key problems.

### *Problems*

The first problem is the relation of divine and human authors. Both Trent and Vatican call God an author.<sup>2</sup> And the Church has always called man a literary author of Scripture.<sup>3</sup> To deny that man is a literary author would be to destroy the very human character of the Scriptures by reducing him to a purely secretarial function. Thus a valid theory of inspiration must not only *tolerate* human activity in conjunction with God's authorship, but *demand* that same spontaneous creativity which man exercises when writing a book under his own impulse.

<sup>1</sup> This theory, based on St Thomas's description of instrumental causality in prophecy (*Summa Theologiae*: II-II, qq. 171-8) was first enunciated in Paul Synave, O.P. and Pierre Benoit, O.P., *Traité de la Prophetie* (Desclée & Cie, Tournai, 1947). The English translation by Avery Dulles, S.J. and Thomas Sheridan, S.J., appeared under the title *Prophecy and Inspiration* by the same publishers in 1961.

<sup>2</sup> DB 783, DB 1787. Rahner points out that *auctorem* is to be understood as 'originator,' not as 'literary author' who selects the literary forms and words (note on pp. 12-13).

<sup>3</sup> cf. Augustin Bea, S.J., *De Scripturae Sacrae Inspiratione* (Rome 1935). In n. 37 he points out that *Providentissimus Deus*, theologians from Augustine to Aquinas, and the Pontifical Biblical Commission have always spoken of 'sacred authors.'

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original and often represents it very incompletely. For just two examples of this, cf. footnotes 2, p. 35 and 2, p. 39 of this article. Finally, he sometimes reverses the meaning of the original by adding or subtracting a 'not'! Nevertheless, since the translation does not substantially distort the original and is easier than Rahner's German, it has been used as the basis for this article.

However, if one insists that God also is a literary author, then this dual authorship creates its own problem: How can two separate literary authors produce the same effect in such a way that each would be author of the whole, *totalitate effectus*?<sup>1</sup> In Rahner's words: 'It cannot be that the causality of both should, from the outset, aim at a single literary authorship.'<sup>2</sup> In that case, a single effect would be caused under the same aspect by two causes, which is impossible' (p. 17). Thus the theory must vindicate the literary authorship proper to both God and man.

The second problem: from an intelligent reading of Scripture, it is obvious that the inspired author is unconscious of his inspiration. He believes he is doing the work on his own initiative.<sup>3</sup> Traditional theory, however, runs into a wall when it tries to reconcile its teachings with this unconsciousness. For with regard to prophetic revelation,<sup>4</sup> what kind of an illumination of the intellect would it be if the intellect were not even conscious of an illumination? With regard to prophetic inspiration, what kind of a 'more certain judgment' would a man make if he were not even conscious of the extra light in which he formed that judgment? Finally, with regard to scriptural inspiration, how can a divine impulse in the will and executive faculties have any effect on the work produced if the author is unaware of it? In what sense can the activity even be spoken of as human if the author is not conscious of his activity? Thus we must have a theory which allows the author to be at the same time both conscious and unconscious of his inspiration in conceiving, willing and executing the work.

The third problem is How does the Church know the Scriptures to be inspired? It is obvious that there is no sacred book which proves its own inspiration. Therefore the knowledge must come through some revelation. But no apostle could have explicitly

<sup>1</sup> The explanation of *concursum* as a combination of a transcendental cause and a categorical cause producing a single effect from different levels is not applicable here. For in becoming a literary author, God restricts His causality to the level of the effect produced. Since He produces an historical book by His direct activity, He becomes a categorical cause of that categorical effect (pp. 15-16).

<sup>2</sup> An example of the translator omitting Rahner's important qualification: 'unter derselben Rücksicht in derselben Dimension' (p. 25 of German edition).

<sup>3</sup> The classical example of this unconsciousness is the prologue to Luke's Gospel.

