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KARL RAHNER AND THE CRITERION
OF INSPIRATION

A Study Of The Norms For Placing A Book
On The Canon From The Human Point Of View

by

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In Memory Of
My Brother Thomas

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

"It is time now to assess the cardinal elements of the modern scriptural advance and to see how these provide new perspectives and unfold new horizons for Christian living."
(Barnabas Ahern, New Horizons, p. 5)

Modern Biblical criticism has advanced to a point where the seemingly formidable problems of the 19th century have lost their ominous character. This happy situation is due in great measure to the encyclicals Providentissimus Deus,¹ and Divino Afflante Spiritu,² which were the guiding light of Catholic scholars. The impetus given to Catholic scholarship by these directives has been seen mainly in the areas of textual, literary, and historical criticism of the sacred writings. The elements or findings of these studies furnished the exegete, in turn, with the tools, as it were, of his proper work: critical interpretation, or hermeneutics.

With the solution of one problem, however, a host of new ones is posed. This seems especially true in the

1 Pope Leo XIII, on Nov. 18, 1893, exposed at length the fundamental principles of Catholic Biblical scholarship. In 1902 he created a Biblical Commission for the promotion and supervision of Biblical studies.

2 Pope Pius XII, on Sept. 30, 1943 (the fiftieth anniversary of Providentissimus Deus), reviewed the principles of Biblical scholarship given by his predecessors, and then gave a detailed exposition of the guiding principles for scholars at that time.

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realm of Biblical studies. The advances made in the area of textual, literary and historical criticism have put in relief the need for returning to the study of inspiration itself.³

The development of the doctrine on inspiration has been a slow process of maturation. Prior to Trent the Church was content with broad affirmations of the divine origin and authority of Scripture as the written Word of God. Further, there seemed to be no need for defining the doctrine at Trent, since it was accepted at that time by the Reformers. The Council merely stated that the books of the Bible with all their parts are to be accepted as the written Word of God.

The 19th century was witness to the first serious attempts at clarifying the doctrine of inspiration. Among the pioneers Franzelin⁴ and Lagrange⁵ are outstanding. It was the fruit of their labors that constituted the starting

³ This is the thought expressed by R.A.F. MacKenzie in his Presidential Address on Sept. 4, 1957, at the general meeting of the Catholic Biblical Association of America, in Worcester, Mass. Entitled "Some Problems in the Field of Inspiration", it was later published in the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. XXI, No. 1, (Jan., 1958), pp. 1-8.

⁴ J.B. Franzelin, Tractatus de divina traditione et Scriptura (ed. 4, Rome; 1896).

⁵ M.J. Lagrange, "L'Inspiration des Livres Saints," Revue Biblique, Vol. V (1896), pp. 199-220.

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point for the critical studies of others. In the last decade of this century Lagrange and other Thomists made significant use of the notion of instrumental causality in the exposition of their theory of inspiration.

However, instrumentality is but one aspect of the problem (and according to some,⁶ an inadequate solution). It would seem that the progress made in this area, scil., instrumentality, demands similar development in other questions on inspiration, that is, if the doctrine is to be in harmony with other developments in Biblical studies.⁷

The challenge to clarify further this doctrine on inspiration has been accepted and answered by one of the most influential theologians of our time. Karl Rahner, in his Über die Schriftinspiration,⁸ has made a monumental contribution in the area of biblical inspiration.⁹

6 In a review of Benoit's Initiation biblique, Joseph Coppens criticized Benoit's position. This review appeared in Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses, Vol. XXI (1955), pp. 671-673.

7 Cf. J.B. Hawkins, "A Suggestion About Inspiration," Downside Review, 260 (July, 1962), pp. 197-213.

8 Quaestiones Disputatae I, (Freiburg: Herder and Herder Co., 1961), p. 88. We shall leave discussion of the genesis of this work for Chapter III. See p. 66.

9 In this essay it would seem that Rahner anticipated the discussion of inspiration by the Fathers of Vatican II. The latter were less interested "in clarifying this or that particular problem than in trying to see these problems in a livelier and subtler perspective than that of the theological textbooks to which we have been accustomed—in terms of the whole history of salvation." (Herder Correspondence 2, January, 1965, p. 20.)

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In this little work, many facets of the problem of inspiration are examined. It is the purpose of this dissertation to study one in particular: the question of the criterion(a) of canonicity. The problem is not new; theologians have long been debating the question.¹⁰ In the last few years, however, it has become the center of new and more intensive study, and is invariably mentioned in connection with the Scripture-Tradition controversy. Our aim here is to study the ideas which have emerged in this new enquiry on canonicity, with special reference to the contribution of Father Karl Rahner, and to present our evaluation of these ideas. Such an evaluation will constitute the state of the question as it now stands—a question which is vital in modern theology and Scripture. It is precisely in this that we hope to make a contribution, and thus justify this study.¹¹ The formal object of

¹⁰ As far back as Cajetan's time, (ca. 1530), and even St. Jerome, (d. 420), whom Cajetan followed, was the question debated.

¹¹ Aside from a few conferences and symposiums, there is no summation of the criticism of Rahner's work on Biblical Inspiration in the English language at the present time.

Notable among the meetings where Rahner's work has received attention are the following: Antonio Artola, C.P., "La teoría del P. Rahner sobre la inspiración: Balance de seis años de crítica, por el R.P.," addressed to the XXV Semana Bíblica Español, 21 al 26 de septiembre, se verson sobre el tema: Cuestiones bíblicas de actualidad; (Madrid); David Stanley, S.J., "The Concept of Biblical Inspiration,"

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this study may be stated as follows: What constitutes the criterion or criteria for placing a book on the Canon from the human point of view?¹²

Lest this statement of the question lead to misunderstanding, we make clear at the outset the distinction between dogmatic data and theological reflection on that data or what I shall later call the Fact, and Reflection on the Fact, respectively. Our case in point is the distinction between the Declaration of Trent and the theological reflection on that data, along with the human investigation prior to it.

In the Declaration of Trent on April 8, 1546, we Catholics have the final¹³ legitimate norm for knowing

addressed to the 13th Annual Convention of Catholic Theological Society of America, (Yonkers, N.Y.: 1958); Van der Ploeg, O.P., address given at Louvain on February 4, 1960, which was a critique of Rahner's work; most recently, Gavin Reilly, O.F.M.Cap., "Karl Rahner's Ideas on Inspiration," address given to the 11th National Convention of the Society of Catholic College Teachers of Sacred Doctrine, April 19, 1965. (St. Louis, Mo.).

12 The question of the Canon is in the logical order, i.e., quomodo cognoscantur. It presupposes the ontological order. In relation to canonicity this is the existence and divine nature of inspiration. The solemn declaration of the Church is the conditio sine qua non. This, too, is presupposed in our inquiry as we shall point out in the following paragraphs.

13 By 'final' is meant the definitive declaration of the Church establishing the canonical list of inspired books. The decisions of the Council of Florence and others prior to Trent were of a disciplinary character only.

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which books are inspired and canonical, both of the Old Testament and the New Testament. Therefore, the question, "How can we know which books are inspired?" has a simple answer: The Church tells us. This is a matter of faith which we accept.

Prior to the fixation of the Canon, there was a history of the uncontested and unanimous acceptance of some books, the general rejection of others, and hesitancy concerning the inclusion of still others. For the Church herself, then, there was an investigation of the natural order preliminary to her dogmatic decision. In other words, prior to the Church's dogmatic decision on the canonical list of inspired books, there existed a long history of opinions as to just what books belonged to the Canon. Keeping in mind that, between the stage of human inquiry and that of declaring a dogma, the Holy Spirit intervenes in a special manner, we pose our question on the criterion of canonicity: "What prompted the Church, from the human, prudential point of view, to choose these particular books as canonical while rejecting others? For example, what prompted the choice of I-II Esdras and the rejection of III-IV Esdras?"

Our method of procedure, based on this distinction just made, will be by way of the better known to the less known. Starting with the official declaration of Trent,

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and the history of the formation of the Canon which led to Trent, we shall have stated the Fact. The Reflection on the Fact will be seen in the remainder of the dissertation.

DIVISIONS

The division by chapter will be made as follows: In Chapter II we shall present the historical background of the problem. This will include a conspectus of the history of the Canon, a statement of the problem coming out of Trent, some solutions to the problem of canonicity with a special section devoted to the Vosté-Zarb debate, and finally, a critical examination of these proposals. In Chapter III we shall present the views of Karl Rahner. This will embrace his whole theory of inspiration as given in Über die Schriftinspiration. Chapter IV will be devoted to an evaluation of Rahner's theory on canonicity. This will be subdivided into three parts: a biographical sketch of Rahner; a report on the evaluation of contemporary theologians; and, finally, our personal efforts of an objective assessment of Rahner's proposal. Lastly, Chapter V will be a recapitulation and summary of conclusions reached in this study.

The immediate task before us, then, is to present a conspectus of the history of the Canon. We make one reservation at this point: since Rahner confines his

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discussion almost entirely to the New Testament, we shall restrict the matter of this dissertation principally to that area. Without further preliminary, let us move ahead to the conspectus of the history of the Canon of the New Testament.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM

"Ego evangelio non crederem,
nisi me catholicae Ecclesiae
auctoritas commoveret."

(St. Augustine, Contra Epistolam Manichaei,
Chapter V, 6. Migne PL 42, 176)

CONSPECTUS OF THE HISTORY OF THE CANON

In factio esse: Declaration of Trent

On April 8, 1546, in its fourth Session, the Council of Trent issued the decree De Canonicis Scripturis, in which it listed the books of both the Old and New Testaments. In this declaration the Catholic Church gave her official recognition to these books as sacred and canonical. The text reads:

The sacred general and ecumenical Council, lawfully assembled in the Holy Spirit ... keeping constantly before it its program, which is, by the suppression of errors, to preserve in the Church the very purity of the Gospel, previously announced by the prophets in the Holy Scriptures, (the Gospel) which our Lord Jesus Christ first proclaimed with His own lips and which He commanded to be preached by His apostles to all men as the source of all truth and of all moral law; considering also clearly that this truth and this law are contained in the written books and in the unwritten traditions which, received by the Apostles as from the very lips of Christ or transmitted as from hand to hand by the Apostles under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, have come down to us; following the example of the Fathers in the faith, (this Council) receives and venerates with no less love than respect, all the books of both the Old and the New Testament, since God is the author of the one as of the other, as well as the traditions which concern faith and morals, whether they were dictated by the Holy Spirit, and which have been preserved by a continual succession in the Catholic Church. It judged, however, that a list of the Sacred Books should be

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written into this decree so that no one may doubt which books the Council accepts. The list is as follows:¹

The Council then gave the enumeration of the twenty-seven Canonical Books of the New Testament (after first enumerating those of the Old Testament).

This solemn declaration of Trent was echoed in the reaffirmation of faith by the Vatican Council:

Qui quidem Veteris et Novi Testamenti libri integri cum omnibus suis partibus, prout in eiusdem Concilii decreto recensentur, et in veteri Vulgata latina editione habentur, pro sacris et canonicis suscipiendi sunt. Eos vero Ecclesia pro sacris et canonicis habet, non ideo, quod sola humana industria concinnati, sua deinde auctoritate sint approbati; nec ideo dum taxat, quod revelationem sine errore contineant; sed propterea, quod Spiritu Sancto inspirante conscripti Deum habent auctorem, atque ut tales ipsi Ecclesiae traditae sunt.

Those books of the Old and the New Testament must be accepted as sacred and canonical in their entirety, with all their parts, just as they are listed in the decree of that Council [Trent] and are contained in the ancient Latin Vulgate. Those books, however, are held to be sacred and canonical by the Church, not on the grounds that they were produced by mere human ingenuity and afterwards approved by her authority; nor on the mere score that they contain revelation without error. But they are held to be sacred and canonical because they were written as a result of the prompting of the Holy Spirit, they have God for their author, and as such, they were entrusted to the Church.²

¹ Council of Trent, Session IV (April 8, 1546). Denziger, Enchiridion Symbolorum, 783, (tr. J. Clarkson et al. The Church Teaches, St. Louis: Herder, 1955), pp. 44-45.

² Vatican Council I, Session III (April 24, 1870), Denz. 1787. The Church Teaches, p. 47.

For us, the faithful, it is sufficient that we accept these infallible decisions of Holy Mother Church. The history of the Canon closed, then, with the declaration of Trent.

In fieri: History of the Formation to Trent

General Characteristics.

Prior to Trent, however, the situation in regard to the Canon was not that clear-cut. From the very beginning of the Church there was a positive attempt made to preserve and hold in veneration certain books we now call canonical, and at the same time reject those considered non-inspired and therefore, non-canonical.

The Muratorian Fragment,³ listing writings accepted around 180-190 A.D., gives evidence of this positive attempt, while we have only to read the history of the apocryphal works,⁴ of Marcion's pretentious

³ This document, in fragmentary condition, bears the name of its discoverer, L.A. Muratori. The latter was an Italian historian. He found the document in the Ambrosian Library in Milan and published it in 1740. Composed towards the end of the second century, it is the oldest ecclesiastical document about the New Testament Canon. Although no proof has been given, some scholars believe that it is a translation from the Greek.

⁴ Protestants employ different terminology. They use the term apocrypha to refer to the seven Deuterocanonical Books retained by Catholics. To complicate

canon,⁵ and of the Montanist heresy⁶ to see that the early Fathers undeniably repudiated certain writings.

matters further, the term apocrypha, from the point of view of dogma was applied to:

- 1) works openly heretical and unorthodox, v.g. Pisis Sophia of the Gnostics;
- 2) writings, heretical in content, but concealed under an Apostle's name, v.g. The Gospel of Philip;
- 3) writings of substantially sound content, but with heretical tendencies, v.g. Acts of Peter;
- 4) works which were doctrinally irreproachable, but questioned as to their apostolic origin.

Properly speaking, for the Catholic, the term has meaning only in relation to the Canon. It simply designates those books not received into the Canon, regardless of the reason.

Cf. A. Robert and A. Tricot, Guide to the Bible, (tr. E. Arbez and M. McGuire, Rome: Desclee, 1960), vol. 1, pp. 123-126 for a summary of the chief apocrypha of the New Testament.

5 For an analysis of Marcion's significance in the establishment of the Canon, cf. A. Wikenhauser, New Testament Introduction, (tr. J. Cunningham, New York: Herder, 1963), pp. 34-35. The author summarizes the theory of D. de Bruyne and later developed by A. Harnack in which they hold that the Church between 160 and 180 A.D. took certain measures against Marcion:

"1. For each of the four Gospels which it recognized it produced a prologue which it prefixed to the particular Gospel—only the prologues to Mk., Lk., and John have survived.

2. It took over the prologues to the ten Pauline Epistles which Marcion or one of his followers had composed.

3. It produced prologues for the three Pastoral Epistles which it also recognized.

4. In the longest of the Gospel prologues, the prologue to Luke, it accepted explicitly Acts of the Apostles as a work of Luke, and Apocalypse as a work of John the Apostle. In regard to both these books we know that Marcion had explicitly rejected them."

As for the plausibility of this theory, Wikenhauser merely says that it is "well-founded." (p. 35)

6 Cf. R. Deferrari, et al., The Fathers of the Church, 46 vols., (New York: Cima Pub. Co., 1951-1963), vol. 19, Bk. 5, c. 14, p. 311.

Not all writings enjoyed equal authority and universality, however.⁷ Even amongst the Fathers, notably Jerome,⁸ there were doubts cast upon the acceptance of some writings.⁹ The early synods and councils, too, although nearly unanimous in approving our present canon, did exhibit hesitancy concerning some books, if by no other means than by their omission.¹⁰ The list finally drawn up at Florence in the decree for the Jacobites, was the one adopted by the Council of Trent.

Now that we have mentioned the general characteristics of the formation of the Canon, we shall present a brief survey of the development of the Canon up to its final fixation.

7 Some writings, as Philemon, were written for individuals or for a particular occasion; the contents, therefore, were particular and individual, and the writers did not send them to all the churches. The doctrine contained in some epistles was not easily understood by some far-distant churches, and became the prey of unscrupulous men.

8 His doubts on canonicity concerned the deutero-canonical books of the Old Testament, while at the same time, advocating the usage of these books in the liturgy.

As for the New Testament books, his hesitancy was in the area of authenticity, while upholding the canonicity of Heb., Jas., 2 Pet., 2 & 3 Jn., Jude, and Apocalypse.

9 Idem.

10 Canon 60 of the Council of Laodicea (363 A.D.) omits the Apocalypse. However, because the Apocalypse was accepted by Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa some authors believe that this Canon (60) is a later interpolation. In other words all evidence points to the fact that Apocalypse was generally known and accepted in the Syrian church at this time. Cf. A. Wikenhauser, op. cit., p. 50.

The division is more or less arbitrary, since on the basis of chronology, the periods could be greater in number with the time element in each shortened. For our purposes, three major divisions will suffice: 1) The Formation (ca. 80-170 A.D.); 2) The Fixation (ca. 170-405 A.D.); 3) The Declaration of the Magisterium.

Chronological Development of the Canon

1) The Formation (ca. 80-170 A.D.)

During this period, i.e., from Apostolic times to the end of the second century, the books first became known in the various churches, principally Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, and of course, Jerusalem. At first only the Gospels were given equal standing with the Old Testament writings,¹¹ but in the second half of this period the Pauline Epistles, Acts, Apocalypse and two Catholic Epistles (1 Jn and I Pet) gained full canonical standing. All of this was a result of the determined judgment of the Books by the various churches, in which the collective conscience of the Church took shape. The latter occurred precisely by virtue of its recognition of the Divine element contained in the Sacred writings. Representative

11 A. Wikenhauser, op. cit., pp. 32-33.

of this collective thinking are St. Clement of Rome,¹² St. Ignatius of Antioch,¹³ and Polycarp of Smyrna.¹⁴

Viewed psychologically, this period was witness to certain forces previously mentioned: Marcion, the apocryphal works, and the Montanist heresy. Together these formed an opposition, as it were, which acted as a catalyst in accomplishing the precision of a definitive list in the Canon, (at least of the more important writings).

In the transition from this first stage to the second in the development of the Canon, two names come to the fore. Ireneus of Rome and Tertullian of Africa—although each took a different approach to the problem of heresy—both guarded the Church against the possible acceptance of pseudo-Christian books in the Canon.¹⁵

12 J. Kleist, Ancient Christian Writers, (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1946), no. 1, p. 38 (ad Cor 45:2) and in ft. nt. 3, p. 104, Kleist remarks on the astonishing familiarity (Clement's) of the New Testament Canon.

13 Ibid., p. 71. (Ad Magn. 8,2).

14 Ibid., p. 77, no. 6. (Ad Phil. 3,2).

15 Ireneus, of Rome with an Hellenistic education, concentrated upon the philosophical errors of the Gnostics of Greco-Oriental bent, while Tertullian, an African, looking upon the Scriptures as the instruments or titles of the Church to certain rights, attacked Marcion from a legal point of view for infringements upon the rights of the Church. For a complete treatment of Ireneus' views on the Canon, see A. Camerlynck, Saint Irénée et le Canon du Nouveau Testament, (Louvain: Istas, ed., 1896).

2) The Fixation (ca. 170-405 A.D.)

In this period we find that the reflex judgement mentioned above was applied to those "secondary" books of the New Testament. The canonicity of a few books remained more or less obscure. However, the reciprocal influence between Greeks and Latins seemed to dispel hesitancy about the canonicity, even though doubts as to authenticity prevailed.¹⁶ Such was the case with the Apocalypse among the Greeks and the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Catholic Epistles among the Latins.

Representative of the Fathers of this period are Hippolytus (Rome);¹⁷ Clement and Origen (Alexandria);¹⁸ Cyprian (Carthage);¹⁹ Cyril and Eusebius of Jerusalem.²⁰

16 Cf. A. Wikenhauser, op. cit., pp. 57, 58.

17 According to J. Lagrange, Histoire ancienne du Canon du Nouveau Testament, (Paris: Gabalda, 1933), p. 69, St. Hippolytus followed the same principles as Justin, Irenaeus and Tertullian, and in his treatise De Christo et Antichristo, Hippolytus refers to most of the N.T. Canon. In addition, he gives a description of the liturgical use of the Scriptures. Cf. Migne, Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina, (Paris: 1844), 10.

18 Migne, op. cit., 8, 192, and 8, 940-941 for Clement, and 11, 341 for Origen.

With the discovery of the Origen papyri, there has been a recent revival of interest in him. Probably the most notable scholar on Origen today is Henri Crouzel, whose latest work is Origène et la philosophie, (Paris: Desclée, 1962).

19 Cyprian cited the Epistles of Paul frequently, Apocalypse, but did omit Hebrews and Philemon in his citations.

20 Cf. A. Wikenhauser, op. cit., pp. 47, 48.

It is to the last two just enumerated that we are indebted for our knowledge of the Canon in the Church at Jerusalem itself.

Eusebius in his monumental ecclesiastical history gives a comprehensive survey of all the writings on the history of the New Testament Canon.²¹

St. Cyril's scope is less broad and he gives more information about the extent of the Canon in the church at Jerusalem.²²

Two other Fathers deserve special notice for their influence on the history of the Canon: Sts. Augustine and Jerome.²³ Whereas Augustine drew up a canon which agrees with our present one, and was identical with the Canon given by the Synod of Carthage in 419 A.D., Jerome exercised his influence at the Synod of Rome in 382 A.D. Jerome's familiarity with Greek thought and thorough grasp

21 Cf. R. Deferrari, op. cit., Bk 5, p. 311.

22 Cf. A. Wikenhauser, op. cit., pp. 47, 48, for a quotation from the Fourth of Catechetical Instructions by Cyril to illustrate his point.

23 Cf. Migne, op. cit., 42, c. 4, p. 176, where Augustine's famous statement appears: "Ego vero Evangelio non crederem, nisi me catholicae Ecclesiae commoveret auctoritas."

For the most recent treatment of Jerome and the Canon, cf. F.X. Murphy, A Monument to St. Jerome, (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1952), "St. Jerome and the Canon of the Holy Scriptures," by Patrick Shehan, pp. 257-288.

of the languages of both Greek and Latin enabled him to act as intermediary between East and West. Thus, he contributed to the favorable reciprocal influence mentioned on the preceding pages.

It would seem, in examining the writings of this period, that apostolic origin (or approval), liturgical usage in addition to orthodoxy of doctrine, constituted the title to authority of the sacred books.

Let us now take a survey of the declarations of the Church prior to Trent.

3) The Declarations of the Magisterium

All hesitation came to an end in regard to the canonicity of the Sacred Books of the New Testament with the official decrees of the Councils of Rome (382), Hippo (393), and of Carthage (397 and 419), and the list given by Pope Innocent I in 405.²⁴ An enumeration of the twenty-seven Books of the New Testament, and the complete list of the Old Testament Books, are found in these documents.

24 In his Dictionnaire de Théol. cathol., II, col. 1568, M. Mangelot explains that these decisions were of a disciplinary character:

"Toutes ces décisions concernant le Canon complet de la Bible n'avaient qu'une autorité disciplinaire... C'est le Concile de Trente, Sess. IV, qui décida dogmatiquement pour la première fois le 8 avril 1546, la canonicité de ces livres."