<sup>4</sup> The three different kinds of *charismata* in men according to Benoit are:

(i) Prophetic Revelation (a gift of supernatural knowledge present to the speculative intellect by way of infused species);

(ii) Prophetic Inspiration (an added divine light given to a speculative judgment naturally acquired);

(iii) Scriptural Inspiration (a supernatural impulse which stimulates the will and directs the practical judgment to compose a book leading to a certain effect). cf. Benoit's latest formulation of his theory in pp. 9-52 of A. Robert and A. Tricot, *Guide to the Bible*, tr. Edward P. Arbez, S.S. and Martin R. P. McGuire (Desclée Company, Tournai, 1960). The different *charismata* are treated on pp. 22-8.

revealed the inspiration of a book or of all the books of Scripture.<sup>1</sup> For if there were an explicit revelation of an apostle to the Church, how can we account for the centuries of controversy over the contents of the Canon? Thus inspiration must be so explained that 'it demonstrates by itself how the Church knows the inspiredness of the books' (p. 29).

The final problem which Rahner considers as a pointer to his theory is the relation of scriptural inspiration to the teaching authority of the Church. What is the point of an infallible teaching authority if there is an infallible Bible? What is the point of an infallible Bible if there is an infallible teaching authority? If we give one priority in forming the other, do we not lessen the infallibility of the latter? From this impasse we are involved in the Two Sources of Dogma theory, so actively debated at Vatican II.

### *Salvation-History Causality*

Now Rahner turns from these problems and constructs his theory to solve them. He begins from the beginning: God's causality in human affairs. But there are two kinds of divine causality in the world. One is God's causality in the order of nature, whereby He creates and maintains a world in space-time relationships which constitute history. Thus the rising of the sun each day is an act of the historical causality of God in our world. But there is a more profound kind of historical action whereby God personally irrupts into free human history and makes it His own. This is the historical causality of the *Heilsgeschichte*. In this redemptive causality God has intended, anterior to man's free choice, to carry through the revelation of the *Logos* in our world. But in order that God might carry out this plan through men He must somehow influence them through grace to accept the plan freely and execute it in history. Such a divine intention and execution which necessarily influence man is a formal predefinition. It is obvious that in this kind of historical action we have a special causality of God, for He has not only to cause the event, but to cause men to bring it about.

Now the formal predefinition of the *Heilsgeschichte* begins with the creation and fall of Adam, takes a new rise with the promise of the saviour and the covenant with Abraham, reaches its climax with the death and resurrection of Christ, and begins its 'last days' with the

<sup>1</sup> The author could not reveal that his book is inspired if he is unconscious of his inspiration. Nor is it likely that some other apostle would be granted a revelation that Luke's book is inspired if Luke himself did not know it. Nor could any explicit revelation come later than apostolic times, since revelation is terminated by the death of the last apostle (cf. pp. 27-8).

Church. Thus the Church is the final culmination of God's eschatological historical-redemptive formal predefinition. All history leads to the Church. Consequently God's will-act which leads to the Church is absolute, since the Church is the necessary culmination of the Incarnation. The Church as eschatological is thus contrasted to the synagogue, which, though a stage of the *Heilsgeschichte*, is only relatively willed, and so can pass out of salvation history (which in fact it did).

### *The Apostolic Church*

Yet the absolutely willed Church does not spring forth full-grown from the head of Zeus. Rather the Church herself grows through an historical development towards her final form. It is not true that all dogma was set at Pentecost and a few accidentals changed during the apostolic age. Rather, at Pentecost the Church was established as a community under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and under that guidance she worked out the essentials of her doctrine as she had received them from Christ. We need only to look at the controversy over the universal mission of the Church to realise how far her self-consciousness of Christ's doctrine had to develop from the dogmas of the judaic *milieu* out of which she rose. Now it is obvious that precisely in this first growth of the Church God exercised His greatest causality on her. The *Church-in-fieri* required watchful positive care ; the *Church-in-facto-esse* requires only an *assistentia per se negativa* to keep her from error. This positive care for the Church is like a gardener's care for a young vine. He must take care that the vine is planted in good soil, well fertilised and watered, trained to grow upright, and sprayed to ward off harmful insects. Once the vine has taken root and matured, then he can allow it to grow with only minor attention. As the young vine prospered or declined, so will the older vine. And so it is with the Apostolic Church (which is Henkey's translation of Rahner's *Urkirche*). God was at work in a special way in planting, nourishing, directing, and conserving the Apostolic Church, for upon its rectitude depends in every respect the Church of the future. Thus the Church being born in a special way had God as its author : *Deum habet auctorem*. The Apostolic Church, then, had an irreplaceable and non-transferable function in the *Heilsgeschichte* which our present Church does not possess. The *Urkirche's* function was to establish the Faith ; our function is to follow what was then established. The apostles also had a non-transferable function : that of forming the Church along the lines which Christ had initiated and the Holy Spirit was making clear to them. Thus they so formed

the Church during the Apostolic Age that by the death of the last apostle there existed the Church upon which the present-day Church is essentially and existentially grounded. In fact, in our doubts about what direction the Church is not to take, we try to return to the 'pure and simple lines of its birth.'<sup>1</sup>

The Apostolic Church had the positive function of receiving new revelations<sup>2</sup> and of unfolding her dogma. Secondly she had the negative function of distinguishing herself from all the foreign thoughts and religious practices of her time. The fact that she could do this indicates that she must have been conscious of positive norms by which she could distinguish herself from others. We can find this self-possession only in some charism given by the Holy Spirit at this time. Somehow the Canon was already present in the Apostolic Church.

### *The Scriptures as constituent element of the Church*

How, then, is the modern Church able to discover the characteristics of the early Church? The Apostolic Church had certain constituent elements in her make-up given to her by Christ. Among these were the possession in faith of the handed-down revelation, the *ius divinum* of primacy and apostolic succession, the sacraments, the social basis of the community, and most important, the Scriptures. Most important, because it is through the Scriptures that the Church expresses for herself the other constituent elements. It is through the Scriptures that the apostles delineate and mark out the essential nature of the Church for the apostolic age and reductively for the Church of all time. It is only through the Scriptures that the Church can become Church, and consequently the writing of Scripture is something willed absolutely in God's formal predefinition. Here the implicit canon by which she was able to delineate herself from other religions became explicit in writing, even if not yet formally recognised as canon. Thus the Scriptures are both God's word to the Church and her own life-process as a self-expression of her faith. As the Church's life process, the Scriptures were, in Rahner's words, 'A written embodiment of that which the primitive Church believed and what in faith she had laid down for herself. To deny this would be to deny the fact that the New Testament writers were real authors and would be to reduce them to mere transmitters of a message from above, which would contradict the actual character of these writings, and also contradicts their *genus litterarium* as a witnessing of the faith

<sup>1</sup> This exact phrase and others like it have been used over and over by Pope John XXIII in speaking of the purpose of Vatican II.

<sup>2</sup> Such as the hierarchical structure of the Church, the universality of her mission etc; cf. p. 46

and not only a witness of revelation' (pp. 48-9).<sup>1</sup> Finally, by forming the Scriptures in herself as the Apostolic Church giving norms to herself, the Church addresses herself towards her own future and towards us who get back to her by accepting the norm of Scripture.

### *Thesis*

Finally Rahner states his theory of inspiration: 'In creating through his absolute will<sup>2</sup> the Apostolic Church . . . and her constitutive elements . . . God wills and creates the Scriptures in such a way that He becomes their inspiring originator, their author . . . the active inspiring authorship of God is an intrinsic element in the formation of the primitive Church becoming Church. . . . God wills the Scriptures and Himself as their originator. He achieves both because and in so far as He wills Himself as the acting and efficient author of the Church. The inspiration of the Scriptures . . . is simply God's causality in the Church as defined by that particular constitutive element which is the Bible' (pp. 50-1). God's inspiration of the Scriptures, then, is His solicitous and continual production of a Church which can only become Church by forming norms for herself in Scriptures.<sup>3</sup>

### *Solutions to problems*

We find it hard to understand God as author precisely because the term author used of God and man is used analogously. God is not author in the sense man is. God does not want primarily to be an author; He becomes so only because the Scriptures are necessary to the establishment of the Church which He wills. Thus He wills and causes Scripture by (1) His formal predefinition, (2) of the *Heilsgeschichte*, (3) in its eschatological stage, namely the Church.