Although there is a dispute over the authenticity of certain MSS supposedly dating to the Synod of Rome,²⁵ Pope Gelasius republished the decree in 495. Prior to that was the letter of Pope Innocent I to Exuperius, of Toulouse, (405) in which the Holy Father replied to a request of the Bishops to have a list published of the Canonical Books.²⁶

The three African Synods named above, give all twenty-seven Books, but the first two place Hebrews extra numerum.²⁷ The last one agrees with Augustine's list; although Augustine no longer cited Hebrews as the work of Paul (after 409), nevertheless, he did not deny that it belonged to the Canon.

The Council of Florence, in the decree for the Jacobites,²⁸ lists all twenty-seven Books. This was the

25 Cf. A. Wikenhauser, op. cit., p. 52.

26 Migne, op. cit., pp. 495-502, gives the complete text of the letter. We quote part of it here:

"Qui vero libri recipiantur in canone [Dionysius adds here 'Scripturarum', meaning Sanctorum] brevis annexus ostendit. Haec sunt quae desiderata moneri voluisti: 'Moysi libri quinque... [He names Books of O.T.]. Item Novi Testamenti: Evangeliorum libri quatuor... [He names all Books of N.T.]. Caetera autem, quae vel sub nomine Matthiae sive Jacobi minoris, vel sub nomine Petri et Joannis, quae a quodam Leucio scripta sunt... non solum repudianda, verum etiam noveris esse damnanda. Data X kalendas Martii, Stilicone secundo et Anthemio viris clarissimis consulibus."

27 Supra, p. 15.

28 Cf. Dz. 706.

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same list later to be adopted by the Council of Trent.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Humanists took occasion to emphasize the divergent views found in ecclesiastical tradition regarding the origin and canonicity of certain books of the Bible. Erasmus was notable among those who stirred up new discussion, although he accepted the books as canonical. Luther took a very radical view, and we find very strong reaction to his assertions in the explicit solemn declaration at Trent. Prior to fixing the attitude of the Church, there was much discussion and even violent difference of opinion among the Fathers of the Council. Wikenhauser sums up the debate in these words:

A conservative group maintained that they should dispense with critical examination of the question, and should simply accept and sanction authoritatively the traditional Canon which had been proclaimed by the Council of Florence. Seripando, General of the Hermits, and Bertano, bishop of Fano, led a critical group which advised the adoption of St. Jerome's distinction between books with a canonical character in the proper sense of the word, and those which could be called canonical only in the loose sense: the former alone were to be the legitimate sources of the faith, while the latter could serve only the purpose of religious edification... A third group was inclined to compromise by simply taking over the Canon of the Council of Florence, but not excluding a critico-historical discussion.²⁹

29 A. Wikenhauser, op. cit., pp. 59-60.

The results were the adoption of the Canon of the Council of Florence, but with no scientific defense of the Canon. To cover the passages often rejected as spurious, without naming them explicitly, the Council voted to insert the words "cum omnibus suis partibus..."³⁰ Hebrews is listed with the Pauline Epistles; the three Epistles and the Apocalypse are attributed to St. John. Yet scholars and exegetes are unanimous in opinion that the Council had no intention of settling merely historical questions, and as we previously pointed out authenticity and canonicity are distinct concepts. This decree at Trent, and its affirmation at the Vatican I, then, are the infallible and irreformable decisions of the Magisterium. We stated the very words of the decree at the beginning of this section, and have now completed the survey.

In our Introduction, we pointed out that there are two questions that can be asked concerning the Canon: The Fact of the formation in time, i.e., its history, and the Reflection on the Fact by theologians and exegetes throughout the centuries. The second process is the logical consequence of the first, because, although the history of the Canon ended with Trent, the decree does not preclude reflex advertence to what happened prior to the declaration.

30 Dz. 784.

Therefore, our next inquiry should be into the theories on the criterion(a) used in admitting books to the canon according to post-Tridentine theologians.

First, however, we must state the problem which arose from a phrase in the decree at Trent, and which initiated inquiry into the question of canonicity—our special concern in this study. We consider that it is against this background only, that is, of the Scripture-Tradition Controversy, that our question becomes meaningful. Prior to investigating the theories of canonicity, then, we shall place our question on the human criterion in canonicity in the perspective of the Scripture-Tradition Controversy.

Our exposition will be as objective as possible,³¹ and will follow this order: 1) the disputed text examined; 2) the various opposing views taken in the interpretation of this text; and, finally, 3) the problem of the human criterion involved in canonicity. Without further preliminary, let us examine the disputed text.

³¹ One of the most recent objective and readable presentations of this background is Scripture and Tradition by Gabriel Moran, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963). Its sub-title "A Survey of the Controversy" indicates exactly what we wish to present in the next section of our study as a background for the problem of canonicity. Therefore, our chief source for the Scripture-Tradition problem will be Brother Gabriel Moran's work.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM COMING OUT OF TRENT

1) The Disputed Text

Sacrosancta... Tridentina
Synodus,... perspiciensque,
hanc veritatem et discipli-
nam contineri in libris
scriptis et sine scripto
traditionibus, quae ab
ipsius Christi ore ab Apos-
tolis acceptae, aut ab
ipsis Apostolis Spiritu
Sancto dictante quasi per
manus traditae ad nos usque
pervenerunt...

The Council is aware that
this truth and teaching are
contained in written books and
in the unwritten traditions
that the Apostles received
from Christ Himself or that
were handed on as it were from
hand to hand, from the
Apostles under the inspiration
of the Holy Spirit, and so
have come down to us.³²

The definition just quoted is that of the Council of Trent
on the Canonical Scriptures. It is in one sense a conclu-
sion to our question, as shown above in our statement of
the fact. On the other hand, it is also a starting point
for the understanding of the theologian, i.e., the reflec-
tion on the fact.

In this definition the words "written and unwritten
traditions" have come under close scrutiny in post-Trident-
ine theology.³³ Since World War I and more recently in the

32 Dz. 783. Cf. Note 1, p. 12.

33 Space does not allow for a complete listing of
literature on this subject. Among the many outstanding
studies, one may note the following:
Y. M.-J. Congar, La Tradition et les traditions. Essai his-
torique, (Paris: Fayard, 1960); G.H. Tavard, Holy Writ and
Holy Church, (London: Burns and Oates, 1959); H. Lennerz,
"Scriptura sola," Gregorianum, 40 (1959), pp. 38-53; Id.,
"Scriptura et Traditio in decreto 4 Sessionis concilii

past ten years, controversies have raged over the precise meaning of these terms.³⁴ Seemingly, Trent left an open question regarding the relationship between Scripture and Tradition. The question is whether the contents of Scripture and Tradition are mutually exclusive, partially overlap, or are identical. In more recent years the attention of scholars has been focused on the first: the existence of a constitutive tradition. Germane to our thesis is this problem: How explain that the Bible does not list its own Canon, and which is likewise not listed in sacred tradition?

It is, therefore, against this background of the problem of Scripture and tradition that we feel our question concerning canonicity should be situated and formulated.

tridentini," Gregorianum, 42 (1961), pp. 517-522; J. Holstein, La Tradition dans l'Eglise, (Paris: Grasset, 1960); J. Geiselmann, "Un Malentendu éclairci: La relation 'Ecriture-Tradition' dans la Théologie catholique," Istina, vol. v (April, 1958), pp. 197-214.

34 Cf. J. Gaffney, "Scripture and Tradition in Recent Catholic Thought," Thomist, vol. 27 (Apr.-Oct., 1963) pp. 141-169, where Father Gaffney points out that the problem of Scripture and Tradition has been "newly illuminated, agitated, complicated by the contributions and demands from an extraordinary number of quarters—ecumenism, biblical source criticism, exegesis, Mariology, Patrology, scholasticism, the Reformation and 19th century history, the theory of inspiration, the development of doctrine..." (pp. 168, 169).

At the end of the last section we indicated our primary source for this background matter—Brother Gabriel Moran's study. Let us present in summary, then, the various positions taken in this controversy, and in this context, formulate our question on canonicity. However, we must first state some preliminary definitions and divisions for the sake of clarity in the discussion to follow.

Preliminary Definitions

A working definition of tradition might be stated as "the transmission of institutions, beliefs, and practices, in the Church through the course of centuries."³⁵

We can distinguish between active and subjective tradition on the one hand, and passive and objective tradition on the other. From the point of view of the transmission of a body of material, we may refer either to the act of handing on, or the content of the matter handed on. The act of transmitting is called active or subjective tradition,³⁶ whereas the latter, i.e., the content, is called passive or objective tradition.

³⁵ Gabriel Moran, Scripture and Tradition, (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963), p. 19.

³⁶ Ibid.; the author points out that all theologians are in agreement with the fact that in some sense active tradition may be identified with the Church itself. But, he adds, it is necessary to keep the distinction between passive tradition on the one hand, and the magisterium of the Church and active tradition on the other.

Objective or passive tradition may be further divided, on the basis of origin, into divine-apostolic, human-apostolic, and ecclesiastical. By divine-apostolic is meant the truths received by the Apostles qua Apostles, from God, whereas human-apostolic tradition had its origin with the Apostles qua Pastors. Ecclesiastical tradition simply refers to that tradition which originated in post-Apostolic times.

From another perspective, objective tradition may be divided into dogmatic or disciplinary.³⁷ The former refers to revealed doctrine in contrast to disciplinary tradition which has reference to any long-existing practice such as a liturgical rite. This could be either in Apostolic or post-Apostolic times.

The final distinction which should be made at the outset is found in the different ways in which tradition may be contained in revelation. (We are referring to dogmatic tradition, of course.) This necessarily involves Sacred Scripture. Traditions which are explicit in Scripture are called inherent traditions; one that is implicit in Scripture is declarative tradition; lastly, if there

³⁷ We have seen an example of this in our *Conspicuous of the History of the Canon*. We noted there that the decree of the synods and councils prior to Trent were of disciplinary character only.

were a tradition existing apart from Scripture it would be called a constitutive tradition.³⁸ The latter would be the 'unwritten' tradition, i.e., that which would not be revealed even implicitly in Sacred Scripture.

During the discussion to follow on the existence of a constitutive tradition, it should be kept in mind that the term refers to objective, divine-apostolic, dogmatic, and extra-Scriptural, revealed truth.³⁹

2) The Scripture-Tradition Controversy

The Negative View

For the sake of maintaining and promoting the unity of Scripture, the Church and tradition, many Catholic Theologians today deny the existence of a constitutive tradition. We shall look at their arguments based upon the Acts of the Council, the evidence from history, and from a doctrinal point of view.

The significance of the change from partim-partim to et in the decree of Trent forms the basis of discussion for Geiselman⁴⁰ and those who deny constitutive tradition.

38 G. Moran, op. cit., p. 21.

39 Ibid.

40 For a complete enumeration of Geiselman's works on this subject, see Moran, op. cit., p. 92. We have mentioned one article above (note 33), which is a translation into French of the original German article published one year previously.

Geiselman claims that prior to Trent this formula reflected the thought current among theologians. The shift in terms was a concession made to a minority of the Council Fathers, but in no way was the essential meaning of partim-partim changed—that revelation is entirely in Scripture as interpreted by tradition. In changing the text, the Council merely disposed of its primary concern, which was the denouncement of the Scriptura sola of the Reformers.⁴¹

Historically, they say that the very notion of tradition has gone through various stages in man's acceptance and use of the term. The modern understanding of tradition as an indissoluble unity with Scripture and the Church approaches the view of the early Church up to the Middle Ages. Unfortunately, out of the polemics of the Reformation even to post-Tridentine times, a false dichotomy arose between the authority of Scripture and that of the Church.⁴² This resulted in throwing the notion of tradition out of perspective. In modern times, with the emphasis on the solidarity of the Mystical Body, they maintain that their position is the only logical one, namely, affirming the

41 Cf. Moran, op. cit., p. 35.

42 Those who oppose a constitutive tradition say that this dichotomy resulted from the stress laid on the equality of tradition and Scripture by 16th century theologians, v.g., Melchior Cano, Bellarmine, who opposed the Reformers.

integral unity of Scripture, tradition, and the Church. In this affirmation, which they feel can be equated with the pristine concept, they rule out the existence of a constitutive tradition.

From a doctrinal point of view, these theologians hold that theirs is not merely a negative position, but that it touches upon the true and proper understanding of Scripture, tradition, and the Church, and in addition, the development of dogma.⁴³

Scripture, they say, receives its proper reverence, but is not exalted at the expense of tradition. The Scriptures belong to the Church, and the Church, guided by tradition, preserves and interprets the Sacred Books.⁴⁴ All play a role in the very life of the Church,⁴⁵ which is expressed in its various stages of growth through the development of dogma.

The conclusion of those who take this position is that the existence of a constitutive tradition is rendered superfluous.

43 Cf. Moran, op. cit., pp. 42-44.

44 Cf. Karl Rahner, Inspiration in the Bible, (tr. C. Henkey, New York: Herder and Herder, 1961), pp. 37, 38.

45 Cf. H. Holstein, "La Tradition d'après le Concile de Trente," Recherches de Science religieuse, 47 (July, 1959), p. 390, cited in Moran, op. cit., p. 44.

Let us take a brief look at the opposing argument of those who hold the existence of a constitutive tradition.

The Affirmative View

Lennerz, in opposition to Geiselman's interpretation,⁴⁶ views Trent's use of terminology merely as a refutation of the Protestant theory of Scriptura sola. In subscribing to this opinion, he is in agreement with Geiselman, but for different reasons, and that is where the opposition lies. Lennerz maintains that overemphasis on the change has resulted in a distortion of meaning.

The intention of Trent, he says, was to define the existence of oral tradition, that is, truths revealed by God which are in no way contained in Holy Scripture. His interpretation rests on the distinction between written books and unwritten traditions, mutually exclusive terms, and not between Scripture and tradition which he admits do overlap.

Secondly, Lennerz points out that his interpretation does not stand or fall with the shift in terminology—that some modern scholars are reading too much

46 Supra, pp. 25, 26, note 33.

significance into this change. It is, after all, the final decree that matters.

The historical evidence given by those proponents of this theory points to the somewhat obscure, but gradual explicitation of the Two-source Theory. The classic arguments are Jn 20:30; "There are many things... are not written," from the Scriptures themselves, and the practical testimony to tradition of the Fathers in the acceptance of the canonicity of the Sacred Books. With pre-Tridentine theologians, the distinction between Scripture and tradition became increasingly clear, so that Trent merely had to ratify the common teaching of the time.⁴⁷ Vatican I confirmed the decision of Trent, and since then the common teaching has been in favor of an extra-scriptural body of truths as a complement of the Sacred Books.⁴⁸

From the doctrinal point of view, the adherents of this theory assert that to make tradition, as a source of revelation, co-extensive with that of Scripture, results in a dilemma when faced with points of doctrine in Mariology, the sacraments, and canonicity.⁴⁹

47 Cf. Lennerz, "Scriptura Sola," pp. 40-43, cited in Moran, op. cit., p. 56.

48 Cf. Moran, op. cit., p. 56.

49 Ibid., pp. 57, 58.

Regarding Mariology and the sacraments, several doctrines which have been defined have no more than a hint, if that, in Sacred Scripture.

Extra-scriptural tradition perhaps has its most cogent argument in the doctrine of canonicity, for nowhere in Scripture can a list of the Books be found. We shall reserve further amplification of this point for the next part of this paper.

These theologians conclude, then, that theirs is the stand taken in the practical teaching of the Church. Any theory of a "totally in Scripture, totally in tradition" would be an innovation both unfounded and unapproved.⁵⁰

With the risk of oversimplification we have attempted to outline the two principal positions in the Scripture-Tradition problem. There are those who hold a middle ground between the allegations of the sufficiency and insufficiency of Scripture.⁵¹ Perhaps they come closer to the truth. However, it is not our purpose here to analyse any of the positions taken; rather, it is to set

⁵⁰ Moran, op. cit., p. 61.

⁵¹ Brother Moran presents a very fine comparison of the two views, showing where they agree, and where the two might be brought more closely together, in op. cit., pp. 77-87.

our particular problem of canonicity in its proper context, since in any discussion of the Scripture-Tradition question, the problem of canonicity is invariably mentioned. With this background in mind, then, let us formulate the question of canonicity, which constitutes the formal object of this dissertation.

3) The Criterion of Canonicity

At the inception of formulating our problem let us make it clear that there can be no question that the Church has knowledge of the fact of inspiration and that these inspired Books alone comprise the Bible. It is a supernatural truth which can be known only through God's own revelation.

The problem of canonicity would seem to require that at least the revelation of the Sacred Books be in sacred tradition, since it is not in Scripture itself. Precisely because of this fact, a vote seems to be cast in favor of tradition. Even those opposing the "constitutive tradition theory" and advocating a "totally in Scripture theory", admit the weakness of their theory when faced with the problem of canonicity.⁵² The Abbot of Downside,

⁵² Cf. A. Stevenson, "The Development and Immutability of Christian Doctrine," Theological Studies, vol. 19 (Dec., 1958), p. 495, cited in Moran, op. cit., p. 59.

Dom Christopher Butler sums up the problem in these words:

To begin with, it is impossible to draw up a canon of Scripture from the internal evidence of the Bible itself without appeal to any outside evidence or authority. How should we know, for instance, by merely examining the books of the Bible, whether the Second Epistle of St. Peter is to be reckoned in the Bible or not? Of course Catholics know the answer, because the Church tells them that it is canonical and therefore inspired. But how does the Church know this? She is guided to her decision by the Holy Ghost: 'It will be for him, the truth-giving Spirit, when he comes, to guide you into all truth' (Jn. 16:13). But this decision, though guided by God, is based on evidence which is, or has at some time in the past been, available. The evidence is not in the pages of the Bible itself, so far as we can see, at least, not sufficient evidence. It therefore seems that we must call in the evidence of the 'unwritten' tradition in order that the scope and limits of the canon of Scripture may be decided by the Church.⁵³

From this argument on canonicity, many tend to generalize to the existence of a constitutive tradition. Whether or not this comes as a valid deduction is not pertinent to our discussion. The point we wish to stress is that, regardless of whether the Scripture-Tradition Controversy is resolved, the problem of canonicity remains. The reason is that canonicity is itself a unique fact, and as such, constitutes a unique problem.

⁵³ Christopher Butler, The Church and the Bible, (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1960), p. 47.

Aside from the fact that canonicity is used by some to advance the cause of a constitutive tradition, i.e., an extra-Scriptural body of revealed truths, nevertheless it does constitute an argument in favor of tradition of some kind, as we pointed out above. If this is so, we must look for the human criterion in canonicity, insofar as this is possible.

Since the Council of Trent, theologians have been divided on this question. Some have held a theory of explicit revelation while others hold that the inspiration and canonicity of a book was made known by way of a theological conclusion.⁵⁴

In the 1930's it was precisely this aspect of the problem that was ventilated in the Vosté-Zarb controversy.⁵⁵

54 Cf. David Stanley, "The Concept of Biblical Inspiration," Proceedings: Thirteenth Annual Convention, Catholic Theological Society of America, 13 (1959), p. 84.

55 We shall cite all the studies of both these eminent Dominican scholars later. For the present we call attention to the heated debate which took place in the Angelicum in Rome in 1934. S. Zarb presented a defense of his thesis in the presence of J.-M. Vosté, one of the Board of Examiners.

Zarb, who followed Cajetan's opinion on canonicity, gives his views principally in "La Dottrina del Gaetano Intorno al Canone Biblico," Rivista di Filosofia Neo-Scolastica, Supple. Speciale al Vol. 27 (March, 1935), pp. 103-126.

Vosté presents his interpretation of Cajetan's views on the Canon in "Cardinalis Caietanus Sacrae Scripturae Interpres," Angelicum, 11 (1934), pp. 445-513.

More recently, the eminent German theologian, Karl Rahner⁵⁶ has advanced a theory of Biblical inspiration on the basis that the Scriptures were a constitutive element of the early Church.

Bernard Brinkmann,⁵⁷ among others, has taken Rahner to task on some points, and has claimed to have furthered Rahner's theory by answering questions the latter left in obscurity.

It is our purpose to present Karl Rahner's theory of inspiration in full, followed by a critical analysis of it, with special relation to the problem of canonicity. The thought of Brinkmann and others of Rahner's critics will be given attention in a subsequent chapter.

Before stating Rahner's theory (Chapter III), we think it appropriate in the remainder of this chapter to treat the various solutions that have been proposed prior to Rahner and his contemporaries. For it is out of the smoke of these theological debates that clearer notions have emerged, and which are presupposed to the modern theories. Because this writer considers that Zarb was striving for what Rahner is proposing in our time, we shall

56 Rahner, op. cit.

57 Bernard Brinkmann, "Inspiration und Kanonizität der Heiligen Schrift in ihrem Verhältnis zur Kirche," Scholastik, 33 (1958), pp. 208-233.

devote a separate section to the Vosté-Zarb debate. This will act as a spring board to the presentation of Rahner's theory in Chapter III.

To sum up this section—1) Our problem may be formulated: What constitutes the criterion of canonicity for placing a book on the Canon from the human point of view? 2) Our procedure for the next section of this chapter: a) A summary of the representative sides taken in the elucidation of this question on canonicity; b) The Voste-Zarb controversy on the criterion of canonicity.

SOME EXPLANATIONS OF CANONICITY

Introduction

Because the inspired Books form part of the depositum fidei, only an objective, infallible and universal criterion can establish their identity. Catholic scholars are agreed on this requirement in regard to whatever norms are established,⁵⁸ and these are of primary interest to us.

We mention in passing that since the Protestants argued from Scriptura sola, and since the Scriptures contain no list of the sacred Books, a number of insufficient

58 J. Lagrange, op. cit., p. 171.

and subjective norms were used to judge the inspiration and canonicity of the books. Not only are these rejected by Catholic scholars, but they have fallen into disrepute among serious non-Catholic critics. We therefore prescind from any consideration of these inadequate and evidently false criteria.⁵⁹

Catholic scholars are unanimous in asserting that the objective, infallible, and universal criterion of inspiration and canonicity must be found in Divine revelation. God alone knows whom He has inspired; then, it is only through His revelation that the fact can be known to us. They look to the sources of Divine revelation—Scripture and Tradition. Since no such list is given in the Scriptures, as we have said, they have recourse to Tradition.⁶⁰

It is here that they part company. All agree on the value of Tradition in explaining the formation of the Canon, but differ in their respective final resolutions of

⁵⁹ Cf. K. Smyth, "The Criterion of New Testament Inspiration," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, vol. 2 (1940), pp. 231-233.

For a more complete treatment of the inadequate criteria, see S. Zarb, O.P., Historia Canonis Utriusque Testamenti, (Romae: Angelicum, 1934), pp. 494-509.

⁶⁰ It is for this reason mainly that certain theologians hold the necessity of the existence of a constitutive Tradition. See supra, pp. 32-35.

the meaning of Tradition in reference to the Apostles. Some are of the opinion that an explicit declaration by an Apostle is required. For others an implicit revelation in Tradition, contained in the Apostolic origin, suffices.