<sup>1</sup> Incidentally, this theory also makes sense out of the Form Critics' phrase and method, *Sitz im Leben der Kirche*, for it is the *milieu* of the Church which determines the literary forms and phrases that the evangelist will use.

<sup>2</sup> Henkey's phrase 'through his absolute will' represents [!] the German original: 'mit absolutem, formal prädefinierendem heilsgeschichtlichem und eschatologischem Willen.'

<sup>3</sup> At this point Rahner treats of the objection that his theory cannot explain Old Testament inspiration. His answer is that Israel is a relatively willed stage of the *Heilsgeschichte*. Her function was to enact the personal history of God in the world until He could become incarnate and establish His Church. But to continue in history Israel had to express to herself her God-given ideals and norms in Scripture. God thus willed a divine and human society which wrote Scriptures as a life-process. Therefore Old Testament inspiration is of the same type as the New. Yet it is only the absolutely willed eschatological Church which has infallibility and can decide on a canon. And so it is the Church's decision which establishes the Old Testament as canonical, infallible, and inerrant (cf. pp. 51-4).

These three factors so completely determine the book produced by the Church that we can only call God the author. And 'God is principal author, since this historical process exhibits within our world effects wrought by God alone.'<sup>1</sup> Those who argue for a more intimate divine activity in the composition of the books must look to see whether they are not thereby prejudicing the human authorship of the Bible. Rahner's theory keeps man free to write the book as he conceives it in the life-process of the human and divine community which is the Church. But since God has determined what the Church thinks, man conceives, wills and writes just what God has intended in His formal predefinition. If someone investigates how the inspiration is communicated to the individual author, he must do it in the context of the authorship as constituent of the divine foundation of the Church. For this context actually makes inspiration more profound, as it results from the total providential action of God.

Furthermore, now that Rahner has vindicated both divine and human authorship, he must also show how the two do not achieve the same effect from the same aspect. God's primary intention is to be an *Auctor Productivus* in producing the Church. It is only because a book necessarily results from God's primary intention that He becomes an author. Man, on the other hand, has the primary intention of being an *Auctor Litterarius*, of writing a book. Thus there are two terminative effects of two different intentions: God produces the Church; man produces the book. But since God's primary intention was the creative influence behind every part of that book, we have to call God the principal author and man the instrumental author. Thus our theory vindicates the fact that both God and man are necessary to the production of the book and are hierarchically related to each other, not identical causes.

This theory also solves the second problem . . . that of the author's unconsciousness of inspiration. The evidence of the Scriptures themselves and the history of the development of the Canon forced us to conclude that man is unconscious of inspiration in the conceptualised, formal meaning of the term. But he *is* conscious of inspiration in so far as he knows 'himself in his writing to be carried by that living process of the Church believing in the Holy Spirit' (p. 62).<sup>2</sup> He can be conscious of an inspiration in so far as he knows while writing his passage 'that its real core was given through God's self-revelation in

<sup>1</sup> Stanley, *op. cit.*, p. 83

<sup>2</sup> Examples of this consciousness of inspiration as a process can perhaps be found in 1 Thess. 2:13; Gal. 1:6-9. To speak of one's own word as the infallible word of God is either consciousness of inspiration or blasphemy. Although these texts refer primarily to infallibility in preaching, the same kind of consciousness may be presumed for writing.



Christ. This occurred in the writer's own generation, and was confirmed through that holy community to which he belongs . . .' (p. 63). Thus the theory justifies the very humanness of inspired authorship by making man a conscious instrument of some inspiration, although it does not give him consciousness of the profoundest levels of the divine activity.