For still others, there is the appeal to the "practical conduct of the Church", as for example the use of certain Books in the liturgy.⁶¹ This appeal to Tradition, exclusively such, seems to us, only the beginning of our problem. What criteria were used to determine which books should be used for public worship? Which brings us back to the other two criteria: either an explicit revelation of the inspiration and canonicity of the Books through the Apostles, or the application of a revealed criterion, such as apostolicity, in which the inspiration and canonicity of a book is revealed by way of a theological conclusion.

It is our purpose in this section to present a survey of the opinions along these two lines, v.g. those who would demand an explicit revelation, and those who would say that an implicit revelation suffices. We shall give the principal points of disagreement in the Voste-Zarb controversy out of which have come the more modern

61 J. Ruwet, S.J., "De criterio inspirationis Novi Testamenti," Verbum Domini, 21 (1941), pp. 93-98 exposes the theory of 'lectionis liturgicae'.

theories concerning the criterion of inspiration and canonicity.

The Criterion of Explicit Declaration

The opinion that one of the Apostles gave explicitly a list of the books for the New Testament was held by some theologians. This explicit testimony was preserved in Tradition, and as such, constitutes the ultimate reason for the canonicity of each of the New Testament Books.

This theory took on two forms so to speak. Under one aspect, the testimony was given by an Apostle in the form of a complete list of all the Books. Under the other aspect, the testimony was believed to be given by different Apostles at different times and places, but nonetheless, was explicit testimony to the canonicity of the Books. Most theologians who hold this theory are prepared to admit with Bea, that "how and to whom this first revelation was made, we simply do not know."⁶² The more important theologians who hold this theory are: J.B. Franzelin, S.J.⁶³

62 A. Bea, S.J., De Inspiratione Scripturae Sacrae, (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1930), p. 92: "Quomodo et cui illa prima revelatio facta sit, plerumque ignoramus."

63 J.B. Franzelin, S.J., Tractatus de divina Traditione et Scriptura, (ed. 2, Romae, 1875), pp. 304 ff.

P. Benoit, O.P.,⁶⁴ H. Höpfl, O.S.B.,⁶⁵ G. Gut, O.S.B.,⁶⁶
 S. Tromp, S.J.,⁶⁷ C. Pesch, S.J.,⁶⁸ A. Merk, S.J.,⁶⁹
 De Rosa,⁷⁰ A. Bea, S.J.,⁷¹ J.-M. Vosté, O.P.⁷² and F.
 Ogara, S.J.⁷³

The principal reason which they assert for their opinion is based on the insufficiency of other explanations,⁷⁴ which only admit an implicit revelation, which

64 P. Benoit, O.P., Prophecy and Inspiration, (Rome: Desclee, 1961), pp. 86-88.

65 H. Höpfl, De Inspiratione Sacrae Scripturae, (Rome: 1923), pp. 134-139.

66 B. Gut, O.S.B., and H. Hopfl, Introductio Generalis in Sacram Scripturam, (Rome: Ed. Arnado, 1948), pp. 134-139.

67 S. Tromp, S.J., De Sacrae Scripturae inspiratione, (Rome: 1953), pp. 28-37.

68 C. Pesch, S.J., De inspiratione Sacrae Scripturae, (Freiburg: 1925), pp. 583-636.

69 A. Merk, S.J., De inspiratione Sacrae Scripturae, (Institutiones Biblicae I, ed. 6, Rome: 1937), pp. 88-102.

70 G. DeRosa, "De apostolatu qua canonicitatis et inspirationis criterio animadversiones," Divus Thomas, 44 (1941), pp. 53-64.

71 A. Bea, S.J., op. cit., pp. 99 ff.

72 J.-M. Vosté, O.P., De Divina inspiratione et veritate Sacrae Scripturae, (Rome: 1932), pp. 21-30.

73 F. Ogara, "Notae quaedam praevia et de Apostolatu et criterio inspirationis," Gregorianum, 16 (1935), pp. 578-585.

74 Cf. B. Brinkmann, S.J., "Inspiration und Kanonizität der heiligen Schrift in ihrem Verhältnis zur Kirche," Scholastik, 33 (1958), p. 210.

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they tacitly presuppose, in requiring an explicit revelation.

The adherents of this theory attack the opposite opinion either in terms of the very nature of inspiration, and the unfitness of such a charism. They attempt to show that there exists no intrinsic connection between apostolicity and inspiration.⁷⁵ They proceed to show this first in ruling out any essential connection between the two charisma. Fundamentally, they show that whereas the charism of Apostolicity is permanent, established as such by Christ without time limits, the charism of inspiration is transient, given for producing an effect, which when completed (the Book), ceases.

After demonstrating that inspiration is not essentially a part of the charism of Apostolicity, the proponents of an explicit revelation attempt to show that neither is inspiration a property. They use the traditional test of omni, soli, et semper, to indicate that in no instance can it be said that inspiration is a property of Apostolicity. They consider their arguments sufficient to rule out any intrinsic connection, then, either essentially or by way of property.

⁷⁵ For a complete exposition of the argumentation used, see G.M. Perrella, C.M., "De Apostolico et prophetico munere," *Divus Thomas*, 35 (1932), pp. 52-58.

However, they are willing to admit an extrinsic connection, at least negatively.⁷⁶ For example, they admit that after the death of the last Apostle there would be no more inspired and canonical books.

Thus, we have seen the principal aspects of the theory which calls for an explicit revelation for the books of the Canon. Let us now present a conspectus of the arguments proposed by those who would favor an implicit revelation.

The Criterion of Implicit Revelation

We have said that this theory involves the application of an implicitly revealed criterion, by way of a theological conclusion. Since, to our knowledge, the only criterion proposed (other than the liturgical practice, which we have set aside as the beginning of the problem rather than a solution) is that of Apostolicity, which we shall now consider.

The Apostles had a supernatural mission and the faithful accepted their message as the words of Christ, who was God. Therefore, when the 'words of God' were

⁷⁶ And materially also. De Rosa, op. cit., p. 53 says: "Catholici auctores fere omnes censent apostolicitatem seu originem apostolicam esse ad summum inspirationis et canonicitatis criterium materiale librorum sacrorum N.T., quatenus 'Ob nexum extrinsecum'..."

consigned to writing (rather than merely orally) their 'divine value' perdured. On the part of the Apostles, they were conscious of their divine mission and of the fact that Christians recorded their words as the words of Christ. They could not ignore the divine character of the doctrine handed on by them and thus must have intended it to be received as divine and canonical. Therefore, implicit in their doctrine is the fact that the books handed on by them truly contained the teaching of Christ, written under the influence of the Holy Spirit. In brief, it was handed on as sacred and canonical. For the proponents of this opinion, then, the ultimate criterion for inspiration and canonicity of the Sacred Books is their apostolicity.

The above summation of the general opinion of implicit tradition or of an implicit declaration concerning the Scriptures, was proposed in view of the difficulties of justifying the theory of an explicit declaration. The principal adherents of this theory are: S. Zarb, O.P.,⁷⁷ M.-J. Lagrange, O.P.,⁷⁸ U. Ubaldi, O.P.,⁷⁹

77 S. Zarb, O.P., "De criterio Inspirationis et Canonicitatis SS. Librorum," Divus Thomas, 34 (1931), pp. 147-186. The general opinion just stated is taken from this work of Zarb, who is the foremost adherent of this theory.

78 J. Lagrange, O.P., op. cit., pp. 171-179.

79 U. Ubaldi, O.P., Introductio in Sacram Scripturam, II (Romae: 1886), pp. 74-79.

L.M. Dewailly, O.P.,⁸⁰ P. Schanz,⁸¹ P. Jouon, S.J.,⁸² and M. Reilly.⁸³

Within the limits of this opinion, however, there is a wide range of thought as to the interpretation of 'apostolicity'.⁸⁴ We might point out here that even among those who demand an explicit declaration they admit apostolicity as a negative norm. However, the proponents of an implicit declaration go further to say that, not only is apostolicity a negative norm, but also a positive criterion. However, Catholics do not go to the extreme of maintaining that it is exclusively such, as was the view of J. Michaelis.⁸⁵ Obviously, this would be contrary to

80 L.M. Dewailly, O.P., "Canon du Nouveau Testament et histoire des dogmes," Revue Biblique, (1941), pp. 78-93.

81 P. Schanz, Apologia des Christentums, II (Freiburg: 1897), pp. 562-579.

82 P. Jouon, S.J., "Le criterium de l'inspiration," Etudes, 98 (1904), pp. 80-91.

83 M. Reilly, "Le Canon du Nouveau Testament et le critère de la canonicité," Revue Biblique, 30 (1921), pp.194-205.

84 For some of the various interpretations, see K. Smyth, "The Criterion of New Testament Inspiration," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, 2 (1940), pp. 229-244.

85 J. Michaelis, Introduction au N.T., (ed. 4, Geneva: 1822), I, pp. 112-145. This author was the first non-Catholic to abandon the internal, subjective criteria, and openly hold apostolicity as the exclusive norm.

faith as it would eliminate the writings of Mark and Luke and perhaps others.

But in the middle range of the spectrum there is still divergence of thought. Perhaps we can divide the adherents of this opinion into two groups: 1) Those who maintain that apostolicity in its very concept includes the notion of inspiration (and prophetic origin in the Old Testament), and 2) Those who hold that all the Apostles were inspired, not because the concept includes inspiration, but by a Divine positive ordination.

Ubaldi and Schanz are representative of the earlier theologians who held that the apostolic office in the concrete, as conferred by Christ, included the charism of inspiration. We quote Ubaldi:

We consider the apostolic office only as an affirmative or positive criterion so that the following argument is valid: this or that author was an Apostle; therefore, his writings are divinely inspired. Moreover, we are not considering the apostolic office in the explicit sense, per se, and in the abstract, which we do not wish to discuss, but rather in the concrete, as they say, and as it is described in Holy Scripture—that is with all the charisms and prerogatives with which it was endowed and replete, as it were, in reality; or, as they say, de facto, we learn from sacred history.⁸⁶

86 U. Ubaldi, op. cit., p. 77: "Munus ergo apostolicum consideramus dumtaxat uti criterium affirmans seu positivum ita ut valeat argumentum: hic vel ille auctor fuit Apostolus; ergo ejus scripta sunt divinitus inspirata. Quinimo munus apostolicum etiam in sensu explicato non consideramus per se et in suo abstracto conceptu, de quo

Without pursuing Ubaldi's argumentation, we merely point out here that it is based principally on Sacred Scripture, and proceeds somewhat as follows: the Apostles, in the discharge of their office of preaching and propagating the doctrine of Christ, were inspired by the Holy Ghost; therefore, they were also inspired when communicating the same doctrine in writing. Ubaldi, then, does not seem to demand any special 'impulse to write', but rather considers inspiration as habitual to the sacred writer.⁸⁷

Schanz, although agreeing substantially with Ubaldi, holds that the Apostles were inspired only when in the actual exercise of discharging their apostolic function, and therefore, he would require a special impulse for writing, which would be, of course, from the Holy Spirit.⁸⁸

More recently, with the studies of the history of the formation of the Canon we have Lagrange and Zarb, both of whom contributed monumental works in this area.⁸⁹ We

nolumus hic instituere quaestionem, sed potius in concreto, uti aiunt, et prout in sacris Scripturis describitur, scilicet cum omnibus charismatibus et praerogativis quibus illud ornatum ac veluti cumulatum fuisse reipsa, seu, uti aiunt de facto ex sacra historia discimus."

87 Cf. Smyth, op. cit., pp. 235-237.

88 Cf. Schanz, op. cit., p. 567 ff.

89 Supra, nts. 58, 59.

shall summarize the principal tenets of each of these authors.

For Lagrange, each book written by an Apostle on revealed doctrine, was a rule or norm of faith and thus was 'canonical'.⁹⁰ In this 'canonicity' inspiration was implicitly contained. This same canonicity was conferred on the writings of Mark and Luke, respectively, by virtue of the sanction as authentic Apostolic documents by the approval of Peter and Paul.

Lagrange's reasoning which led to these conclusions runs somewhat like this: Since the Apostles were sent to preach the Gospel, they taught truths revealed to them by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke in the name of God, and thus, with Divine authority. This doctrine became a rule of faith, a norm of life for their disciples. Now are we to judge their writings as being less a rule of faith than their oral preaching, asks Lagrange.⁹¹

Further, by the fact that the Apostles spoke in the name of God and with His authority, they announced themselves as instruments of God, who inspired them. Lagrange points out that despite the fact that the notion of inspiration was more perfectly and distinctly conceived

90 Lagrange, op. cit., pp. 171-174.

91 Ibid., p. 174.

after Trent, nevertheless the obscurity of the notion prior to Trent held no obstacle to the Apostolic teaching. The authority of the Apostles was recognized. The gift of inspiration in an Apostle was taken for granted as his right.

Lagrange continues to argue by pointing out that if others possessed charismatic gifts, would it be logical to deny them in even greater abundance to their leaders? And if the gift were given to Moses and the prophets of the Old Testament, why should the heralds of the New Testament receive any less?

Throughout his work Lagrange shows that this, de facto, was the criterion used by the Fathers and writers of the early centuries.

Thus, for Lagrange, inspiration is the raison d'être of canonicity, its formal ratio, but nevertheless canonicity is the sign of inspiration. His words are as follows:

Inspiration is the raison d'être of canonicity, so that [ontologically] canonicity follows inspiration according to the Vatican Council; but canonicity is the sign of inspiration, so that it appears first [secundum modum cognoscendi] in so far as it is more easily discernible. If an Apostle had the gift of inspiration in writing, people could suspect it and even know it, since the Holy Spirit had been given to the Apostles to govern the Church; but even though this gift had something mysterious about it, nevertheless, the

authority of the Apostles was evident to everyone.⁹²

Let us summarize the principal points in Zarb's reasoning. Fundamentally, he follows Cajetan in his ideas on inspiration and canonicity.⁹³ He holds that apostolicity is not merely a negative criterion, but positive also. He demonstrates his conclusion through an examination of the history of the Canon.

Since the word of Christ is the word of God, the Gospel must be added to the Canon of the Old Testament by the early Church. And since the word of the Apostles was the word of Christ, they too, must be considered with the Gospel.⁹⁴

Secondly, the practice of pseudo-Apostles of attempting to usurp the name of 'Apostle' in order to acquire

92 Lagrange, op. cit., p. 174. Parenthetical inserts are mine. His exact words are: "L'inspiration est la raison d'être de la canonicité, aussi elle apparaît la dernière, au Concile du Vatican; mais la canonicité est le signe de l'inspiration: c'est elle qui a apparue la première, comme plus aisée à discerner. Un Apôtre avait-il le charisme de l'inspiration en écrivant, on s'en doutait, même on le savait, puisque l'Esprit Saint avait été donné aux Apôtres pour gouverner l'Eglise; mais si ce charisme a quelque chose de mystérieux, l'autorité des Apôtres était évidente pour tout le monde."

93 Zarb, op. cit., and further shown in "La dottrina del Gaetano intorno al Canone Biblico," Revista di Filosofia Neo-Scolastica, Supple. Speciale al vol. 27 (March, 1935), pp. 103-126.

94 Zarb, "De criterio inspirationis et canonicitatis," p. 165.

authority for their writing would seem to argue in favor of apostolicity as a criterion.⁹⁵

Thirdly, Origen, Eusebius and others among the Fathers, distinguished between those books received by all, those rejected by all, and those disputed.⁹⁶ This terminology, according to Zarb, which became part of the common expression of the later Church, resulted from the application of apostolicity as a criterion. However, the precise term apostolicity became somewhat obscured when, at the end of the third century some of the Fathers and writers invoked the criterion under the title 'argument by prescription'. Augustine and others continued to use the term 'apostolicity'.⁹⁷

Finally, Zarb maintains that Mark and Luke do not constitute an obstacle to this theory of apostolicity, but rather the fact that their writings were accepted confirms his theory. The reason for the inclusion of their writings is their close association with Peter and Paul, respectively.

95 Zarb, "De criterio inspirationis et canonicitatis," p. 167.

96 Ibid.

97 Cf. Andres Ibañez Arana, De Sacrae Scripturae Inspiratione et Hermeneutica, (Vitoria: Seminario Diocesano, 1957), p. 90.

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Zarb clarifies his use of the terms biblical inspiration and apostolicity, and in so doing refutes those who would use the argument of permanency (apostolicity) vs. transiency (inspiration). He admits a real distinction between the two notions, even though some of his predecessors would concede less.⁹⁸ However, it does not follow that God in His wisdom, cannot unite two separate works, which de facto, are distinct. He cites the example of the priesthood of the New Testament, distinct from the masculine sex, yet united to it de facto. He continues by a comparison between the cogency of Sacred Scripture and that of Tradition: "nam documentum scriptum in immensum excellit super documentum oraliter traditum."⁹⁹ However, he goes on to show, there can be no Divine Tradition unless initiated by the Apostles. A fortiori Sacred Scripture should be conferred through the Apostles. This reason of course, must suppose a Divine ordination uniting inspiration with the Apostolic work, which, according to Zarb can be substantiated in examining the historical facts in the development and use in the primitive Church.

⁹⁸ Zarb, op. cit., p. 170 cites Ubaldi and Schanz, in note 75.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

Zarb also refutes those who would maintain that the judgment of the Church can be the sole criterion of inspiration and canonicity.¹⁰⁰ Accepting the fact that the Church is infallible and definitive in her declaration of the Canon, nevertheless the Church is not the formale quo object of faith, but rather the conditio sine qua non. We believe on the authority of God revealing.

Zarb sums up his opinion on the criterion of inspiration and canonicity by ruling out an explicit revelation, and admitting an implicit revelation only. But even here he distinguishes his opinion from others:

In what sense is "implicitly" used? Not by an introduction made by the Apostles of the books of the New Testament as writings of the same authority as the books of the Old Testament... but inasmuch as whatever the Apostles, endowed with a supernatural mission, transmitted to the Church, was considered transmitted by God and Divine; likewise it was considered as God's doctrine consigned in writing. Besides the first Christians could not have recourse to the judgment of the Church, which only came later.¹⁰¹

100 Zarb, op. cit., pp. 175-176.

101 Ibid., p. 176. We quote: "Quomodo autem implicite? Non per introductionem, ab Apostolis factam, Librorum Novi Testamenti, ut scripta parvis auctoritatis ac illa Veteris Testamenti, quatenus Apostoli, missione supernaturali insigniti, quicquid ipsi Ecclesiae tradebant, censebatur a Deo tradita sunt divina, ita pariter eiusdem doctrina scripto consignata. Ceteroquin primi Christiani non potuerunt recurrere ad sententiam Ecclesiae, quae nonnisi tardius venit."

Thus, we have seen representative opinions of the two main streams of thought regarding the criterion of inspiration and canonicity. Let us now take a cursory glance at the controversy between two of the most prominent theologians of the 1930's, which brought out into the open the very question which constitutes the formal object of our study. This 'airing' of opinions gave impetus to the more recent opinions on this question.

Vosté-Zarb Controversy

J.-M. Vosté was head of the Biblical Commission in Rome at the time when Seraphinus Zarb publicly defended his thesis, the outline of which has been given above. Vosté had outlined his views on the question of the criterion of inspiration and canonicity in De Divina Inspiratione et Veritate SS, in 1932. Both theologians used the occasion of the Four-hundredth Anniversary of the death of Cardinal Cajetan to make their views known regarding the criterion of inspiration and canonicity.

In a special Memorial edition of Angelicum,¹⁰² Vosté, who clearly favored an explicit revelation as the criterion of inspiration and canonicity, was very severe in his criticism of the Cardinal's views and the latter's

102 11 (1934), pp. 445-513.

dogged adherence to the teachings of St. Jerome.

Zarb, writing in a special supplement on Cajetan in another periodical,¹⁰³ deplored the fact that, although it was evident that some of the great Cardinal's views were now commonly rejected, nevertheless on this occasion his great contributions were being overlooked. The latter should have been stressed, instead of subjecting Cajetan to such severe criticism. Zarb follows the thought of Cajetan in matters pertaining to inspiration and especially in connection with canonicity.

Let us summarize the principal points of contention. First, the negative points as made by Voste concerning the criterion of canonicity according to Cajetan.

By way of introduction let us mention one view that Voste points out as having been made by Cajetan (prior to Trent of course) which no longer may be held. This concerns the distinction made by Cajetan, following Jerome, between books with 'full authority' and those with 'less'. The books in the latter category were the deutero-canonical books and the apocryphal, the latter being excluded by the Council of Trent. As we now know, Trent made no such distinction. Thus, all Books are of equal authority, and Cajetan's opinion must be rejected.

103 See note 93.

Vosté accuses Cajetan of confusing, or at least joining the questions of authenticity and canonicity, illustrated by this statement of Cajetan's: "Unde sola scripta ab Apostolis (seu ab eis approbata) sacrae Scripturae auctoritatem habent."¹⁰⁴

Vosté goes on to show that for Cajetan, apostolicity is per se and exclusively connected with inspiration, and that the 'subsequent approbation' by an Apostle does not make a book of Divine origin or inspired.¹⁰⁵ If this approbation is conceived as an authentic declaration, with a definition impending, then it presupposes a Divine revelation. Vosté, in effect, accuses Cajetan of an a priori supposition, and denies that apostolicity is per se and exclusively the criterion of inspiration and canonicity, but rather he contends, it is the infallible Magisterium of the Church. The latter, of course, is enlightened by a Divine revelation, with the first witnesses the Apostles

As for the Old Testament Cajetan conceived this necessary connection between human authenticity and canonicity in another way. One must be certain of the author. Thus, for Cajetan, anonymity is a priori a sign of non-canonicity. As Vosté points out, no one admits this today.

104 Vosté, op. cit., p. 455.

105 Ibid.: "De cetero 'subsequens' approbatio Apostolorum non facit librum origine divinum seu inspiratum."

Finally, Vosté refers to his own work where we find a summary of his own views on the criterion of canonicity. Other than the points mentioned above, he brings out the view that the human author was not necessarily conscious of his charism of inspiration, and even if he were, and expressed that he was conscious, the most we could have would be moral certitude. The important difference that Voste holds in opposition to Cajetan and Zarb, is that the former does not see apostolicity as per se, exclusively, or de jure connected with inspiration and canonicity, and rejects it as the criterion.¹⁰⁶

On the other hand, Zarb, writing shortly after the publication of Vosté's severely critical article, places Cajetan in a more favorable light. Zarb treats of Cajetan's views on the text of the Biblical Canon, the criterion of canonicity, and his influence on the Fathers of Trent.

Since we have seen Zarb's main views in stating the two general streams of thought regarding the criterion of canonicity, we shall not repeat them here, but merely indicate that Zarb followed Cajetan. After showing the tenets of the theory of implicit revelation as being the thought of Cajetan, Zarb has this to say:

¹⁰⁶ Voste, op. cit., p. 455.

We believe that this opinion has the advantages over the other, not only of being theologically unassailable, but it also explains in the best possible way the history of the slow and progressive formation of the Canon... Therefore, when the Church was forming itself, the certain and indisputable idea of the prophetic and apostolic origin of a book, she received it immediately among the number of the Sacred Books.¹⁰⁷

The point that we should like to stress in bringing in the dispute between these two eminent Dominican theologians is that it was precisely this controversy that brought out into the open this question on the criterion of inspiration and canonicity. That there was a problem indeed, no one could deny. From this ventilation of the problem others whom we have mentioned lined up on one or another side.

Analysis of These Explanations

Let us finally make an analysis of these explanations for the purpose of determining the merits of each, and perhaps more important to our study, the needs out of which the modern theories, especially Rahner's, have come.

¹⁰⁷ Zarb, "La dottrina del Gaetano intorno al Canone Biblico," pp. 115,116: "... e Noi crediamo che questa sentenza ha sopra l'altra il vantaggio, non solo di essere teologicamente inattaccabile, ma anche spiega nel miglior modo possibile la storia della formazione lenta e progressiva del Canone... Quando dunque la Chiesa si formava l'idea certa ed indiscussa dell'origine profetica o apostolica di un libro, lo riceveva senz'altro nel novero dei Libri Sacri."

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That is, what questions remained unanswered by these theories, which might have led Rahner and others to propose their explanations?

As we saw, the explanation which demands an explicit revelation bases itself on the insufficiency of the opposite theory. They pay little attention to the 'canonical origin' in the sense of being normative and authoritative, which seems to be the signification as used by Trent and Vatican I. They seem to indicate that the mere canonicity, the 'belonging to the Canon', is given with the definition as a dogma. In other words, they seem to prescind from the history of the formation of the Canon, for nowhere is there evidence of such an explicit revelation.

Further it would seem that if such a revelation did exist, it would have been called upon by the Fathers at Trent and Vatican in clearing up doubts which existed concerning certain Books. Trent merely calls upon Tradition as a criterion of inspiration and canonicity, because such a dogmatic declaration presupposes some kind of revelation.

Thus, the explanation of an explicit declaration would seem to be inadequate.

As for the explanation which rests on an implicit revelation, through the application of some norm such as apostolicity, it cannot be exclusively such, as Michaelis

held, since this would be contrary to faith.

An implicit revelation, by way of apostolicity, considered negatively is conceded by all Catholic scholars, although theoretically possible, as we shall see later.

Apostolicity, considered positively, and with the broad sense of the term 'Apostle' to include Mark and Luke, is reasonable and held by many. However, even within this theory there remain many difficulties. It would seem that neither arguments for, nor those against apostolicity constitute a cogent proof. Many difficulties remain, both those which spring from the nature of the two gifts, and those which are closely allied with the nature of inspiration and canonicity, as related to apostolicity. A few examples by way of questions will illustrate our point, questions posed by those who are not convinced with the present arguments in favor of apostolicity: Is not the infallibility promised to the Apostles in their oral teaching confused with the inspiration to write? (Against Ubaldi) Conceding the possibility of the revelation being made under a general formula "All books written by Apostles are inspired and therefore canonical", nevertheless, how explain Mark and Luke? (Against Lagrange) Can we really say that a book that was considered normative was canonical (and inspired)? Does not the history of the Canon testify that there were other writings taken as normative

for faith, which were not considered inspired and canonical? If apostolicity was clearly the norm accepted and used by the early Church, how is it that confusion arose in post-Apostolic times over the meaning of 'praescriptio'? (Against Zarb) Other questions closely connected concern the consciousness of the human writer during the process of inspiration.

Two factors seem to indicate that this is still very much an open question. First, the fact that not all the theologians accept this theory of an implicit revelation, would testify that the arguments do not contain sufficient proof and cogency. Secondly, the heat generated by the Vosté-Zarb debate seemed to call for further thought and development of this theory.

In our times one who has answered the challenge to these difficulties is Father Karl Rahner. Let us now turn to the exposition of his study on biblical inspiration.

CHAPTER III

THE EXPLANATION OF KARL RAHNER

"We have but to distinguish between the basic revelation as such about the inspiration of a book on the one hand, and the written grasp and discussion of this revelation on the other hand."
(Karl Rahner, Inspiration in the Bible, p.65)*

* "Wir müssen nur zwei Dinge unterscheiden: die grundsätzliche Offenbarung als solche ... über die Inspiration einer Schrift... und die satzhafte, reflexe Erfassung und Aussprache dieser Offenbarung..."
(Karl Rahner, Über die Schriftinspiration, p.74)

INTRODUCTION

Now that we have seen something of the historical background of the specific problem of canonicity, let us examine the views of one of today's foremost theologians, Karl Rahner.

In 1956 Father Rahner published an article "Über die Schriftinspiration,"¹ in which he outlined his basic principles on Biblical inspiration. Soon afterwards he expanded and developed this article and published the first monograph of the now famous Disputed Questions under the same title.² Since the later work incorporates the contents of the original article, it is to this work that we shall refer in this study.

First we shall attempt to show the general structure of Rahner's work, and then present individually the

1 The article appeared in the publication Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie, 78 (1956), pp. 137-168.

2 The original title was Über die Schriftinspiration (Quaestiones Disputatae, I) (Freiburg: Herder, 1958). The English translation by Charles Henkey, Inspiration in the Bible, was published in 1961 by Herder of New York. Although this translation has received some adverse criticism, (cf. infra, pp. 229-233), it substantially represents Rahner's thought, which is often difficult to discern from his more difficult German expression. Therefore, unless indicated to the contrary, references in our study will be made to the English translation.

particular points. Germane to our thesis is his theory regarding canonicity. However, it will become quite evident that to exclude the other questions posed in Rahner's work would not only be to distort his theory of canonicity, but would be to remove the very foundation of his theory on Biblical inspiration. We shall, therefore, treat of all the aspects presented by Father Rahner, but with greater attention given to the problem of canonicity.

Being fully aware that there exist many other problems in the area of Biblical inspiration, Father Rahner selects only those which give rise to his hypothesis on the nature of inspiration. With this in mind, he restricts the scope of his study to four principal questions: 1) How God can be the true literary author; 2) How the inspired author could receive an illumination in his soul without consciousness of the same; 3) How the Church knows the Scriptures to be inspired; 4) How the infallibility of the Scriptures is reconciled with the infallibility of the Church. Rahner's statement of these four questions, which together form the bases of the problem, constitutes the first part of his work.

In the second main section Rahner proposes his thesis which he envisions as springing from the preceding consideration. He submits "an outline of a systematic

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structure,"³ in which he conceives of the Scriptures as being constitutive elements of the Church, which God has willed in the same will-act in which He willed to create and organize the primitive Church.

Finally, in the third part Rahner answers the questions posed in Part I in terms of his hypothesis set up in the second part.

Preliminary to setting up the questions, Father Rahner states that he accepts the traditional concept of inspiration which he says is "partly defined, partly laid down by the official teaching of the Church, and is partly the concept formed by the common opinion of scholastic theology."⁴ He does criticize the formal abstractness of the traditional concept and points to the danger of accepting it as being a materially adequate description of the process of inspiration. He sets before himself the formidable task of clarification of the traditional concept and of making it more meaningful.⁵

3 Karl Rahner, op. cit., p. 8.

4 Ibid., p. 9.

5 Ibid. Rahner says that he has no intention of criticizing or changing the traditional concept of inspiration. However, he so repeatedly stresses the differences between his thesis and the traditional view that one cannot help wondering if this does not amount to a subtle form of criticism. It would seem that Father Benoit takes it this way in his review of Rahner's work in Revue Biblique, Vol. 67 (1960), pp. 277-278. We shall discuss this point in Chapter IV.

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THE BASES OF THE PROBLEM

Question I: How can God be the literary author of the Scriptures?

Since the very notion of author in biblical inspiration involves a collaboration of God and man, the application of the term to both admits of a certain elusiveness in character. It is, obviously, an analogous concept. With this complex question Rahner begins his exposition.⁶

That the term author can be truly attributed to God, there is no doubt. The infallible magisterium of the Church, in both the Councils of Trent and Vatican I, expresses this as a dogma: Deum habent auctorem,⁷ and Spiritu Sancto inspirante.⁸

Nor would it be prudent or safe to deny that the human writer is a true author. This is the common teaching

6 In a lengthy footnote (p. 10) preliminary to this question, Rahner suggests several points on authorship of the Scriptures in need of further clarification. Again, it is to point out the differences between the formal and material contents of statements about inspiration.

7 Dogmatic Constitution On the Catholic Faith, ch. 2 (The Church Teaches, no. 99; Enchiridion Symbolorum, no. 1787).

8 Dz. 706.

of theologians.⁹

Obviously, Rahner accepts both the teaching of the Church and that of theologians. His point of contention is first, that there lies a danger in too easily equating author with literary author,¹⁰ and second, with the whole notion of causality in its traditional explanation, as we shall later see.

As a point of departure Rahner uses the question of human authorship. He shows, first of all, the negative side of the question, i.e., what is not included in the notion of human authorship:

The human authors of the Scriptures are not secretaries merely taking down divine dictations; nor are they secretaries who, by their own intelligent understanding and free will receive whatever is illuminated and presented by God.¹¹

9 Cf. Augustin Bea, De Scripturæ Sacrae inspiratione, (2nd ed., Rome: E Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 1930) cited by Rahner op. cit., p. 13, footnote 3; also, P. Synave and P. Benoit, Prophecy and Inspiration (tr. A. Dulles and T. Sheridan, New York: Desclée Co., 1961), pp. 89-98; N.I. Weyns, "De notione inspirationis biblicae iuxta Concilium Vaticanum," Angelicum, 30 (1953), pp. 315-336. In this latter work it is pointed out that the distinctive character of the books of Scripture is not so much that they are written under the divine influence (as other books might have been) but that which is indicated in the formula "ut tales Ecclesiae traditi sunt".

10 Cf. Rahner, op. cit., ft.nt. 2, pp. 12,13; also R.A.F. MacKenzie, "Some Problems in the Field of Inspiration," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, 20 (1958), pp. 1-8.

11 Rahner, op. cit., p. 13.

In order to avoid reducing the human author to the status of a secretary, Rahner suggests the sense in which the "instrumentality" must be understood: "[as a question] of a human authorship which remains completely and absolutely unimpaired, which is permeated, embraced, but not diminished, by the divine authorship."¹² Further, God's authorship does not merely tolerate the cooperation of men: it demands it. In this sense Rahner feels the traditional concept is inadequate and open to misrepresentation. But precisely how can God and man be truly called authors? To refer to God's activity as a kind of concursus, in which His causality remains transcendental is not the point of the problem under consideration. In other words, Rahner is saying that everyone admits that the effect of the double authorship is in the same "category", but somehow we must reconcile the causes within the same dimensions. God's causality, not just His effects, must be seen in an "incarnational" perspective, with spatio-temporal determinations:

If He is to be the literary author of the Scriptures, and not only their transcendental cause—which itself would not be sufficient for a literary authorship—then God must be at work within the redemptive dimension of the world just as in the prophetic inspiration and in the

¹² Rahner, op. cit., p. 14.

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miracle of the Incarnation, both representing activities of God's miraculous character...¹³

It is in this context only that Rahner feels literary authorship predicated of God and of the human writer becomes meaningful. In this way he maintains that he overcomes the "instrumentality" dilemma, in which the human author either ceases to be an author at all, or his role as author is minimized.

In summing up the statement of the first question, then, Rahner suggests that a workable solution will have to delineate the analogical character of the twofold authorship: God is, in one sense truly an author, but not in the same sense as man; man is truly an author, unimpaird by God's authorship, and actually required in the effecting of Scripture.

Question II: How can the sacred writer receive an illumination in his soul without consciousness of the same?

Rahner entitles this section simply: "Some Problems Concerning the Concept of Inspiration."¹⁴ We take the liberty here to state the question regarding the consciousness of the human writer, since that is the question Rahner dwells on at length.

¹³ Rahner, op. cit., p. 16.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 18.

Rahner emphasizes once more the danger of misrepresentation of dogmatic truth by the abstract and formal concept of inspiration traditionally held. In seeking for the material meaning of the concept, he shifts now from the aspect of causality to the very nature of inspiration, i.e., what takes place in the human writer's faculties when he is inspired.

According to the traditional concept of inspiration, an illumination of the intellect and motivation of the will seem to be basic to a correct understanding. However, some theologians hold that inspiration neither implies basically an illumination of previously unknown matter, nor even an infusion of images. Indeed, some go as far as to say that consciousness of the inspiration is not necessarily included. But then, is not an illumination without communication of some knowledge, or which remains unconscious, a contradiction of terms?¹⁵ The point Rahner is making is: Must one speak of an illumination, and if so, is this consistent with unconsciousness in the human writer? With inspiration thus circumscribed, what effect will it have on our understanding of the authorship of God?

¹⁵ Supra, chap.I, for Zarb's opinion on the consciousness of the human writer. Also, S.M. Zarb, "Num hagiographi sibi conscii fuerint divinae inspirationis," Angelicum, 2 (1934), pp. 228-244.

Regarding the motion on the will of the human author, Rahner is once more critical of the material interpretations placed on the traditional formal concept of inspiration.¹⁶ He suggests that the human writer could be requested by other people to produce his writing. Both the requests and their realization would themselves be matters of divine, formal pre-definition. Thus, in summing up this second question on the activity of God in inspiration, Rahner says:

Such an activity of God basically can be imagined in any manner, provided only that it but conceives, wills, and accomplishes the book by formal predefinition.¹⁷

Thus, he leaves the way open to a wider interpretation of the activity of God on the soul of the human author.

We now arrive at the statement of the question which constitutes the formal object of this work.

16 Rahner, op. cit., p. 23. Cf. also P. Synave and P. Benoit, op. cit., pp. 93-95 for a statement of the principles of Thomistic solution; Kevin Smyth, "The Inspiration of the Scriptures," Scripture, 6 (Jan., 1954), pp. 67-75. Father Smyth criticizes present authors for treating instrumentality "not as the key to the puzzle, but as a puzzle to which a key must be sought" (p. 68). The same author has written a more recent article, "The Inspired Writers as God's Instruments," Theology Digest, 8 (no. 1, 1960), pp. 15-19.

Finally, we should mention Augustin Bea, "Die Instrumentalitätsidee in der Inspirationslehre," Studia Anselmiana, nos. 27,28 (1951), pp. 47-65.

17 Rahner, op. cit., p. 24, note 14.

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Question III: How does the Church know which books are inspired?

At the outset Rahner makes it clear that his initial discussion is limited to the New Testament Books. His attention will focus on the Church, not individuals, since Catholics accept the fact that the individual can know the inspired books only through the declaration of the Church. The Church is the conditio sine qua non for the canonicity of the inspired Books.

As so many other theologians have done in the past,¹⁸ Rahner shows the futility of going to the Scriptures themselves or to their sacred authors, at least those who were not Apostles. But the inspiration of certain books is part of revealed truths entrusted to the Church prior to the death of the last Apostle. As to the kind of revelation received, implicit revelation in a purely logical sense is impossible:

For it is impossible even to conceive of a more universal statement, from which it could be deduced or developed that, for example, the Epistle to Philemon is inspired.¹⁹

To hold that everything written by an Apostle is inspired²⁰

18 Supra, Chap. II of this study, pp. 40-50.

19 Rahner, op. cit., p. 25.

20 Ibid., ft.nt. 16, p. 26. Supra, Ch. II, pp. 16-19, 42.

still leaves difficulties for the theologian. Such provoking questions concerning the Pauline Epistles, the writings of Mark and Luke, the possibility of inspired works having been lost, immediately come to mind. As for a formal and explicit revelation of the inspired nature of the New Testament writings in individuo, in a direct statement received and handed on by one of the Apostles, Rahner is a little more than skeptical. There is little historical probability that one of the Apostles had knowledge of the inspiredness of a book, while at the same time its very author remained unenlightened on that point. The Epistle to Philemon is a case in point. Is it probable that some Apostle had knowledge of its inspired character when all evidence points to a lack of that knowledge by Paul?

Rahner begins to give us a hint of his thesis when he incorporates into the discussion the subject of the formation of the Canon. Immediately he indicates how, in view of the gradual recognition of the canonical Books, a formal and explicit revelation to one of the Apostles seems even less an historical probability. He then makes a statement, which we might say inchoatively contains his thesis which he develops in the following section:

Was, in fact, the real history of the Canon such that a writing was acknowledged as inspired and canonical—even if slowly—because certain writings from apostolic times were recognized really to have originated at the time of the

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Church that is, to have been composed by one apostle and/or representing the original faith of the Church?²¹

We should bear in mind here the distinction previously made in this study²² between material and formal canonicity.

For purposes of analysis and perhaps argument we accept Rahner's view.

Difficulties admittedly arise from the hypothesis quoted above. Rahner prefers to put them aside for the moment to set in relief a cardinal point:

We do need a material content for the concept of inspiration... Inspiration has to be conceived of in such a manner that it demonstrates by itself how the Church knows the inspiredness of the books of the New Testament, without the necessity of having recourse to any statement about it in Apostolic times that has no historical support.²³

For the time being he approximates the two concepts of inspiration and canonicity, although they must not be conceptually identified. On this supposition, Rahner finally reveals another insight which is suggestive of this thesis to follow:

21 Rahner, op. cit., p. 28.

22 Supra, Chap. II, p. 45, note 76. Cf. Rahner, op. cit., p. 28, note 18.

23 Rahner, op. cit., p. 29.

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The recognition of canonicity in fact means to know inspiredness, without anyone knowing anything about a formal inspiredness, in order to recognize canonicity.²⁴

With this statement Rahner leaves this question to the formulation of his last problem.

Question IV: What is the relationship between the canonical writings and the teaching authority of the Church?

Out of the polemics of the Reformation Catholics have seemingly involved themselves in a dilemma regarding the relation between the authority of Scripture and that of the Magisterium of the Church. How reconcile the two? If both authorities are infallible, is not one sufficient and the other superfluous? In testifying to and interpreting the Scriptures, does not the Church weaken the authority of both? Does not that very act imply a need one for the other? Why then, a double infallible authority? That is the question. Rahner sums up this difficulty as follows:

If we decide for the Bible, we do not know where to find its binding character; if we decide for the authority of the Church, we can hardly maintain authoritative writings beside it.²⁵

24 Rahner, op. cit., p. 30.

25 Ibid., p. 32.

Some would slip through the horns of the dilemma by separating the two authorities in time. Tradition reigned during the Apostolic Church, while in post-Apostolic times it is the teaching authority of the Church, however subordinated to and dependent upon the Bible.

Others would evade the difficulty altogether by what in fact would almost be equivalent to simply ignoring the dilemma. Their stand, simply stated, is: It has pleased God to give to His Church two infallible authorities even if one of them would have been sufficient. Rahner calls this theological positivism, not humble and prudent faith, and its dangers must not be underestimated. If we dispense with determining a more specific relationship between the Bible and the Church, and their mutual reference to each other, then might we not thereby dispense the dogmas of our faith from the meaning which is necessary for belief? In other words, this is not a question for idle speculation. Rahner proposes no solution here or even in the thesis of this work. Rather, he moves on to the question bordering on this one, i.e., the sufficiency of the Bible.²⁶ Again, he will not attempt a full exposition, but will merely use it to demonstrate the

26 Supra, Chap. II, pp. 25-35.

"extensive range of the problem of inspiration."²⁷ We might add that it is the question that links the statement of the problem with his thesis.

Rahner attacks the so-called Two-Source Theory as merely one interpretation, but certainly not the decision of Trent: Trent left the relationship between Scripture and Tradition an open question. His reasons for denying this theory are first of all, it lacks the general support of theologians both prior to and after Trent. His second reason involves the question of canonicity and it is here that he anticipates his thesis. On the supposition that the recognition of the Canon through oral tradition is a unique phenomenon resulting from the relationship itself between Church and Scripture, it follows that generalizations cannot be made. The Church necessarily establishes and realizes her mind in the Bible. At the same time the knowledge of the inspired character of the Bible belongs to the Church. The Bible is the Church's Book. But "the knowledge of this inseparable link between herself and the Bible, an existential connection, cannot become part of

²⁷ Rahner, op. cit., p. 34: "For if one single theological problem can stir up the whole of theology, we may be sure that it has been correctly asked." Some authors and commentators on Rahner's statement question the point of whether the "whole of theology" really has been stirred by this question. We shall mention this again in our analysis of Rahner's impact on theology in our next chapter.

the contents of the Scriptures,"²⁸ Rahner then suggests that this in no way impedes the possibility of sufficiency of the Scriptures in regard to content (except for this one fact), nor does it affect de facto the non-sufficiency. He challenges those who would advocate the existence of a constitutive tradition with this direct statement:

Thus we can confidently contest, that, "outside" the truths of inspiration and of the Canon, it would be impossible to cite statements which are neither explicitly nor implicitly contained in the Bible, and are yet to be considered as truths of the faith. They derive from an "oral tradition", handed down to us as a second source in its own right besides the Scriptures.²⁹

Finally, Rahner embarks on his thesis, well aware of the other very real problems in inspiration which he has chosen to pass over in this essay.

THE THESIS

Preliminary Remarks: I—God has founded the Church

The questions raised in the previous section might be termed the remote preparation for the thesis. Rahner now adds some lengthy preliminary statements which can be viewed as the immediate preparation. Because the order is necessary to the systematic development of his

28 Rahner, op. cit., p. 36.

29 Ibid., p. 37. Cf. supra, pp. 29-35.

thesis, we shall continue to follow the points of discussion as Rahner presents them.

Using the tools of Heideggerian existentialism, Rahner concentrates upon the historical process in which the divine influence of Biblical inspiration actually operated. Thus, at the outset, Rahner gives an explanation of the Heilsgeschichte—the historical divine activity—which reaches its climax in Christ and the Church. It is in this context, namely, the historical process through which the Urkirche is formed into the Church, that Rahner situates his thesis on Biblical inspiration. A new element is introduced into the discussion of Biblical inspiration which differentiates it from the traditional formal abstractness. But we are anticipating a point, which rightly deserves attention in the following chapter of this study. Let us return to our point: the explanation of the Heilsgeschichte.

The work of salvation belongs to God in another and higher way than the work of creation. In the work of salvation God enters into the world whereas in the work of creation He 'deals' with the world. The entrance of God into history attains its unique climax in Christ and the Church. The Church is God's work by formal pre-definition: a redemptive historical pre-definition which is eschatological in nature. This is a general summation of Rahner's

Heilsgeschichte. Let us examine the twofold distinction contained in this statement.

Rahner's first distinction between God's work in nature and His historic activity in effecting salvation is taken from the point of view of creaturely freedom. Both the Church and all creation spring from God's absolute will.³⁰ In the former this will is prior to any decision of human liberty, but includes the freedom of man. But in creation, what is created is not as yet an act of creaturely freedom, but precedes it. In other words, if man, by his free action, causes an effect, which is at the same time pre-defined by God's absolute will, then there is something qualitatively distinctive in this act which sets it apart from the other works of God. This act takes place in space and time at various points in the history of man. Because it is absolutely pre-defined, it is "miraculously delimited from the normal run of things."³¹ Rahner continues: "There is some preferential will at work, the terminus of a divine action,"³² and because of its spatio-temporal distinctiveness in the world, this quality is

30 Rahner's meaning of "will" here is "not only in the sense of a capacity to determine, but also as a determining act." (p. 40)

31 Rahner, op. cit., p. 40.

32 Ibid., p. 41.

assigned to the divine action itself. Thus, this first distinction, based on the notion of creaturely freedom, leads to the conclusion stated at the very beginning of this explanation: God's redemptive action, which includes the willing of the Church is on a higher plane than His works of nature. God is thus the Author of the Church in a more intimate way than of other things.