The third problem was how the Church knows the inspiration of the Canonical Books. Since the Scriptures are not themselves a revelation of their own inspiration, another revelation of the fact was needed. Now revelation can be considered as (1) a self-conscious process in the Church, and (2) the written grasp and discussion of this revelation. Granted the fact that the Church knows the preaching of Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, then the Church knows revelation of inspiration as a process. For 'This revelation is simply given by the fact that the relevant writing emerges as a genuine self-expression of the primitive Church. Her inspiredness is thereby sufficiently revealed' (pp. 65-6). Simply put, the Church recognises the Scriptures as inspired because they reflect her divine mind. In Rahner's words: 'The Church, filled with the Holy Spirit, recognizes something as connatural amongst the writings which accord with her nature. If, at the same time, it is also "apostolic," that is, a piece of the self-accomplishment of the Apostolic Church as such, and recognized as such, it is then, according to the assumptions of our theory, inspired *eo ipso* . . .' (pp. 66-7). Nevertheless, it may take decades before the Church can reduce this self-conscious knowledge to the written formulation of a Canon. . . .

Our final problem was the relation of an infallible Bible to an infallible Church. The Church, as the eschatological fulfilment of the *Heilsgeschichte*, cannot be succeeded by any other event in time and in the world. She is the perfect institution of human history and destiny. She is triumphant and infallible. But she has this infallibility in teaching not from successive new revelations, but from the infallible *custody* of that revelation handed down by those twelve apostles whom Christ made infallible. Thus, our present Church's infallibility is directly dependent on the infallibility of the *Urkirche*. But the infallibility of the Apostolic Church is an act of reference to the Scriptures. Thus there can be no clash between the two infallibilities, because they are two instances of the same process. *A priori* there can be no contradiction between the two.

Thus far Karl Rahner. He has given us a magnificent context in which to view the whole of inspiration. But he has not told us how God communicates to the individual author except in the social

context of the Church. Fr McKenzie takes up this efficient causality of God intrinsic to the author.<sup>1</sup>

*Problems with the traditional view*

The Lagrange-Benoit position, says McKenzie, is satisfactory when one is dealing with one author and one book. But when the conception is expanded to a multiplicity of authors compiling and 're-reading' a number of books (as is the case in biblical authorship) the traditional position becomes inadequate. For example, from the time of the patriarchs to the monarchy the biblical books were solely in the form of oral traditions. It is hardly possible to speak of inspiration of these spoken traditions by means of a theory which equates inspiration with inspiration to write. For instead of the fixity of the written word, we have one thousand years of oral tradition in which the material was composed anew each time it was told. As McKenzie puts it: 'Who, then, is the inspired author, and what does the inspired author produce? We find it difficult to believe that the final redactors of the Pentateuch, for instance, were the inspired authors who compiled quite uninspired material, and no-one thinks that the final and terminal editor is the only inspired author, whoever he may have been. Therefore we feel the need of distributing the charisma, so to speak, among the various men who contributed to the book . . .' (pp. 117-18).<sup>2</sup>

The present traditional conception would not call the preceding sources inspired because they were not written. Yet these oral sources contributed considerably to the final inspired book: they contributed most of its material. Our modern culture tends to identify creative genius with authorship.<sup>3</sup> And so we think the original creative authors would need and deserve the charism of inspiration more than the editors, glossators and redactors.<sup>4</sup>

Yet to spread out inspiration among various contributors is mechanical and it tends to multiply authors and reduce books to fragments. There is left a shattered theory of instrumentality which cannot make intelligible the inspiration of the Scriptures. We must 'seek another principle of unity in the literature which will make the

<sup>1</sup> John L. McKenzie, S.J., 'The Social Character of Inspiration,' *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, (1962), 115-24

<sup>2</sup> From here to the end of this article pages in parentheses will refer to McKenzie's article in the *CBO*.

<sup>3</sup> For a clear statement of this, read Alexander Pope's preface to his translation of the *Iliad*.