In the enactment of His own history in the world a unique climax is reached in Christ and the Church. An eschatological character is discernible, to give us the second way in which God's authorship of the Church may be distinguished from His other works of creation. Prior to Christ the Heilsgeschichte had not received its definitive pattern which was accomplished eventually by the presence of divine grace in the world. Therefore, there existed the possibility that the various realizations of God's redemptive acts might be thwarted.³³ Rahner exemplifies

³³ Rahner, op. cit., p. 41, ft.nt. 22: "From this angle precisely the positive peculiarity of the Old Testament writings can best be visualized. It is the reality of the Old Testament which remains because it is actually the only permanent, representative validity of the pre-history of Christ and his Church. But we perceive also the negative aspect of the Old Covenant. The Word, as a positive law of God, valid and commanding obedience (and that was the original meaning of the Old Testament) is no longer valid in this sense. But this possibility was contained in the Law from the beginning. In that respect there is a contrast to the New Testament, both affirmed verbally and written with greater finality."

this point by the destruction of the synagogue through rejection of Christ, and what he terms the "nebulous character of the sacraments in the Old Testament which could cease to be signs of grace."³⁴ With Christ there is no longer this possibility of voiding the effecting of God's activity. In Rahner's words:

They are the definitive presence of God's grace in the world, an eschatological event of mercy, an end of history. We may say that, in the institution of the Church, God makes the Church his own in a unique fashion because it is the work, i, of his formal pre-definition, as ii, a redemptive-historical pre-definition, that is to say, iii, of an eschatological kind.³⁵

Preliminary Remarks: II—The Apostolic Church (Urkirche)

Having pointed out the uniqueness of the coming of Christ and the Church in a general way, Rahner proceeds to narrow his remarks by treating of the Apostolic Church. Since a precise meaning is important to the discussion that follows, he defines "Apostolic Church" (Urkirche) simply as "the Church in the time of her foundation, in the first generation, in which she herself is still in the stage of growth."³⁶ With this definition in mind, let us

34 Rahner, op. cit., p. 41.

35 Ibid., p. 42.

36 Ibid., note 23. We should like to point out that Charles Henkey's translation of Rahner's Inspiration in the Bible uniformly is 'Apostolic Church' to render the German 'Urkirche'. Others refer to this reality as the

proceed as in the last section by giving a general summary of the points of Rahner's statement and then consider each individually.

Rahner distinguishes and rightly so, between the Apostolic Church and that of post-Apostolic times. The Apostles had a constitutive and normative function in comparison with the post-Apostolic Church. But this was the work of God in a unique qualitative mode. The Church also 'becomes' until it is completely constituted. In this 'becoming', the Apostolic Church has a singular and irreplaceable function, for it is upon this foundation and norm that the later 'adult' Church is constituted. So much for function. As for the very act of founding, it is qualitatively different in its term from the act which conserves the Church for all time. This is true to the extent that one should aptly say of the Apostolic Church, in a very special sense: God is the Author. The Apostolic Church is not only first in chronological order, but it is the first in being the permanent foundation, the immutable norm of all that follows and the law ruling all future developments. Let us now elaborate on these points.

'early Church'. We should like to suggest the term 'proto-Church' as a more exact rendering of 'Urkirche', than 'early Church', which seems to refer rather to a mere historical continuity.

In this section Rahner applies the general principles on the founding of the Church to the Apostolic Church. Again he bases his statements on a distinction, this time between the Apostolic Church and the Church from post-Apostolic times for the rest of history. Just as the Church itself in a qualitatively unique manner is subject to divine intervention, (as distinct from the other works of nature), so too, is the Apostolic Church as distinct from the Church for the rest of time. We have seen the first part of this analogy. To the second part which regards the uniqueness of the Apostolic Church, he adds that what can be predicated of the Church in later ages is valid essentially because she is based upon the Urkirche—the early Church. We might ask: What does Rahner mean by the Urkirche and how does he understand its function in the history of salvation? This should explain the uniqueness. Rahner first admits the similarities that the early Church and the later Church have in common. Briefly, he says, in effect, that with the institution of the Church a nature was posited, i.e., "a mission and power which, lasting through the ages, exists in each generation."³⁷

However true these similarities, still the Urkirche differed from the later Church both in function and in the

37 Rahner, op. cit., p. 43.

very act of founding as distinct from conservation.

How does the act of founding differ from conservation? The Church has an institutional character as part of her nature. This involves a beginning and a continuation in time. Now this beginning must have some originality—something irreducible, a character proper to itself. Or, in other words, the Church-in-fieri as we might term the early Church, precisely because she is 'becoming', must develop. For this development she was not her own guide, but God, in a special manner directed the Church in her growth. Thus, Rahner is saying, in effect, that God's activity in founding the early Church and in conserving it once fully developed, differs in terminus. God as its founder has a unique relationship to this beginning, then, which He does not have to the later Church. Rahner qualifies this last point to mean that God's relationship to succeeding generations is such that it follows only in virtue of His relation to this first generation. He anticipates any denial of this opinion with the following:

To contest this would be to deny implicitly that, for instance, revelation was terminated with the death of the last Apostle, that Peter was not only the first pope and the apostles were not only the first bishops, but something more than that which, according to the Bible, was theirs in a unique and not transferable manner. The act of instituting the Church is thus qualitatively different from that of her preservation.³⁸

³⁸ Rahner, op. cit., p. 44.

In support of his opinion he calls on the traditional use of terminology in referring to the act of conservation as an assistentia per se negativa, which cannot be predicated of the act of founding the Church, as such.³⁹

How does Rahner conceive of the function of the early Church? Since this notion of function cannot, in fact, be separated from God's unique relationship to the Urkirche, but rather is derived from that very relation, we must keep in mind what has been said in the preceding paragraphs. We merely treat them separately to throw in relief the insights of Rahner in this matter. As to the function, then, of the early Church, Rahner says that it was unique and irreplaceable: The early Church is not merely first in time, but she is the lasting norm for everything to come. Not only did she have a beginning in time, but her formation was to take the shape of an evolutionary process extended in physical time. Later events exist only in virtue of their origin and not only from their originator. This last point introduced by Rahner seems worthy of special mention:

³⁹ Rahner, op. cit., p. 44. Rahner uses the analogy between the act of being born and the act of living. Taken qualitatively, neither has the same connection with the mother. So too, does the Urkirche have an originality, a "non-derivativeness" which distinguishes it from its later unfolding.

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Later events, in spite of their development and unfolding, always exist only because they derive from the given origin, the Apostolic Church, and not only from the originator, God. They derive from the foundations and not only from Him who laid the foundation. This foundation, however, is not Christ alone, but the community which he himself has gathered around him, and on which he bestowed his spirit on the first Pentecost.⁴⁰

He gives examples of the Apostolic succession and the paradosis. "These phenomena not only suggest that something has been handed on and exists, therefore, at a later date, but also, that something will be handed on because it was there earlier."⁴¹ This implies that there was something to pass on and the power to do so in such a way that later events have their raison d'être only because of the original events. The power to hand on is both positive and negative in its determination of the extent of later possibilities. Because of the unique relationship of God to the early Church and the unique function of the same, the proper nature of the early Church was such that it constituted a norm for the Church of later ages.

Rahner reminds us of two factors to be kept in mind: We must guard against a rigid mathematical computation of time in reference to the institution of the Church,

40 Rahner, op. cit., p. 43.

41 Underscore mine.

and secondly, we must be aware of the fact that there were foreign elements or pseudo-Christian phenomena which came within the boundaries of the early Church, from which she freed herself. Let us look at these two reminders.

In guarding against too rigid a computation of time in reference to the institution of the Church, Rahner points out that the original institution had a duration measurable by physical time and not just an instant in time. Pentecost marked the visible existence as a Community, but the Church was not complete. As an example of this, Rahner cites the revelation of the Canon of the inspired Books which came after Pentecost.⁴² This point brings out the fact that the Church, whose role is to preserve and interpret the revelation, could not preserve nor interpret what she had not yet received. Actually, her role then included the very reception of further revelations, as this example shows.

Closely annexed to this point is the second factor that Rahner mentions, i.e., the capacity to slough off elements foreign to her true nature. We saw earlier that the Church is eschatological in nature—Christ and the

⁴² Rahner, *op. cit.*, p. 45: "The Church indeed had visible existence, as a community, a legal structure, at least in its basic traits, and the Holy Spirit. Still, she was not complete."

Church constituted the definitive presence of divine grace in the world as the eschatological event of God's mercy. It is precisely because of this eschatological character that she was endowed with a self-consciousness which enabled her to de-limit herself against what Rahner calls "pseudo-ecclesiastical and pseudo-Christian phenomena."⁴³ If this were not so, i.e., if she did not have this ability of distinguishing herself from pseudo-Christian phenomena, she might become confused with something other than herself.

As a consequence of this special power of de-limitation, we have the existence of the Canon of the Bible. As an historical entity, the Canon is a source of reference—a norm of faith and morals for the Church of all times. Thus, it is relatively easy for the later Church to continue this self-critical delimitation. From this it is clear that the crucial question is the constitution of the Canon. (Whether actual reference is made to the Canon is secondary as compared with the basic correctness of the Canon.) For this materially-integral norm of faith and morals, the formal teaching authority of the Church and the assistance of the Holy Spirit are no substitute. The magisterium is guaranteed that it will make the correct application of this norm, but it cannot dispense with it.

⁴³ Rahner, op. cit., p. 46.

Preliminary Remarks: III—The Scriptures as constitutive elements of the Church.

Not only is the Bible a norm of faith and morals, but a constitutive element of the early Church. It is such because it is part of the concrete being of the Church in its fully developed essence. Let us first summarize Rahner's thought on this point, and then examine it in detail.

Certainly, Scripture is the word of God. It is formed in such a way that the Word of God is addressed to men. But it must be seen that it is also originally the expression of the faith of the Church. Scripture, then, is simultaneously the Word of God to men and the expression of the faith of the Church, one depending on the other. By the same token Scripture has also originally the function that has been attributed to the Apostolic Church in general, in comparison with what followed. We have seen that it did not constitute only a first phase in time, but the permanent origin, the canon, the norm, of the future Church. In other words, the Apostolic Church is precisely that norm, by reason of Scripture. Nor in the fulfillment of its normative function, does the Apostolic Church have recourse to Scripture as to something extrinsic, or as a neutral arbitrator. Rather the actualization of this function consists in the redaction of Sacred Scripture.

It is in concretizing, in fixing in writing its tradition, its faith; it is in actualizing its proper being, in creating in itself the Scriptures that the Apostolic Church, in turn, as normative, becomes the complete post-Apostolic Church. Inversely, it is in constituting itself as the normative rule of the future Church that the Apostolic Church created Scripture. Let us now examine these points in particular.

Few would quarrel with the major of Rahner's reasoning, which might be stated as follows: Whatever belongs to the Church in general must be included among the essentially constitutive elements of the Apostolic Church. However, the minor premise needs justification and qualification: The Scriptures are an essentially constitutive element of the Apostolic Church. It is this point that Rahner attempts to establish just prior to stating his thesis.

Not only are the Scriptures God's word to man, but at the same time they are the original self-representation of the belief of the Church: the concrete expression of the faith of the early Church committed to writing. There is a mutual dependence of one on the other. In other words, the New Testament writings must be seen in their essential character, not only a manifestation of the divine revelation in Christ, but a manifestation of the faith of the

writers, which was the faith of the Church. To deny this quality would be to deny the real authorship of the New Testament writers, and at the same time to affirm, at least implicitly, that they were "mere transmitters"⁴⁴ of a heavenly message. Rahner proceeds by way of negation. What did not happen was the writing of the Books with God as their author, and subsequent approval being given by the Church which adopted it as her "handbook of the faith", once she recognized its divine origin. Rather, the Scriptures are the distilled essence of what the Church was handing down and preaching as her faith:

The writings of the New Testament originate as life-processes of the Church; they are the sediments of that which in her, has been transmitted and preached as her faith; they are writings which come into existence as manifestations of communal life, as letters, exhortations, sermons, etc.⁴⁵

Therefore, the Scriptures, like the Apostolic Church, have from the beginning the same unique function, distinct from the later Church.

We saw in the previous section that the Apostolic Church was not merely first in time but the permanent source and norm for the later Church. Her perfection in this normative function is due to the Scriptures. They

44 Rahner, op. cit., pp. 48-49.

45 Ibid., p. 49.

are not something extraneous—neutral factors, as it were, but the actualization in writing of her faith. It was because the Urkirche was aware of its duty to preserve a record of her faith and traditions that she confided these things to writing.⁴⁶

Finally, inasmuch as the early Church concretizes her faith in writing, she forms Scripture in herself and presents herself as normative for her own future. Conversely, by setting herself as normative for the future, she forms the Scriptures. Rahner concludes this section with the following pertinent statement:

It is precisely in the formation of the Scriptures that the Church confirms that unique delimiting understanding of herself which is, as we said, hers in a particular degree, in order to become the "canon" of the later Church.⁴⁷

IV. The Thesis

Because he has carefully laid the foundation in what he termed the preliminary statements, Rahner can now state his thesis in a brief résumé. We think that it is worthy of being quoted in its entirety:

46 Rahner says on p. 50, note 31, that he does not mean that the primitive Church deposited her entire "oral" paradosis in the Scriptures.

47 Ibid.

If what has been said in the preceding section is correct, it follows that, in creating through his absolute will the Apostolic Church (cf. pp. 40-43) and her constitutive elements (cf. p. 48), God wills and creates the Scriptures in such a way that he becomes their inspiring originator, their author. Let it be noted that we say "creating", for we wish to stress that the Scriptures originate not only on the occasion, or in the course of the institution of the Apostolic Church, but that the active, inspiring authorship of God is an intrinsic element in the formation of the primitive Church becoming Church, and derives its marks from being this. 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 (naturally with the proviso of what was said in II, 3, p. 48), is but simply the causality of God in regard to the Church, inasmuch as it refers to that constitutive element of the Apostolic Church, which is the Bible.⁴⁸

Since we have given considerable space and attention to the individual points that comprise this synthesis of Rahner's thought, we shall not belabor the obvious. Rather, we shall move on to his explanation of his thesis in terms of the Old Testament. Because we limited the scope of this dissertation to the criterion(a) of canonicity of the New Testament, and also because Rahner deals primarily with the New Testament, we shall include here but a summary of the points he develops in the application of his theory to the Old Testament.

48 Rahner, op. cit., p. 50 and 51.

V. Inspiration of the Old Testament

Rahner immediately sets up the problem of explaining the inspiration of the Old Testament in terms of his thesis. The problem may be stated in this dilemma: Either the Old Testament is inspired or it is not. That it is not is clearly heretical. Then positing its inspired character, either its inspiration is the same as the New Testament or not. That it is of a different kind is an impossibility; if it is the same there would seem to be difficulty in using Rahner's theory to explain it.

To answer these objections Rahner distinguishes and compares the concepts of inspiration and canonicity once more. Inspiration and canonicity differ conceptually and materially, but there is a mutual dependence between them. The Church does not make the book inspired—she recognizes its inspired character and "canonizes" it. Therefore, canonicity presupposes inspiration. On the other hand, inspiration is not complete until crowned, as it were, with canonicity. Thus, canonicity adds something to inspiration: the authentic recognition of the Church. It is then only that inspiration becomes truly meaningful. With this point in mind, let us examine Rahner's pre-history of the Church.

A history of the Old Testament Canon reveals that there were indeed writings recognized by the Synagogue as inspired. The Old Testament, however, was formally recognized and ratified only by Christ, the Apostles and the Church. The Old Testament Canon was incomplete prior to Christianity, for writings appeared after the last of the prophets. Also, the Synagogue could not have the power to be an infallible witness of the inspired character of the books. The only factor which could and did aid in the delimitation of the Old Testament Canon was prophecy which lent support to the writings.⁴⁹ These writings were brought about by God, then, with a view to their ultimate validity and function in the New Testament. Rahner justifies his position as follows:

Now we may say according to our thesis that, inasmuch as God causes the Old Testament as the definitive image of the prehistory of the Church, He inspires the Scriptures and makes them His own as their author. In other words, because the Old Testament belongs a priori to the formation of the Church and not only of the Synagogue, as a part of her prehistory and as such remains actual for ever, it can claim the same validity as the New Testament.⁵⁰

Finally, he maintains that his thesis in regard to the inspiration of the New Testament is thus confirmed by showing that:

49 Rahner, op. cit., p. 52.

50 Ibid., p. 54.

The longing for the New Testament belongs from the outset to the nature of the Old Testament and its writings. These books are subject to the same formative law as those of the New Testament.⁵¹

We now arrive at the third and last part of Rahner's work—the conclusions which he draws to show that his thesis does no violence to the traditional theory on divine authorship and inspiration, and secondly (and more germane to our thesis) he answers those questions posed in the first part of his study.

CONCLUSIONS

The Harmony Between Rahner's Theory and the Traditional Explanation

The first conclusion is simply that since he postulates God as the author of the Scriptures, his thesis is in harmony with both the traditional concept of theologians and the truth of faith. He states his reasoning in syllogistic form:

God wills and produces the Scripture by a formal predefinition of a redemptive-historical and eschatological kind as a constitutive element of the foundation of the primitive Church, because and inasmuch as he wills and effects the primitive Church in exactly this manner. But to effect such a book is to be its author in an actual sense,... when we take into consideration that the divine authorship of the Bible is free from certain

51 Rahner, op. cit., p. 54.

characteristics unavoidable in human authorship. The term authorship, therefore, used in regard to God and to man is an analogous concept only. God can thus be said to be the author of the Scriptures of the New Testament.⁵²

Rahner reiterates once more that the formal abstractness of approach in the traditional explanation of inspiration leaves open the question of precisely how inspiration was actually realized by God. In other words, the 'material clothing' of the formal concept is left an open question. His theory leaves intact and in fact presupposes the formal concept, but supplies something that is wanting to that concept. Inspiration (and divine authorship), for Rahner, takes place only when God wills that the human author under His influence should perceive correctly and effectively the judgment of what is to be written, makes the decision to write and then does so. This is true, regardless of how the actual execution is effected. Since the complete form of the Apostolic Church is specified by its constituents, one of which is Scripture, in its total effect, it is plausible that a special kind of divine activity for any particular constituent might be required. But the point is that, even though more might be added to Rahner's theory, basically his opinion would hold. He is very firm in the opinion that the

52 Rahner, op. cit., pp. 55, 56.

"divinely inspired authorship is an intrinsic constituent of the divine foundation of the Church."⁵³ But even with his emphasis on the social character of inspiration, he does not overlook the necessity of an intrinsic inspiration, touching the spiritual faculties of man. This is so, whether a book emerged from within man or the historical situation as its origin. The point that Rahner is making may be summed up as follows: "Being Scriptures they originate in a predefined manner, and by originating in this realm, they are, eo ipso, Scriptures."⁵⁴

Now let us examine Rahner's answers to the questions posed in the first part of his work.⁵⁵

Answer I: Double Authorship

He explains the double authorship of the Scriptures through the fact that both authors do not bring about the same effect in the same respect. This statement implicitly answers many difficulties on the causality involved, resulting from the traditional interpretation by way of a principal and instrumental causality.⁵⁶ God does

53 Rahner, op. cit., p. 57.

54 Ibid., p. 58.

55 Supra, pp. 69-72.

56 Supra, pp. 72-74.

not will to be a writer intentione prima et per se. He becomes an author because the kind of Church He wills to establish requires it. In short, He becomes an author in making man an author. Man wills to write a book and does so according to the ultimate intentions of God. The work that God intends and wills effectively and absolutely in the Heilsgeschichte, is the Urkirche, or the community of salvation. The latter objectifies itself in a book, to which both God and man are linked, but with a terminative difference. Thus, God's authorship is something sui generis, for only God could become an author by making man one. In addition to the analogy of efficient grace, he also uses the notion of obediencial potency to explain man's role. He takes issue here with several points in the traditional explanation of authorship. We shall deal with these in the next chapter.

Finally, in the question of divine authorship, it follows that God will be an author in the sense described above, only of the Church-in-fieri; once the Church is fully established, His authorship ceases.

Answer II: Consciousness of Inspiration

Again Rahner poses his thesis against the traditional interpretation. Accordingly, the abstract, formalized concept more likely will exclude consciousness of the

inspiration; whereas, in his thesis, which includes the "meaning" of the concept, consciousness is more likely to be present. The human writer could be conscious of a special inspiration of God, and yet would not need to know that he was under a particular influence of God regarding this particular writing, or parts thereof. This would be especially true in the case of less important writings. The very fact that the human writer knows that the core of the writing was given through God's revelation in Christ, he is conscious of his own inspiration. Further, inasmuch as in this act of writing he is part of the life of the Church-in-fieri, which testifies to his work for the future Church, he can be said to be conscious of inspiration.⁵⁷ Rahner seems to be saying that, in the act of writing, there may be both conscious and unconscious elements present. According to his theory, however, the conscious elements only are intrinsic and essential to inspiration. If consciousness of the fact that this writing was caused by God to be an enduring document for the future Church is missing, the writing nevertheless contains conscious elements which suffice for conscious inspiration. But, if even this fact is known consciously

⁵⁷ Rahner, *op. cit.*, p. 63. Rahner does not discuss "whether or not this consciousness formally (though implicitly) includes the whole of inspiration."

to the sacred writer, then we could say that the inspiration was totally conscious.

Answer III: How the Church Knew the Scriptures to be Inspired.

In the final analysis, the inspiration of Scripture can be known only by revelation. The question, therefore, may be stated: How should we understand that revelation in order to ensure its historical plausibility?

That some revelation has occurred is accepted a priori, but as to when or where, we simply do not know. The hesitation of the Church regarding the canonicity of certain books most probably rules out any explicit revelation. Many historical difficulties remain even after the traditional explanation of assuming that the tradition of the inspiration of certain books was first handed down only in individual Churches. How explain the apocryphal works, some of which were accepted as canonical? After posing the problem of historical difficulties, Rahner applies his theory by way of making a distinction. On the one hand, there was the original revelation about the inspiration of a book, and on the other, the reflection on this revelation. The basic revelation must have occurred prior to the death of the last Apostle, but not the reflex advertence to this revelation. He contests the point

usually made, scil., the revelation had to be explicit. Not necessarily, says Rahner. The actual revelation was accomplished by the fact that the writing emerged as a true constitutive element of the Urkirche. The Scripture, as we previously saw, is the self-expression of the early Church. For Rahner, the inspiration of the book is thus sufficiently revealed. As for the second part of the distinction, i.e., the reflex knowledge of this revelation, the inspiration can be known in post-Apostolic times without a new revelation. This is accomplished through a certain con-naturality which the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, recognizes as existing between these writings and her inner nature. If at the same time, a writing was "apostolic" in the sense of being "a piece of the self-accomplishment of the Apostolic Church as such, and recognized as such... it is inspired eo ipso."⁵⁸ There would be no need to refer to a revelation in that sense; nor to hold that the recognition and revelation must occur contemporaneously. This accounts for the real fact of the history of the Canon. Rahner continues:

58 Rahner, op. cit., pp. 66, 67.

If we suppose the conscious knowledge of canonicity to be the result of an explicit and direct testimony by an apostle, as is usually done, then we cannot really understand how it could take so long, until the canonicity of many writings was finally explained.⁵⁹

The argument that the original clarity concerning the canonical books gave way to a period of confusion which was finally resolved with an explicit clarity, is an a priori postulate which has little or no historical foundation. The solution must lie elsewhere.

If the distinction previously made between the basic revelation and the reflex advertence to the revelation is seen properly, then the need for a period of physical time becomes evident, and thus accounts for the history of the Canon. If, in fact, we view the first arm of the distinction, i.e., the revelation of the inspiredness of a book, not as an explicit statement, but as a self-expression of the early Church, and if we see in the second arm, i.e., the reflexive knowledge about a book, the fact of its inspired character and canonicity—then the need for time is seen to be essential. The time element for the revelation need not be of the same duration

In reference to the problem implicit in the terminology "death of the last Apostle", Rahner suggests that

⁵⁹ Rahner, op. cit., p. 67.

the supposition generally taken (the calendar date of the last Apostle's death marking the end of the Church-in-fieri) should be replaced by something more meaningful. Could not this phrase signify the first generation of the Church as distinct from the Church continuing for all time? Would not this latter signification give purpose to such Biblical investigations as, for example, literary genre of the Epistle to the Hebrews? Further, must we assume that the recognition of the inspiredness necessarily refers to an Apostle? Rahner answers in the negative. He suggests, rather, that it might occur through the Church. This latter explanation allows for the possibility that the knowledge of the inspiredness might relate to a writing of the first generation, but not necessarily written before the death of the last Apostle.

Finally, the vagueness of the concept of the "first generation" does not render the term unacceptable. Although difficult to determine at what precise time the Church-in-fieri is past and the Church for all time begins, nevertheless that moment did exist. Rahner justifies his opinion by a parallel example found in death. It is sometimes difficult to determine the precise moment when the end of life and the beginning of death takes place. This does not preclude the fact that that moment did in fact exist. Rahner concludes with an application of this principle to

the Apostolic Church:

Twenty years, for example, after the death of the last Apostle (about the turn of the first century A.D.) at a time when it was already possible to look back to an earlier and "different age, it could certainly be stated that the time of the Apostolic Church was past.⁶⁰

Answer IV: The Authority of Scripture and That of the Church.

In the light of Rahner's thesis, the apparent opposition between the "two infallibilities" becomes closer to solution. The infallibility of the Scriptures does not cancel out the infallibility of the Church's magisterium, nor vice versa, but are mutually dependent on one another. The infallibility of the magisterium of the later Church is the unerring interpretation of Scripture. But it is this by virtue of its relation to the doctrine of the early Church, whose infallible magisterium was the ability to form Scripture. To quote Rahner directly:

For the teaching of the early Church has not only found factual expression also in the Scriptures; the Scriptures are the canonical exposition of this teaching of the early Church... if in the early, growing Church the act of this teaching... is an act of composition of the Scripture, then it is obvious that the act of the

60 Rahner, op. cit., p. 69.

later infallible teaching Church will appear essentially also as an act of reference to the Scripture.⁶¹

Rahner uses this argument which conveys his concept of the sufficiency of Scripture against a Two-Source Theory. He then suggests that the sufficiency of Scripture does not eliminate oral tradition, nor does it signify any cessation of the unfolding of the faith through theology and/or the teaching of the Church. Nor would the rejection of the sufficiency of Scripture theory facilitate the explanation of the development of dogma. Finally, on this point, Rahner warns against too narrow a concept of interpretation of Scripture. A broader view would aid in tracing a modern dogma back to the Scriptures.

Were Rahner's thesis taken into account several allied problems might be clarified. Briefly, some of them are: an understanding of the holy books of non-Christian religions, which would throw in relief the uniqueness of the inspired Scriptures of Christianity; secondly, why the literary genera of the Scriptures do not reflect, eo ipso, necessarily and absolutely, on God; thirdly, why the various literary forms are possible in the inspired writings; fourthly, a clearer understanding of the personalities in the cast of human characters as authors of the

61 Rahner, op. cit., p. 71.

Scriptures; fifthly, and especially relevant to our study is the relationship between inspiration and canonicity.

We quote in full:

The relationship between inspiration and canonicity also could be made clearer, and the close link between both brought home to us. In that respect, a distinction could be introduced between canonicity proper, a concept relating to the post-Apostolic Church, (inspiredness rationally known and taught through the Church) and being a constituent part of the Church, a concept relating to the Apostolic Church that may not be identified simply with canonicity. This appertaining to the Apostolic Church belongs to the concept of inspiration, but its kinship with canonicity facilitates the understanding of the material and noetic link between inspiration and canonicity.⁶²

Rahner concludes his treatise on inspiration on a note of hope—that his thesis might stir up new interest in biblical exegesis, not only in the problems just listed but in the area of scriptural interpretation. Thus, not only does he lay claim to shedding light on some problems, but presents, at the same time, a challenge to others for further research.

62 Rahner, op. cit., p. 78.

CHAPTER IV

AN EVALUATION OF RAHNER'S EXPLANATION

"Perhaps Rahner is the most influential theologian in German-speaking Catholicism today."

(Cornelius Ernst, O.P., in his Preface to the English translation of Schriften zur Theologie, p. 5.)

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF RAHNER

Introduction

In his first volume of Theological Investigations, Karl Rahner¹ enunciates his principles of operation as a theologian. Father Courtney sums them up as follows:

The true theologian has the duty of receiving as fully as possible and proclaiming to the world and to the Church in the world the authentic message of the magisterium and must be able to formulate problems as they exist today and offer adequate solutions to them.

This requires openness to the intellectual climate of the age and a power of discerning what is erroneous and sinful in it from that which has a value that can only be brought to full expression when it is taken up into the life and thought of the Church.²

If it is the duty of the theologian to be "open to the intellectual climate of his age", then it is doubly true of those who would pass judgment upon his work; for it is in the spirit of the age in which the ideas of the theologian are formed.

¹ Father Karl Rahner was born in Freiburg on March 5, 1904.

² F. Courtney, Review of Theological Investigations, Vol. I, by Karl Rahner, Clergy Review, (May, 1962), p. 159.

It seems fitting, at this point, that we should consider Rahner's philosophical and theological background preliminary to our evaluation of his work.

Philosophical and Theological Background

To one unacquainted with Rahner it might seem out of place in such a short biography to include his philosophical background in considering him as a theologian. However, we must remember that Rahner was first a philosopher and his first works were philosophical.

As a disciple of Martin Heidegger at Freiburg, Rahner produced a metaphysical treatise on human knowledge, Geist in Welt,³ followed by his philosophy of religion,

³ The first publication of this work appeared in 1939 at Innsbruck; the second ed. at Munich: J.B. Metz, 1957. It is interesting to note that this work was his doctoral thesis, which, for three years, had remained in obscurity in the archives of the University of Innsbruck. His director, Honecker, did not look on it favorably. The thesis was a presentation of St. Thomas' mature thought on the metaphysics of human knowledge. The seeming failure of this work is remarkable in view of the fact that it was one of the works which formed a basis for his later thought. The prologue carries, in retrospect, significant meaning for what was to come. In effect, Rahner says that if the reader receives the impression that he is engaged in an effort to fit St. Thomas into the framework of modern philosophy, then his book is not without merit. For his very motive is to relate St. Thomas to the philosophy of his time, i.e., Rahner's time.

Hörer des Wortes.⁴

Lecturer from 1937 and professor from 1949 at Innsbruck, Rahner turned his attention to theological subjects. The influence of his earlier philosophical reflection will be seen in his subsequent theological activity. Rahner is fully aware that this should be so, for he says:

The Catholic theologian will always set out from the solid ground of Church doctrine as it is proposed to the faithful by the magisterium of the Church. But from this basis the theologian will go on to elaborate the concepts which he has taken over, to compare them... and to seek a more precise understanding of what is already accepted on faith. In doing this, he will, explicitly or implicitly, make use of philosophical ideas that are extrinsic to theology itself.⁵

What, then, was the philosophical climate in which Rahner composed his theological treatises? Obviously, it is beyond the scope of this study to do other than merely

4 Munich, 1941. This is a continuation of the transcendental reflection on the a priori conditions of possibility for man's conscious activity begun in Geist in Welt. In this, his second work, Rahner uncovers two further essential structures of the human subject. Man is essentially social and essentially historical.

For a comprehensive study of Rahner's philosophy of the human person, see Gerald McCool, "The Philosophy of the Human Person in Karl Rahner's Theology," Th.St., 22 (Dec., 1961), pp. 537-562.

One further reflection which we consider significant is that Rahner has now returned to the place where this work was published, scil., as Head of the Philosophy of Religion Faculty at the University of Munich.

5 Karl Rahner, op. cit., quoted in J. Macquarrie, Twentieth Century Religious Thought, (London: SCM Press, 1963), pp. 293-294.

indicate some of the possible influences.

It was under Heidegger that Rahner made acquaintance with contemporary existentialism, and saw in it the possibility of incorporating what was best into a metaphysics of the human subject. It is this influence of Heidegger that accounts for his anthropocentric philosophy, out of which came his preoccupation with the human person and the dynamics of human living. We do not call him an existentialist. As one of his noted translators remarked:

It would be incorrect to call him an existentialist —far less true than it would be to call St. Thomas Aristotelian theologian.⁶

We merely point out that undoubtedly, in Heidegger's⁷ philosophy of existence, Rahner has found elements of service to him in the development of his own theological thought. As Barnabas Ahern points out in New Horizons,⁸ the existentialism of Heidegger (among others) as a philosophical system is on the wane. "Its spirit," he continues,

6 Cornelius Ernst in his Introduction to the English translation of Schriften zur Theologie, p. xi.

7 Martin Heidegger began his teaching career at Freiburg in 1915, but spent an interim of six years at Marburg where he published his masterpiece Sein und Zeit (1927). Influenced by Husserl's phenomenology, Heidegger succeeded the latter to the Chair of Philosophy at Freiburg. Thus Heidegger's contact, and subsequent influence upon Rahner.

8 Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 2nd ed., 1964, p. 211.

"is still active." Later on he places Rahner among those who would propagate this spirit. We might add an observation—the German discussion today centers around the transference of Heideggerian thought into relevancy for the Scriptures and theological research.⁹ For one formed in this climate, is it to be considered strange that he has already, to some extent, accomplished this very goal?

In the light of this background, what can we say of Rahner's theological system?

Rahner's Theological System

The first question that might arise is: Does Rahner have a system? And this is not meant to be facetious. In the 299 theological works produced,¹⁰ all have been in essay style. This prodigious output includes subjects widely diversified, and most of them suggest further questions, rather than formulating precise answers. As yet, a complete tract in a given area is wanting.

⁹ Cf. Raymond Brown, "After Bultmann, What?," CBQ, (Jan., 1964), pp. 1-30.

Also, cf. J. Robinson and J. Cobb, The Later Heidegger and Theology, (New York: Harper and Row, Pub., 1963), for one of the best non-Catholic works on the subject of the present German discussion.

¹⁰ Cf. Von Johann Auer, "Das Werk Karl Rahners," Theologische Revue, no. 3, (1964), pp. 146-155.

Also, cf. Gott in Welt: Festgabe für Karl Rahner, Freiburg: Herder and Herder, 1964.

But this is not the meaning we intend. Perhaps if we oppose "system" to "synthesis", our use of the term will be more meaningful. Broadly defined, system as we are using it connotes a "unifying element" through his works.¹¹

Space forbids a comprehensive inquiry into this question. We can merely suggest what might be this unifying element.

Undoubtedly, the best place to begin would be with the author himself. In Volume I of Theological Investigations,¹² Rahner sums up his aims in the realm of dogmatic theology.

After presenting a somewhat pessimistic critique of the present (1954) state of dogmatic theology, Rahner gives a "tentative sketch of a more inclusive treatise of the whole of dogmatic theology."¹³ Remarking that "only a fully elaborated synthesis could, if at all, establish and

11 This is clearly understood and accepted by Rahner's German disciples who are endeavoring to work out in greater detail a synthesis outlined by him.

12 Vol. I, pp. 1-37. Cf. William J. Hill, O.P., "Uncreated Grace—A Critique of Karl Rahner," The Thomist, Vol. 27 (Apr.-Jl.-Oct., 1963), pp. 333-356. The same issue carried an analysis of existentialism and its influence on theology, with direct reference to Rahner: Anthony Lee, O.P., "Thomism and the Council." Vol. 25 (1962) carried an interesting article: William Wallace, O.P., "Existential Ethics: A Thomist Appraisal," pp. 493-515, and also a review of Rahner's Theological Investigations, pp. 448-452, which is an appraisal of his theological system.

13 K. Rahner, op. cit., p. 14.

justify the plan of construction,"¹⁴ Rahner does not attempt to justify or explain it. He simply lays down what he considers to be requirements which he has attempted to meet in this sketch. He says:

Every Catholic theology must be a theology of both essence and existence... it must both look for necessary and intrinsic structures and connexions and it must report what in fact, without metaphysical or logical necessity, took place in saving history. The second requirement needs no explanation. But the first retains its truth despite every kind of modern existentialism.¹⁵

He continues by showing why we must have a theology of essence:

For even what is freely posited has its nature and structure, its connexions, homologies, and analogies. Thus, in the very midst of the report that this or that took place, it has always to be said what intrinsically took place. And this what is never absolutely incommensurate with other things.¹⁶

In brief, there must be "co-operation and interpenetration of the theologies of essence and existence, theological ontology and historical report."¹⁷ It is on this basis that Rahner sets up and distributes his themes in his theological system.¹⁸

14 K. Rahner, op. cit., p. 14.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid., p. 15.

17 Ibid.

18 Cf. ibid., pp. 18-38.

A cursory look at this sketch will convey the stress Rahner lays on the existential and phenomenological elements. To make generalizations from what we have said thus far would indeed be superficial. However, these facts substantiate what we have gleaned from our general study of Rahner. Thus, we venture to sum up with what we consider is Rahner's theological system.

Rahner is authentically Thomistic; yet he follows the tradition of Heideggerian existentialist phenomenology. His basis is Thomistic—his method that of Marcel.¹⁹ He acknowledges, as we have seen, both the need for a theology of essence and that of existence. "Natures" and "being-in-situation" are both important. His emphasis, however, is first on the "being-in-situation" and then only, by a reflective process—"a transcendental reflection on the conditions of possibility"—does he work back to the nature.²⁰ In the previous section, we said that Rahner's philosophy was anthropocentric (as opposed to cosmocentric). Might we not call his theological system a "theological anthropology"?²¹

19 Cf. Gerald McCool, op. cit., pp. 537-562.

20 Cf. Ernst, op. cit., p. xiv.

21 Cf. G. McCool, op. cit., p. 562.

There are many objections to Rahner's theology, mainly because of the philosophical method employed. But whether his system stands or falls is not our present concern. We have merely attempted to present a general background of his philosophical and theological endeavors. It is against this background that we hope to evaluate his work on inspiration, and because of it, be the more objective in our assessment.

EVALUATION OF RAHNER BY OTHERS

Introduction: Internal Critique

In order to achieve objectivity in evaluating this work, our critique will include two aspects of consideration: the internal critique, and the external critique. It is with the first aspect that we are presently concerned. Let us set down some principles which will guide us in this area.

We are concerned here primarily with the content, which immediately suggests two things: 1) a correct understanding and interpretation as well as 2) the evaluation given by the author's peers. In a previous chapter we have presented our understanding and interpretation of what Rahner intended to convey. We presume on the competence of his peers for a correct understanding and interpretation. What is left, then, is the critique of

authority, i.e., of Rahner's contemporaries, viewing his work in the light of his own principles.

Does Rahner achieve what he set out to do? To what extent does he answer the problems set up by himself? How 'much', i.e., quantitatively? How well, i.e., qualitatively? These are questions which we shall attempt to answer by way of viewing the reactions of authority to his work on Biblical Inspiration.

Our fundament of division for this section has been determined, not a priori, but rather by the common notes, pro and contra, seen in the reactions of others to Rahner's work. Thus, we shall view successively the following points: 1) Rahner's work as a whole; 2) Rahner's method or approach; 3) the nucleus of Rahner's theory; 4) related problems; and finally, 5) the problem of canonicity. A summary will then be given with the hope of answering the questions set up in the preceding paragraph.

Rahner's Work as a Whole

While one is forced to observe the reluctance of many authors to commit themselves to a judgment of Rahner's work on inspiration, nevertheless the signs are there, namely, that this work must be taken into account in any

discussion of biblical inspiration today.²²

As Father David Stanley has expressed it: "This magnificent contribution by one of the most original thinkers in the Church today constitutes a landmark in the study of biblical inspiration."²³

The general attitude of most critics is reflected in the words: "a solid and stimulating study,"²⁴ "a brilliant thesis,"²⁵ "a study of merit in considering the problem of inspiration from a new angle,"²⁶ "something quite new and stimulating,"²⁷ "most interesting work,

22 Cf. The Heythrop Journal (Oxford, Eng.), II (1, Jan., 1962), p. 99.

Cf. also L.J. Topel, S.J., "Rahner and McKenzie on the Social Theory of Inspiration," XVI (34, April, 1964), p. 33, where the author points out that exegetes are aware of the importance of Rahner's work despite the limited response to it at that time.

23 David Stanley, "The Concept of Biblical Inspiration," Proceedings of the 13th Annual Convention of Catholic Theological Society of America, (Yonkers, N.Y.), (1958), p. 84.

24 J. Jensen, O.S.B., Review of Über die Schriftinspiration, by Karl Rahner, Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XXIV (1962), p. 185.

25 Review of Über die Schriftinspiration, by Karl Rahner, Revue Bénédictine (Maredsous, Belgium), 69 (1-2, 1959), p. 115.

26 C. Van Puyvelde, Review of Über die Schriftinspiration, by Karl Rahner, Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale (Louvain), 27 (1960), p. 156.

27 C.M. Cherian, S.J., Review of Über die Schriftinspiration, by Karl Rahner, Clergy Monthly (Ranchi, India), (May, 1962), p. 142.

which constitutes ... one of those of more serious intent on resolving the numerous difficulties ... inherent in the classical theory of inspiration,"²⁸ "Altogether this is a stimulating little study,"²⁹ "a vigoureux effort to rethink the concept of inspiration... a sign of the vitality in Catholic thought today."³⁰ "[Rahner's] discussion ... excels precisely in the insight which stresses the social character of inspiration,"³¹ "[Rahner's] work concerns itself with an ever old yet ever new question of inspiration, which he treats in a new light with both progress and perception,"³² "a groundbreaker in the field of inspiration."³³

28 Santos de Carrea, Review of Über die Schriftinspiration, by Karl Rahner, Estudios Franciscanos (Barcelona), 61 (1960), p. 107.

29 Dom C. Butler, Review of Über die Schriftinspiration, by Karl Rahner, Downside Review, 80 (1962), p. 71.

30 C. Baumgarten, Review of Über die Schriftinspiration, by Karl Rahner, Recherches de Science religieuse (Strassburg), 46 (1958), p. 558.

31 Joseph Fitzmeyer, S.J., Review of Über die Schriftinspiration, by Karl Rahner, Perspectives, (March-April, 1962), p. 51.

32 Review of Über die Schriftinspiration, by Karl Rahner, Theologie und Glaube, 48 (1958), p. 457.

33 N. McKendrick, Review of Über die Schriftinspiration, by Karl Rahner, Review for Religious, 21 (1962), p. 482. Cf. D. Stanley, op. cit., p. 84.

AN EVALUATION OF RAHNER'S EXPLANATION

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Father Quinn seems to suggest that at least one popular work has been influenced by Rahner's thought: Jones' popular work, God's Living Word, sounds like a simple exposition of Rahner's thesis.³⁴

Even Rahner's severest critics welcome his work. Ibañez Arana has this to say:

But the current theology concerning inspiration, which contains slight variations, and which is the common inheritance of the schools, is submitted by Rahner to a complete revision, from which arises a new theology of inspiration, ingenious and attractive.³⁵

Father Ernst, a translator of one of Rahner's other works, says that the study on inspiration is "indispensable reading for any theologian, not only for specialists in fundamental theology."³⁶

34 E. Quinn, Review of Über die Schriftinspiration, by Karl Rahner, The Tablet (London), 215 (Dec. 23, 1961), p. 1233.

35 Andres Ibañez Arana, "La teoria de Karl Rahner sobre la Inspiración," Lumen (Vitoria), IX (May-Aug., 1960), p. 193.

Two years later the same author published a critique of Rahner's work under the title, "Observaciones. La teoria de Karl Rahner sobre la Inspiracion," Lumen (Vitoria), XI (May-Aug., 1962), pp. 193-213. It is to this later article that all references shall be made in our study. The original of the above quote: "Pero la teología corriente acerca de la inspiración la que con ligeras variantes era patrimonio común de las escuelas, es sometida por Rahner a una revisión a fondo, de la que sale una nueva teología de la inspiración, ingeniosa y tentadora." (Under-score mine.)

36 C. Ernst, O.P., Review of Inspiration in the Bible, by Karl Rahner, Clergy Review, (May, 1964), p. 324.

Father Crehan, who takes issue with Rahner on several points, but particularly on the point of canonicity, nevertheless pays an oblique compliment to Rahner by devoting most of his article on the Canon in the first of a projected series of the Catholic Dictionary, to Rahner's theory.³⁷

Among Protestants, too, the work of Rahner is having its impact. Presently there is a heated debate on the inspiration in the Bible, with particular reference to the problem of canonicity, among the professors of the Lutheran faculty of Theology of Erlangen, stirred up by a challenge from the noted exegete Professor Stauffer.³⁸ German Catholic theologians in attempting to answer problems posed by this debate for the Catholic theologian, are appealing to Rahner's theory for a solution. This would indicate the general acceptance, at least of his work.

Among the Presbyterians Rahner is looked upon as the "most representative dogmatician of present day Roman Catholicism which tries to combine absolute loyalty to the dogmatic heritage with the serious endeavor to free the

³⁷ Joseph H. Crehan, S.J., "The Canon of the Scriptures," Catholic Dictionary of Theology, (New York: Nelson, 1962), vol. I, pp. 321-324.

³⁸ Cf. Max Brändle, "Diskussion um die Inspiration der Bibel," Orientierung, (Zürich), 26 (1962), pp. 89-90; 100-104; 153-160.

Church from the fetters of a false traditionalism."³⁹

This is said despite the many areas of disagreement, especially on the question of canonicity, in his theory on inspiration.

On the American scene of Protestantism Rahner is viewed as "a provocative writer,"⁴⁰ and one whose talents "are needed by the Romanist Church."⁴¹ This, too, is said, despite an almost complete rejection of Rahner's thesis: "Hence, we cannot accept this effort of a Roman Catholic scholar to explain the Bible."⁴²

In summation we would like to say that from our reading, the critics' overall reaction to Rahner's work on inspiration is favorable. This is true even though some Catholic theologians give derogatory criticism to particular aspects of the study. It is also true of the Protestant scholars, despite their almost complete rejection of some main lines of his thought. This favorable reaction might possibly be explained through Rahner's clearing the

³⁹ H. Sasse, "Concerning the Nature of Inspiration," Reformed Theological Review, (Hawthorn, Australia), 23 (June, 1964), p. 35.