<sup>4</sup> 'The Yahwist and authors of the Gospels were the heirs of a faith and a tradition, not its creators' (p. 118).

charisma more intelligible ; for we cannot have intelligibility without unity' (p. 118).

### *Principle of unity*

This principle of unity McKenzie finds in Rahner's social theory : the Church is the source of the charism. But if the Church is made the source of the charism, will not this reduce the status of the individual author ? Yes, says McKenzie, and this is exactly what the orientalist finds characteristic of near eastern literature. The ancient author was anonymous because he did not think of himself as an individual contributor, but as fulfilling a social function. Through him, his society wrote *its* thoughts : 'The men who wrote the recitals of the deeds of the kings of Assyria and of Egypt are as anonymous as the artists who illustrated these deeds in sculpture. How could they be anything else ? The king was the speaker of the recital of these victories, as he was the agent of the victories ; and the king was the people, the visible incorporation of the society' (pp. 119-20).<sup>1</sup>

Now this concept of corporate personality which we find in Israel's idea of messianism and in our idea of Church, has largely been lost in the modern world. Because we do not understand it, we make it a metaphor. Yet we must understand the corporate author if we are to understand the Scriptures. The ancient author ' . . . wished to be the voice of Israel and of the Church, to produce in writing utterances which were not the expressions of his own mind but of his society. The Bible is the story of the encounter of God and man, but not of God and the individual man ; it is the encounter of God and Israel which issues in the incarnation of Jesus, the new Israel, and his continued life in the new Israel, the Church. The recital and the profession are the work of no individual writer ; the writer writes what his society has communicated to him' (p. 120). Thus it is not for instance only Luke who writes, but also the Church who writes.

### *Inspiration in the writer*

How, then, is God's message communicated through the Church to the individual ? The communication is not an inner utterance, nor an infused species, but ' a direct mystical insight and awareness of the divine reality. . . . When the prophet utters the word of God, he articulates this experience, he responds to it. . . . But I would insist once more that the spokesman speaks for his society ; when he speaks, he speaks not only in virtue of his own personal experience

<sup>1</sup> Note how this conception of author makes perfect sense of Rahner's thesis of God the author of Scripture, because He makes the events of salvation history terminate in a Church.

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' (p. 121). Yet the position is entirely different from Franzelin's *sententiae et verba*: 'I do not wish to conceive revelation as an inarticulate proposition which can be formulated indifferently one way or another, and I scarcely think that the direct insight and awareness of God is an inarticulate proposition. It is an experience . . . like pleasure or pain which has no definition except what the sentient gives it' (p. 12).

Thus, the point of the whole thesis is that the author gives his experience of God the meaning which he takes from the social context of ideas of the Church. Yet the ideas are not expressed automatically by the author. He must wrestle with his vocabulary to find the words which fit exactly the divine personal encounter he has experienced. This is the relationship which Newman saw in the two-fold *logos*, the thought and the word intrinsically connected. Neither Newman nor McKenzie could have proposed Franzelin's theory of an inarticulate divine concept which does not immediately influence man's choice of words.<sup>1</sup>

### *Conclusion*

There have undoubtedly been civilisations in the past where society was better integrated than it is today. But never in the history of the world have social relations been the subject of so much thought and study. It is the age of the sociologist, the cultural anthropologist, the social psychologist. In modern times the philosophers and theologians of the Church have also orientated their whole approach, to the social nature of man. If theology is to have any meaning for us and for our contemporaries, it must be based on man's social nature. Our religion arose out of a society and it constitutes a society. It is important for us to realise that the very beginnings of the Scriptures which constituted our Church were a societal enterprise. Inspiration took place in a community and the communal experience was recorded in a communal way by the community which was becoming the Church. Not to be conscious of our social origin and social nature is to lose our self-identity as the People of God.

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<sup>1</sup> To the objection that his theory identifies inspiration and revelation, McKenzie pleads guilty. But he justifies himself by explaining that the traditional views of both were inadequate: inspiration was too rigidly restricted to the written word, and revelation was identified with a cut-and-dried revealed proposition (p. 122).