⁴⁰ E. Young, "The Bible and Rome," Bibliotheca Sacra (Dallas), (April, 1964), p. 117.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., pp. 123-124.

air for further discussion. In the words of Father Ernst:

... no one with a serious interest in modern biblical studies need ever again have to master that curious feeling of embarrassment one used to feel when the theology of inspiration came up for discussion.⁴³

We conclude this section with the words of Father Congar:

Karl Rahner a l'art de poser des problèmes classiques de théologie d'une manière qui les renouvelle.⁴⁴

It would seem that in his work on inspiration Father Rahner has manifested this ability to bring new light on an old problem, and his efforts have been well received.

Rahner's Method and Approach

For those who pay tribute to Rahner's method employed, Ibañez Arana is representative of the warm applause.

He says:

Rahner does not resign himself to an unhappy conformism, which renounces a priori any possible advances, as if theology would have to be just a mechanical repetition of stereotyped theses.⁴⁵

43 Ernst, op. cit., p. 324.

44 Yves Congar, O.P., "Inspiration des Ecritures canoniques et Apostolicité de l'Eglise," Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques, 45 (1961), p. 32. This same article was later published under the same title in Unam Sanctam, 41 (Paris: Ed. du Cerf, 1963), pp. 187-200; also a condensation appeared in Theology Digest, XI (3, Autumn, 1963), pp. 187-191, under the title, "Inspiration and the Apostolicity of the Church." All references made in our study will be to the first mentioned publication.

45 Ibañez Arana, op. cit., p. 194.

He also praises Rahner's method of treating the dogma of inspiration, not as an isolated fact, but in relation to other dogmas of the foundation of the Church, namely Scripture and Tradition.

Finally, he compliments Rahner on his reproach to those who are endangered by a "theological positivism."⁴⁶

Father Cherian echoes these views:

It is one of the great merits of Father Rahner's approach in this study that it brings out strikingly the unity of the Church and the Bible, the inseparable link between them, their "existential connexion"... Now that a distinguished theologian, using an approach that is more dogmatic and scholastic than biblical, has produced such happy results in this difficult field, it is greatly to be wished that some distinguished biblical scholar would make a further contribution to this subject by using the Bible as the starting point of his investigation.⁴⁷

The allusion made by Father Cherian to the existential connexion between the Church and the Bible brings us to another aspect of praise in the approach used by Rahner. Father Ernst, whom we have already mentioned as having serious qualifications about Rahner's theory, nevertheless praises the shift from the psychological to the sociological theory of inspiration. He points out, as does Rahner, that the psychological account only becomes really

46 Ibañez Arana, op. cit., p. 194. Cf. also De Carrea, op. cit., p. 107.

47 Cherian, op. cit., p. 144.

plausible in the sociological context of saving history.⁴⁸

In justifying Rahner's methodology, Father Topel has two points to make:

1) 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. ... Thus there need be no conflict between Rahner's social theory of inspiration and Benoit's individual theory.

2) The second note indicates the plan of Rahner's book. In chapter I he considers certain significant problems ... in chapter II ... his theory ... in chapter III he shows how his theory answers these same key questions.⁴⁹

Our interest here is merely to point out the sociological approach and would remind the reader of Rahner's existent background as given in the preceding biographical section. This notion of the "social theory of inspiration" will receive further treatment under another question. That it is appreciated by some is evident in the words of Father Stanley:

48 Ernst, op. cit., p. 324-325.

49 Topel, op. cit., p. 34.

... a new element is introduced into the recent discussion of the nature of biblical inspiration: the historical process in which the divine influence actually operated.⁵⁰

In sharp contrast to the praise of Rahner's method and approach some critics ask by what right can Rahner presume to divorce dogma so thoroughly from its revealed sources. Despite the warm applause given above by Ibanez Arana, he points to some serious defects in Rahner's approach, and goes so far as to say that these defects must of necessity lead to an inexact solution and one prejudiced in advance. He says:

He [Rahner] affirms that he does not pretend to treat of biblical theology. Since the study is to be dogmatic he does not start with Scripture, but with the notion of inspiration as it appears to be in the doctrines of the Magisterium and in traditional theology.

We believe that no theological study can prescind with impunity from the texts of Sacred Scripture when there are some.⁵¹

Ibañez Arana illustrates how Rahner would have been forced to change not only his procedure but also his doctrine had he taken into account the Scriptural texts. We quote:

50 Stanley, op. cit., p. 80.

51 "Creemos que en ningún estudio teológico se puede prescindir impunemente de los textos de la Sagrada Escritura, donde los haya." (Ibañez Arana, op. cit., pp. 194-195.)

In our case the Scripture shows abundantly that already in the time of Jesus Christ, inspiration was an accepted doctrine, and that Jesus Christ and the Apostles proposed it, not as one announcing something new, but as one who simply gives definitely that which is the common inheritance; so that the first known testimony concerning the inspiration of the New Testament is presented as of equal value with the Old Testament.⁵²

Father Costelloe likewise reflects these thoughts:

Many will perhaps feel that this account of inspiration is something of a tour de force. Father Rahner discusses the problem at length without taking into explicit account any of the Scripture texts or writings of the Fathers used to substantiate the traditional view. The omission, moreover, is deliberate since he "is not concerned with the Biblical theology, but with dogma," that is, with "the teaching on inspiration as it is established in its basic traits by the magistracy of the Church and explained and expanded in scholastic theology (p. 7). But how can dogma be so thoroughly divorced from its revealed sources? And how is the thesis supported by theologians who, using these revealed sources, have come to a different conclusion than his own?⁵³

Dubarle has similar reservations about Rahner's method, despite praise of Rahner's 'rigor of argumentation':

52 Ibañez Arana, op. cit., p. 195: "En nuestro caso, la Escritura demuestraba abundantemente que ya en tiempos de Jesucristo la inspiración era una doctrina recibida, y que Jesucristo y los Apóstoles la propusieron, no como quien anuncia algo nuevo, sino como quien simplemente da por bueno lo que es patrimonio común; que el primer testimonio conocido acerca de la inspiración del Nuevo Testamento se presenta como una equiparación de este con el Antiguo."

53 M.J. Costelloe, Review of Inspiration in the Bible, by Karl Rahner, Homiletic and Pastoral Review, 62 (1961-62), p. 377.

Malgré la virtuosité de la dialectique, cet ouvrage laisse une gêne à cause de la tension entre la méthode et la doctrine.⁵⁴

In a recent biblical conference in Louvain, Van der Ploeg and those in attendance did not hesitate to present their objections to Rahner's method and several of his theologoumena. Referring to Van der Ploeg, the chronicler says:

As regards the method, he reproached the theologian of Innsbruck for beginning from the definitions of Vatican I to understand the books of the Old Testament, when it is preferable to proceed precisely in the opposite way—then to arrive at a theory which, in the manner of the Protestants, tends to confuse the Church with the Scriptures, with this difference, however, that the stress falls more on the Church than on the Sacred Books.⁵⁵

Professor Edward Young challenges the legitimacy of Rahner's approach, which stand is undoubtedly representative of the Protestant position on this point.⁵⁶ He says that the question of inspiration rests on a Christian

54 A.M. Dubarle, Review of Über die Schriftinspiration, by Karl Rahner, Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques, 43 (1959), p. 107.

55 Van der Ploeg, O.P., Critique addressed to K. Rahner at the first session of the Louvain Conference, Feb., 1960, the report published in Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses, 36 (1960), p. 316: "En matière de méthode, il reprocha au théologien d'Innsbruck de partir des définitions du Vatican pour comprendre les livres du Vieux Testament alors qu'il convient précisément de faire la route en sens contraire,—puis d'aboutir à une théorie qui, à la manière des Protestants, tend à confondre l'Eglise avec les Ecritures, sans doute avec cette différence que l'accent tombe plus sur l'Eglise que sur les Livres Saints."

56 Young, op. cit., pp. 119-120.

theistic presupposition, which of course no Catholic denies. For Young, however, the problem cannot be resolved with starting with what the Church says, but rather with what the Bible itself says, which, by these theistic presuppositions, we know to be the Word of God. Therefore the only legitimate approach is from the Bible itself.

This problem is more complex than might seem. To meet the Protestants 'on their own grounds', i.e., with the Bible as the starting point in the spirit of ecumenism, Max Brandle has written a series of articles in Orientierung.⁵⁷ We shall see the results of his study in greater detail when considering the problem of canonicity, but for the present, let us simply admit that criticism of Rahner's approach is to be expected from those who do not accept the authority of the Church.

For one who accepts Rahner's approach as legitimate, Peter Nober⁵⁸ is nevertheless critical of Rahner for not considering the importance of relevant Tridentine formulas. This omission will obviously be especially detrimental to a treatment of the relation between Scripture and Tradition.

57 Brandle, op. cit., especially pp. 89-90.

58 Peter Nober, S.J., Review of Über die Schriftinspiration, by Karl Rahner, Verbum Domini, 36-37 (1958-59), pp. 362-365.

Ibañez Arana agrees with Nober on this point and goes further in stating that Rahner should have considered the Fathers and theologians and the Magisterium prior to Vatican I. The Spanish theologian says:

For that reason it is a deficiency in Rahner's study, that besides prescinding from Scripture, he forgets the Fathers, the theologians, and the Magisterium prior to Vatican I.⁵⁹

He criticizes Rahner further by pointing out that Rahner's system of beginning with the difficulties, as might be used sometimes as a pedagogical device to arouse interest, is not good. His point here is that it is not the difficulties that should impose the idea of inspiration, but rather, having determined first the nature, then the difficulties should be resolved as far as possible. In proceeding inversely, Rahner runs the danger of eliminating the mystery and then, of course, the difficulties also. He also points out that too much stress is placed on the difficulties inherent in the traditional theory, which leads Rahner to try to explain the obscurum per obscurius. In short, this method according to Ibañez Arana, leads Rahner to fail to see the positive advantages, for example, in the double infallibility.

⁵⁹ Ibañez Arana, op. cit., p. 195: "Por eso, es una laguna en el estudio de Rahner el que, además de prescindir de la Escritura, olvide a los Santos Padres, teólogos y Magisterio anterior al Concilio Vaticano."

Further, the Spanish theologian points out that one cannot begin the study of inspiration with the New Testament, and precisely for reasons of method.⁶⁰ On this point Dubarle⁶¹ is in agreement with Ibañez Arana.⁶²

Finally, this outspoken critic of Rahner criticizes Rahner's method as an acumulación de minimismos. He illustrates this 'hair-splitting' in the examples of 1) the illumination in the understanding of the sacred writer when inspired; 2) in the comparison between efficacious grace and inspiration. In the latter case Rahner overlooks the usual distinction made by theologians, v.g., that there is an essential difference between the two realities, and in seeming to establish an equality between inspiration and efficacious grace, Rahner is at least showing Molinist tendencies!

One further observation that seems fairly common, expressed as a disappointment rather than an adverse criticism, is that the study remains very speculative. In other words, these authors do not contest Rahner's method of delimiting his thesis, but express the hope that the positive basis will be developed.

60 Ibañez Arana, op. cit., p. 196.

61 Cf. Dubarle, op. cit., p. 107.

62 Ibañez Arana, op. cit., pp. 196 ff.

In summary, what can we say concerning Rahner's method and approach to the question of inspiration? We have seen some scathing criticism, which will undoubtedly cast a pall over the entire thesis, from the point of view of the Spanish theologian. The latter, incidentally, claims no reliance upon the views of others, but rather presents his critique as totally his own reflection on Rahner's work. However, despite these unflattering observations from Ibañez Arana, the general consensus would seem to favor Rahner's method and approach.

Perhaps we could divide the outspoken critics into two groups: 1) Those who stress the positive contribution of Rahner, and thus are in favor of his approach; and 2) Those who accuse Rahner of too freely divorcing dogma from its sources, or at very least, of not giving sufficient attention to the formulas which express the dogma.

In the first category, the emphasis is particularly on Rahner's incorporation of the existential or social aspect of inspiration into his approach, and in the social context of the Church, his 'enlarging the horizons of classical theology.'

It would seem to this writer that the first group is in the majority, viewing their observations quantitatively, i.e., they outnumber those who do not accept Rahner's approach. Taken qualitatively the positive value

cited supercede the negative criticism of his method.

Thus far, we have seen that the general reaction to Rahner's study as a whole is favorable, and likewise his method or approach. Let us now view the reactions of theologians to the very nucleus of Rahner's theory.

The Nucleus of Rahner's Theory

The matter thus far has been more or less introductory to what follows. We come now to the nucleus or heart of Rahner's thesis, which has been exposed in Chapter III.

We recall that there are three main elements that constitute Rahner's central thesis: 1) By the fact that God willed to found the Urkirche by His formally predetermined, salvific and eschatological, absolute will, 2) He willed and created the Scriptures at the same time, 3) in such a way that He is the Author (Urheber and Verfasser). Although difficult to separate these notions because they are so closely knit in synthesis, nevertheless for our purposes we shall treat each aspect separately.

On the first point, v.g., that God's divine action in founding the Urkirche was unique, no theologian will deny. In fact, there seems to be the general attitude among critics that this is not new, but to Rahner must go

the credit for having expressed it with such clarity.

The act of God's Will by which the Church was founded is absolute and pre-determined because it is included in the decree of the Incarnation, prior to any decision of human liberty.

It is salvific because it culminates in the founding of the Church, willed by the same absolute will of salvation as that of the Incarnation.

Finally, it is eschatological because the Church is the definitive economy in redemptive history. As such it is distinguished from the election of Israel, and also from the later Church. It is clear that there must be a divine intervention—a special divine action in the foundation of the Church, i.e., in the epoch of its being born, and that the later Church as such is Church insofar as it is a continuation of the Church-being-born, or what some authors translate as the Church-in-fieri. The Urkirche will always be the norm, the rule for the later Church. Thus, God is in a sense, more Author of the Urkirche than of the later Church.

However, some critics point out that Rahner stresses too much the normative role of the Urkirche for the later Church. For that matter, they contend, every age is normative for its subsequent ages. Father Ernst would qualify the sense of the term normative, as used by

Rahner, but he does not specify what qualifications he would make.⁶³

One critic who has spelled out his objections is Father Peter Nober, who says: "... relatio Ecclesiae Apostolicae ad Ecclesiam subsequentem, i.e., relationem 'Ecclesiae in fieri' ad 'Ecclesiam in facto esse'!"⁶⁴ The punctuation employed is expressive of his thoughts. He concedes one point to Rahner, namely, that between the two (the Urkirche and later Church) there exist such differences as the cessation of public revelation not only in doctrine admitted as "positivistic", but on the contrary, necessarily so. But, he points out, the charism of Apostolic Tradition remains "all days even unto the consummation of the world."⁶⁵ Nober gives further reasons for objecting to this sharp distinction which we shall mention later where they will be more relevant.

Likewise, the eminent Abbot Butler of Downside confesses that his first reaction to Rahner's qualitative distinction⁶⁶ between the age of the Apostles and all

63 Cf. Ernst, op. cit., p. 324.

64 Nober, op. cit., p. 364.

65 Ibid.

66 Rahner, op. cit., pp. 42-47.

subsequent ages of the Church "contained an element of malaise."⁶⁷ His reasoning proceeds along these lines:

For while it is obvious that every subsequent age is indebted to the apostolic age as its indispensable link with the history of salvation, it is also obvious that every age after the sub-apostolic age is similarly indebted not only to the apostolic age but to one or more subsequent ages. And although it may be impossible to deny that the apostolic age has a uniqueness, indicated by the twin facts that the apostles were not only assisted but inspired teachers, and that revelation is held to cease, not with the Ascension of Christ, but with the end of the apostolic age, yet one remembers the powerful affirmation of a St. John of the Cross that the Word incarnate is the fullness of public revelation, so that nothing more is to be expected; and the history of the Incarnate Word terminates with the Ascension.⁶⁸

However, Butler himself seems to have gone through an evolution of thought, as he continues:

Perhaps, however, we have reached the stage at which we have to give deeper theological consideration to the fact that the Messiah is nothing, in the divine economy, without the Messianic Community. He and it are two correlative terms, implicating each the other. Or, to put the same truth another way, the Word is not fully given until it is received; and there is, in human life, the possibility, if not the necessity, of a time-lag between the physical giving of a word and that mental reception of the gift which makes the word a word in actu secundo. If we then grant, as seems reasonable, that coming-to-birth is a unique stage in the existence of a thing subject to temporal duration, and that the process of coming to birth is itself measurable by physical time, the bases on which Prof. Rahner's theory rests would appear to be stable.⁶⁹

67 Butler, op. cit., p. 71.

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid.

There is much more to be said about the normative role of the Urkirche, but since Rahner's synthesis precludes separation of the normative role of the Urkirche from the normative role of Scripture, we shall reserve further discussion until we have seen the basic criticism of the second aspect of Rahner's central thesis: Scripture as a constitutive element of the Church.

We recall that by saying that Scripture is a constitutive element of the Urkirche, Rahner is, in effect, saying that in willing the primary reality, the Church, God willed the Scriptures (at least the New Testament) as a decisive, internal, and determining element. Scripture is not something extrinsic—something brought in from the outside; it is rather the "fullness of life"—Lebensvollzug—characteristic of the Primitive Church, created in the same divine causality as that of the Church. These writings constitute a moment in the Heilsgeschichte: they are the elements composing the living actualization of the Church at its birth and formation, reflecting its very life and faith. As such, they are inspired. Along with the other essential elements, the Scriptures would remain normative for the subsequent ages of the Church.

In situating the understanding of inspiration within the question of the essence of the Church and above all the Primitive Church, Rahner has one theologian at least in

fundamental agreement. Uhlenbrock says:

More than until this time Rahner has situated the question concerning the understanding of inspiration in the question concerning the essence of the Church and above all, the question concerning the early Church. This seems to me fundamentally the right way to be.⁷⁰

Uhlenbrock gives as his reason for agreeing on this point that "even with inspiration God goes about the Church and in the building of the Kingdom of God."⁷¹

On the final judgment of Rahner's central thesis, Uhlenbrock, like others, is hesitant. He thinks that this can be done only after further study. There is need for deeper and more extensive study on the teaching of the Church in which the question about the particular situation and mission of the Primitive Church is more clearly answered. It will be in the light of these studies that Rahner's thesis may stand or fall, especially on the authorship of God which we are about to discuss. Whether or not his thesis survives will be determined from its conformity or non-conformity to the teaching of the Church in this matter.

⁷⁰ Werner Uhlenbrock, O.F.M., Review of Über die Schriftinspiration, by Karl Rahner, Franziskanische Studien, 40 (1958), p. 415: "Mehr als bisher hat Rahner die Frage nach dem Verständnis der Inspiration in die Frage nach dem Wesen der Kirche und vor allem dem der Urkirche eingebaut. Das scheint mir grundsätzlich der richtige Weg zu sein."

⁷¹ Ibid.

The unfortunate choice of the word 'elements' to refer to Scripture, and likewise Tradition and the magisterium, is deplored by Nober. "It is unfortunate," he says, "because element implies composition from parts, none of which contains the whole."⁷²

More pertinent to the central thesis, Congar⁷³ sees that it is in this view of the inspiration of Scripture that the originality of Rahner's position consists. Congar is in fundamental agreement with Rahner, although he has some sharp reservations on the role of the apostles. This we shall see shortly.

Grelot,⁷⁴ among others, acknowledges that Rahner's view enlarges considerably the horizon of classical theology, but does not cast sufficient light upon the question of Scriptural inspiration as such. Like Congar, Grelot has reservations and qualifications concerning Rahner's underplaying of the role of the Apostles.

Even Ibañez Arana agrees that Rahner is right in viewing the Scriptures in relation to the early Church.⁷⁵

72 Nober, op. cit., p. 363.

73 Congar, op. cit., p. 33.

74 Grelot, "L'Inspiration Scripturaire," Recherches de Science Religieuse, 41 (July-Sept., 1963), p. 347.

75 Ibañez Arana, op. cit., p. 206.

The fact that Rahner brings to the fore the point that the Scriptures were not only the work of God and a particular man, but a "sedimento" of the very life of the primitive Church, is worthy of praise. This is a need, not fully brought out until now, of the New Testament writings. The Spanish theologian sees it as a condition required in the material content of the inspired books of the Old Law, and will serve, thanks to Rahner, as a more profound and more human understanding of the prophetic element in the inspired books.

However, this critic detects serious flaws in Rahner's reasoning. He concedes to Rahner, first of all, that God is the founder of the Urkirche under a special title, but accuses Rahner of a fallacy in applying this idea to the divine origin of Scripture. He explains the fallacy thus:

God is the founder of the primitive Church.
But He is the founder, and nothing more, of the
constitutive elements of the primitive Church
as such.⁷⁶

From these premises, Ibañez Arana claims that Rahner must logically conclude:

Therefore, God actually, in such manner, makes
Himself founder of everyone of the constitutive
elements of the primitive Church. God does not
make himself founder of the Church if He does not

76 Ibañez Arana, op. cit., p. 206.

make himself founder of each of its elements. God is in a special manner the founder of the primitive Church because, in having conceived, willed and effected it, by a special and perfectly differentiated action in each case, He effected each and all of the elements which constitute it (the Church): revealed doctrine, Scripture, grace, hierarchy, sacraments, etc.⁷⁷

This conclusion does not square with what Rahner seems to consider as God being the founder of the primitive Church by a unique action, global and diffused, which does not seem to include in itself the particular actions by which each of these elements is realized or fulfilled. At least Rahner does not make it such in regard to inspiration, whose peculiar divine origin he does not consider necessary. So, the Spanish theologian says that if we apply this procedure of Rahner to the other elements of the foundation of the Church, then we reduce this foundation to a mere nominalism.

As a result, he continues, if we are to accept the teaching of Rahner concerning the peculiar action of God in the Church naciente, then we must study further the element of the Church que nace, which is Scripture. Rahner says many times that this divine action of God by which He makes himself founder must be taken as miraculous or "wunderbar".⁷⁸ There is need to investigate further in what

77 Ibañez Arana, op. cit., p. 206.

78 Cf. Rahner, op. cit., pp. 40 seq.

this miraculous character consists in inspiration, as a special mystery within the wider mystery of the Church. This need results from the fact that the Magisterium has always understood them as distinct mysteries. Finally, on this point, Ibañez Arana concludes that if Scripture is, in the order of execution, the spontaneous fruit of the Church naciente, but with special divine intervention, inspiration does not take on a special miraculous and mysterious character, so that it will be held as a distinct mystery from that of the Church.

Dom Butler's remark above that "the Messiah is nothing in the divine economy without the Messianic community"⁷⁹ brings us to another point in Rahner's notion of the Urkirche, to which we have alluded, namely, the function of the Apostles.

We have seen that Rahner points to a qualitative difference between God's willing the founding of the Urkirche, and that of her preservation, resulting in a unique relationship to the Urkirche, and to her members—the first generation of Christians. Among these members were the Apostles, involved as they were in this founding with Christ. Rahner points out that Peter and the apostolic college possessed in addition to the office handed on to

79 Supra, p. 141, note 69.

their successors, an untransferable function in the Church. Rahner's treatment of the role of the Apostles in the Urkirche ends here.⁸⁰

It is precisely this brevity of treating the function of the Apostles that urged the eminent Dominical theologian, Yves Congar, to criticize Rahner, and to develop his own ideas on this matter. Congar says:

... we would like to see the role of the apostles better evaluated. For at the interior of even the primitive Church, it is they, as apostles, who are formally and distinctively the reason for the inspired normative character of her writings, decisions and acts. Now this fact is not sufficiently noted by Rahner; the Apostles are to some extent lost in the indiscriminate title, "primitive Church" (Urkirche).⁸¹

For Rahner, then, God is not so much the author of Scripture because He has moved a human writer to conceive, desire and execute the composition of a book, as for having willed and created the Scriptures by the same will-act in establishing the Church.

Because of this, Congar goes on to point out how, for Rahner, the proper subject of normative Scripture is always indicated as being directly the Church: die Urkirche. "But," he argues, "Why not say: the Apostles?"⁸² He

80 Cf. Rahner, op. cit., pp. 33-34.

81 Congar, op. cit., p. 35.

82 "Mais pourquoi ne pas dire: les Apôtres?" (Congar, ibid., p. 36.)

concedes that Rahner honors their decisive role but reduces it to the Urkirche, as he does also with the prophets. As a result of this, Congar points out that in placing the generative, instrumental human causes within the Church, Rahner attains a unity, but at the expense of the apostolic function. He leaves an important aspect of the role of the prophets and Apostles in a shadow.⁸³

Perhaps we should indicate to the reader at this point the reasons for our preoccupation with Congar's ideas, as well as those who share his opinion.

Other than deeming the distinguished theologian's views necessary for a balanced evaluation of Rahner's work, we consider the suggestions he makes as a positive contribution to the present discussion on inspiration stirred up by Rahner, and something of a complement to Rahner's work. Even more important for our study is the relevance of his ideas on apostolicity for the specific aspect which we are considering, namely, canonicity.

What, then, would Congar suggest for a better evaluation of the role of the Apostles, which he claims is wanting in Rahner's work? What does Congar mean when he accuses Rahner of "leaving an important role of the prophets and Apostles in a shadow"?

83 "... cela laisse dans l'ombre un aspect important du rôle des prophètes et des apôtres." (Congar, op. cit., p. 36.)

Congar explains this through pointing out that the Apostles are not only an internal formal element of the Church, but also external efficient instruments in bringing about the formation of the Church. Rahner emphasizes the role of the Apostles in their being a 'formal element' of the Church, and almost completely overlooks their activity as efficient instrumental causes. This results in a distortion, or as Congar puts it, "the categories used by Rahner are insufficient."⁸⁴ Therefore, in his presentation, Congar accepts Rahner's basic position, but points to the need for balancing the picture with an account of the efficient causality of the Apostles.

How does Congar conceive of the causal relation between the efficient cause of society and its form? He calls it a sort of dialectique des rapports⁸⁵ between the two. Authority is both an efficient cause and a formal element of society.

It is an efficient cause either "dans l'acte de fondation,"⁸⁶ or in some way exercises from the outside "une action unificatrice et motrice."⁸⁷

84 Congar, op. cit., p. 42.

85 Ibid., p. 36.

86 Ibid.

87 Ibid.

It is a formal element insofar as it organizes and animates society in the operations or activities "qui font la vie de cette société."⁸⁸

In terms of the society which is God's People, it is the prophets and Apostles who are chosen by God as His instruments, to mediate His divine revelation. In effecting this, the Apostles and prophets are the efficient instrumental cause of the Church. Congar shows how they are first efficient instrumental causes, by an analogy with human generation. The substance of the analogy is as follows:

In human generation, the sperm is first of all, the active principle carrying the influx of the generator, then comes the integral part informing and organizing the engendered in the living being...⁸⁹

As the sperm must first act efficiently and only then, formally—the integrating, informing, and organizing element of the begotten life—so too, with the Apostles and prophets. As bearers of God's revelation in forming His Church, they are first efficient instrumental causes, and then, in the differing conditions, they constitute the formal element by interiorly determining and organizing God's people.⁹⁰

88 Congar, op. cit., p. 36.

89 Ibid., pp. 36-37.

90 Ibid., p. 37.

Congar spells out in what way the Apostles belong to the formal element of the Church. The prophets, as well as the Apostles, are part of the formal element of the Church by determining the speculative and practical values that together go to form or constitute the revelation and the fides quae creditur. It is this that gives the Church its essential form of existence. Moreover, the Apostles are such by the pastoral powers of the priesthood, teaching, and spiritual government, which the hierarchical ministers derive from them.⁹¹

Thus, a balanced view of the role of the Apostles (and prophets) must consider them as both efficient causes and as part of the formal element in the Church, but they are first efficient before they can be determinative influences in imprinting a 'form'. In considering Scripture as the normative internal determination of the Church—its form (along with the sacraments and other essential elements), Rahner is correct, in Congar's view.⁹² However, Scripture must also be seen in its primary aspect as the result of that motion received from outside, by which the prophets and Apostles are the instruments of the supreme efficient Cause of the People of God. Because Father

91 Congar, op. cit., p. 37.

92 Ibid.

Rahner does not stress this sufficiently, certain profound biblical values are almost overlooked, as Congar points out:

... the choice of singular and clearly historical individuals such as Moses, Isaiah, Peter, John, Paul, etc.; their mission, which is another name, more biblical, for that motion or influx mentioned above; the charismatic personality which God formed in them, to respond to this mission, since every mission carries with it the necessary means of fulfillment; and finally, the apostolic authority which comes to them by reason of that choice, of that mission, and those corresponding gifts.⁹³

Father Congar says that all of these elements are very strongly underscored by the testimony of the early Christianity, and by theological tradition. He then treats of each of the 'biblical values' mentioned above.

The choice of certain singular persons...

In Rahner's presentation, with his stress on the social aspect of inspiration, Congar says that the individuals chosen by God are swallowed up in the great collective being which is the primitive Church. "The historic gradation of God's revelatory interventions and motions of inspiration is too much centered in the Urkirche."⁹⁴ The election of certain individuals who were given privileged positions of intimacy with God (Paul, for

93 Congar, op. cit., pp. 37-38.

94 Ibid., p. 37.

example) is not adequately noted.

Congar points out that God's plan, constantly manifested, is to reveal to all men things which he has confided to one or to a chosen few. Now when speaking of the Apostles, one cannot stress too much their direct and personal contact with the Word Incarnate, Jesus Christ. Congar reminds us also, that Christ is ours only insofar as He was first their personally. Congar says:

Because we have full knowledge of God only in Jesus Christ (Philip, who sees Me sees the Father", Jn 14, 9), and we have full knowledge of Jesus Christ only through the knowledge and the understanding that the Apostles had of Him.⁹⁵

Congar maintains further that the prophets should be given their rightful place in the personal election among the People of God. He concedes that Rahner's thesis is partly true in that the Old Testament is fully constituted as Scripture only when the Canon is fixed—"in the moment when God founds the Church with Scripture as the form of Her faith."⁹⁶

95 Congar, op. cit., p. 38: "Car nous ne connaissons pleinement Dieu qu'en Jésus-Christ ("Philippe, qui m'a vu a vu le Père", Jn, 14, 9), et Jésus-Christ qu'à travers la connaissance et l'intelligence qu'en ont eues les Apôtres."

96 Ibid. Cf. also Grelot, op. cit., p. 351.

Their mission...

Congar emphasizes once again that we must keep a balance between the Apostles as belonging to the formal determining element of the Church and their role as efficient causes. In the latter they were looked upon by the first Christian generations as following in a "cascade of missions": the Father sends the Son, who sends the Apostles, who found the Churches. The Apostles hand on what they receive from Christ. Under one aspect they and their objective "tradition" can be seen as an interior and formal principal of the Church. But in the order of efficient causality, they are intermediaries between God, Christ, and the Church. Congar sums up with: "It is the moment of their mission, to which belongs in its order, the editing of their writings."⁹⁷

Their charismatic personality...

Congar delineates further the understanding of the charismatic personality of the prophets and apostles as held by the early Christians. This refers to the general acceptance that the Apostles enjoyed a special participation in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Theologians through the ages, St. Thomas in particular, have integrated this

97 Congar, op. cit., p. 39.

traditional view into their writings. Briefly, it is that before being efficient causes even, the Apostles received the gifts of the Holy Spirit before the others and in greater abundance. Referring to Rahner's 'submerging of the Apostles in the Urkirche', Congar asks, "Grace of the Urkirche?", to which he replies succinctly, "Yes, but first of all the personal grace of the Apostles."⁹⁸

The apostolic authority...

From this results their authority, which they themselves claimed, and which we honor as Christ's in their teaching.

It is this sequence, claims Congar—election, mission, fullness of the charismatic gifts, and authority—upon which is founded the normative character of the apostolic writings.⁹⁹ This normative character is what Congar says we can call the canonicity of these writings. We are now touching upon another problem, namely, that of canonicity. For this reason we shall leave Congar's further views, the foundation of which we have just presented, for our section on canonicity. What is important here is to see that Congar believes that Rahner does not attribute to the Apostles their proper place. For Congar, the Urkirche

98 Congar, op. cit., p. 39.

99 Ibid., p. 40.

is the subject of Scriptural inspiration only in an indistinct sense; strictly speaking, it is the prophets and Apostles.

Echoing Congar's views on the role of the individual is Denis McCarthy.¹⁰⁰ He hails the incorporation of the social dimension in the formation of the Scriptures as the way to a fuller understanding of the divine element in them. He grants that first Israel and then the Apostolic Church were communities of a special sort and which were subject to a special influence from God. There is no question but that this influence extended to the writings formed in, and in turn, formed the communities.

However, McCarthy warns against submerging the individual in a tradition of impersonal production, which is not, in fact, indicated by the ancient Oriental literatures. He illustrates his point:

Thus it would be oversimplifying to take as absolute the statement that the ancient author was in all instances the spokesman of society, and society was the real author of his book. The basis for such a statement in regard to the Old Testament literature is the peculiar relation

100 Denis McCarthy, "Personality, Society and Inspiration," Theological Studies, (1963), pp. 553-576.

Van der Ploeg also shares Congar's views: "On aurait tort de faire disparaître les fortes personnalités d'où dérivent nos écrits néotestamentaires, dans la nébuleuse d'une communauté primitive dont on est incapable de dresser la physionomie précise ou l'état civil." (Op. cit., p. 316.)

of individual and society in the ancient world. Beyond doubt, the ancient lost himself in identification with his society in a way strange to us. Beyond doubt, ancient literature was a part and a product of tradition, that is, the fund of beliefs, forms of expression, and so on, held and passed on by the community, to a degree beyond anything we know. But I submit that this is still a matter of degree; individuals, anonymous to us perhaps, but still individuals, did the work, even though under the pressure of tradition. All literature—not just the ancient Oriental—involves an interplay of individual and a tradition carried in society.¹⁰¹

Although McCarthy's approach and context differ from Congar's, the warning is nevertheless basically the same—we must keep perspective. There is an interplay between the personal and social factors in the production of the Scriptures; both must be kept in balance in the discussion of inspiration.

We have seen that Congar agrees with Rahner in his fundamental thesis, but is critical of inadequacies in stating the role of the Apostles. In point of contrast, Topel defends this very aspect of Rahner's thesis, and does not seem to share Congar's reservations. Topel says:

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

¹⁰¹ McCarthy, op. cit., p. 554.

in the context of the authorship as constitutive 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.¹⁰²

Pierre Grelot, one of today's foremost scholars, says that Rahner's solution is by no means definitive on the question of scriptural inspiration as such. He certainly agrees with Rahner's notion of Scripture as a constitutive element of the Church, and in viewing scriptural inspiration as relying organically on the total salvific action of the Spirit. However, with Congar, Grelot has reservations on Rahner's views concerning the role of the Apostles. He emphasizes that its role, as the unique rule of faith to which the Church ought always to refer in the course of centuries, is derived fundamentally from the Apostolic preaching. He points out that it is "insofar as the authentic fixation of the preaching, that Scripture enjoys an authority without equal and plays an essential role in the Church."¹⁰³

Since the appearance of Rahner's original article on inspiration, Benoit has expanded his own theory or treatment of the social character of inspiration.¹⁰⁴ He has

102 Topel, op. cit., p. 40.

103 Grelot, op. cit., p. 348. Cf. also Congar, op. cit.

104 P. Benoit, O.P., "Inspiration et Révélation," Sacra Pagina, Congrès biblique de Louvain, (Paris: Gembloux, 1959), pp. 86-99. For Benoit's review of Über die Schrift-inspiration, by Karl Rahner, see Revue Biblique, 67 (1960), pp. 277-278.

pointed out that inspiration is but one of the charismata by which the hierarchically structured religious community is guided. In his opinion, none of these charismata are properly understood if they are considered as communicated to the individual. Rather, they are primarily communicated to the Church within which they are exercised, and for which they are given. In this Benoit would seem to be in agreement with Rahner.

In his article on this very subject—the social aspect of inspiration—the American Jesuit, J.L. McKenzie,¹⁰⁵ hails both the contributions of Benoit and Rahner.

Although Rahner's theory does not immediately appear as applicable to the Old Testament, in McKenzie's opinion, it is a decisive and constructive addition to the theory of inspiration. "The vehicle of inspiration ... is the community of the people of God, Israel and the Church,"¹⁰⁶ McKenzie insists. He continues: "The difficulty, I believe, arises from isolating inspiration as the charisma of the individual author."¹⁰⁷

105 John L. McKenzie, S.J., "The Social Character of Inspiration," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, 24 (2, April, 1952), pp. 115-124. See p. 118.

106 Ibid., p. 119.

107 Ibid., p. 123.

McKenzie develops some aspects of Rahner's theory, notably the concept of author which we are about to see. He finds in Rahner's social theory the principle of unity between the traditional position which used instrumental causality to explain the charisma of inspiration, and the modern biblical understanding of many authors, many of whom are anonymous.¹⁰⁸

This brings us to the third part of our discussion on the core of Rahner's thesis, namely, that God willed the Scriptures... in such a way as to be their Author (Urheber and Verfasser).¹⁰⁹

This question, we recall, involves the dilemma of the Divine-human authorship, i.e., how both God and man can be called the true literary authors, since this would seem to violate the principle that 'an effect, under one and the same aspect, can have but one cause'. On the one hand there is the instrumentality of the secondary author, not an instrument of a mere secretary, but a true literary author. On the other hand, the same causality—not merely the transcendental concursum—must be ascribed to God in the same dimension. One would seem to exclude, or at least place limitations on the other.

108 Cf. Topel, op. cit., p. 43.

109 Cf. Rahner, op. cit., pp. 58-62.

This difficulty would seem to be diminished, if not solved, only insofar as the 'respect' under which God is Author, keeps intact the true causality of a literary author and likewise, that it is not the same 'respect' under which man is literary author. However, the 'respect' (under which God is Author) must not only admit, but demand, the literary causality of the human author.

Rahner, we have seen, offers just such a solution. The human author primarily and per se intends a book. God primarily and per se intends the supernatural and historical community of salvation, which represents itself (sich objectiviert) in the sacred Books, and finds in the Books themselves its definitive moment. The same causality, or rather, the two causalities—Divine and human—have a terminative difference, both having reference however, to the same Book. Further, Rahner claims that this theory makes 'more perfect' God's causality as a Principal Cause in making man a true author, rather than a mere secretary.

We saw above how Topel upholds Rahner's thesis from the point of view of the human author, which he says is meaningful only in the social context. This critic also upholds Rahner as having vindicated the divine as well as human authorship:

God is principal author, since this historical process exhibits within our world effects wrought by God alone. Those who argue for a more intimate divine activity in the composition of a book must look to see whether they are not thereby prejudicing the human authorship of the Bible.¹¹⁰

In the above quotation, Topel is following David Stanley's lead.¹¹¹ Stanley goes on to point out that he considers Rahner's explanation of the Divine-human authorship as satisfactory. Not only is God their principal Author, for the aforementioned reasons, but he says that since "God willed that the Church record in writing her awareness of her true nature and mission, the apostolic writers who evince this faith are also real, yet subordinate authors."

For those who would argue for 'a more intimate Divine activity in the composition of the sacred Books', Father Costelloe asks a representative question:

And, finally, does the identification of the inspiration of the Scriptures with the founding of the Church adequately preserve their Divine authorship?¹¹²

In the previous section, in speaking of the social context of inspiration, we made reference to John L. McKenzie's development of Rahner's social theory. McKenzie

110 Topel, op. cit., p. 40.

111 Stanley, op. cit., p. 83.

112 Costelloe, op. cit., p. 377.

takes up the efficient causality of God intrinsic to the author, since Rahner does not tell us how God communicates to the individual author except in the social context of the Church.

Against those who deplore Rahner's reducing the status of the individual author, McKenzie argues that "this is exactly what the Orientalist finds characteristic on Near Eastern Literature."¹¹³ He continues by showing that the ancient author was anonymous because he did not think of himself as an individual contributor, but as fulfilling a social function. According to McKenzie, this idea of corporate personality which he says is found in Israel's idea of messianism and in our idea of Church, has largely been lost in the modern world.

Since McKenzie's views are closely tied in with what has already been said on the social context of inspiration, we shall not consider them further except to point out one thing. McKenzie considers that the communication received is "not an inner utterance nor an infused species," but rather "a direct mystical insight and awareness of the Divine reality."¹¹⁴ His point is that the author gives his

113 Topel, op. cit., p. 43.

114 Ibid., pp. 43-44.

experience of God the meaning which he takes from the social context of ideas of the Church.

We might point out here that what was said in the criticism of Rahner's underplaying the role of the Apostles is also closely allied to the concept of author, and therefore should be kept in mind at this time.

The Spanish theologian Andres Ibañez Arana, accuses Rahner of narrowing down the concept of author from the traditional acceptation in which the human author uses his human faculties, to the extent that there is nothing left. In effect he says that Rahner makes a false generalization: "De menos a más, llega a proponer el siguiente caso como posible:..."¹¹⁵ He illustrates with this example:

The poet who composed a psalm was not inspired. But some other person, perhaps much later, considered the psalm as an expression of his own religious conviction and made it his own and introduced it into the official use of the Synagogue. (For Rahner, he implies, the second person is the inspired author.) Therefore, the approbation of a book by a competent authority—the Synagogue or Church—would be the carrier of the divine inspiration.¹¹⁶

In his exposition, Rahner gives the parallel of the Pope's ghost writer, so-called, composing an encyclical,

115 Ibañez Arana, op. cit., pp. 197-198.

116 Ibid., p. 198.

which will be attributed to the Holy Father.¹¹⁷ But, the Spanish theologian argues, it is one thing to submit ourselves to the Holy Father from obligation, i.e., to his directives contained in encyclicals attributed to him as author, and quite another question as to who is the real literary author. If it were merely a question of preserving the divine authority of Sacred Scripture, it would suffice to have inspired approbation. The critic concludes by saying that simply because we do not know the precise limits of the concept, we cannot continually diminish it indefinitely.¹¹⁸ There comes a time when we would trespass beyond the limits of the concept; this is precisely what Rahner does with the concept of author, according to Ibañez Arana.

Finally, on this concept of author, Van der Ploeg¹¹⁹ and his colleagues attending the biblical conference in Louvain, were critical of Rahner's in abstracto analysis of the concept of author, without any regard for the concrete properties to explain the sacred Books.

As a result of this criticism, these theologians seemed to line themselves with Congar, Ibañez Arana and

117 Cf. Rahner, op. cit., pp. 10-12, note 1.

118 Cf. Ibañez Arana, op. cit., p. 198.

119 Cf. Van der Ploeg, op. cit., pp. 316-317.

others who do not accept Rahner's emphasis on the "collective charism" as opposed to the traditional view of inspiration as a "personal charism". These theologians maintain that since the understanding of the charism of inspiration is "to write", then it presents itself rather as a personal individual charism.¹²⁰ As such, these critics hold, the Holy Scriptures appear as better being given to the Church, and as produced by the Church. They conclude:

This certainly holds for the Old Testament whose inspired character is terribly diminished in the system of Karl Rahner. This holds also, in large part, for the New Testament.¹²¹

There are other aspects of this problem of authorship, as for example, the question brought out by Max Brändle: "Is Scripture inspired because they have God for their Author or, Is God the Author because He has inspired the Scriptures?"¹²² In other words, which is primary—the authorship of God, or the inspiration of the Scriptures? This question would demand explanation outside the scope of this study. We therefore merely suggest it to the reader as a possibility for further development of this concept. Let us state our conclusions now regarding the

120 Van der Ploeg, op. cit., p. 316.

121 Ibid., p. 317: "Cela vaut certainement pour l'Ancien Testament dont le caractère inspiré est terriblement amenuisé dans le système de Karl Rahner. Cela vaut aussi, dans une large mesure, du Nouveau Testament."

122 Brändle, op. cit., p. 153.

assessment of Rahner's concept of author as given by his peers.

It would seem that there is some difference of opinion among writers as to just what Rahner does intend to convey in presenting the notion of authorship within the social context. For some it would seem to be entirely opposed to the traditional notion of a personal and individual charism on the part of the human author and do an injustice to God as the Divine Author. For others it is a development and an improvement, more in keeping with the progress made in other areas of biblical studies, and at the same time not in opposition to the traditional concept of author.

By no means are theologians agreed as to a complete and unreserved acceptation of Rahner's theory. In justice to Rahner it must be said that several theologians, working independently and from different angles, have come up with results that are fundamentally in agreement with his theory. To mention a few, by way of summary, Max Brändle finds that Rahner's theory makes provision for the analogy between man and God in the composition of the inspired writings; and, in addition, it guards the authorship of God as literary author better than the traditional approach.¹²³

123 Brändle, op. cit., pp. 153-160.

This, Brändle maintains, is in harmony with the self testimony of the Scriptures, which we have seen, was the starting point of his study.

Canon Hawkins,¹²⁴ using as his point of departure the accepted historical criticism of the Bible, illustrates how the theology of inspiration fits in and is understood in these terms. His findings coincide with Rahner who uses the Church as his point of departure.

Thus far we have found no one who accepts Rahner's thesis as applied to the notion of authorship without some reservations or qualifications. Since Rahner stresses the social situation in which the writings were composed, those who favor him are theologians who tend to emphasize the sociological context, but even these writers—Congar, McKenzie, Topel, Hawkins—have reservations.

Among the theologians who offer negative criticism on this point, Ibañez Arana and Costelloe are vociferous.

Let us take a brief survey of the marginal problems which Rahner thinks are more easily evaluated if one accepts his thesis.

124 J.B. Hawkins, "A Suggestion About Inspiration," Downside Review, (260, July, 1962), pp. 197-202; 212, 213.

In this same article, the Abbot of Downside answers the preliminary views of Hawkins with comments of his own. These are followed by a re-statement of the first author, Hawkins.

Other Problems

There remain three principal problems which Rahner considers to be in a clearer light by reason of his thesis: whether or not inspiration was an unconscious process;¹²⁵ the criterion of inspiration and canonicity;¹²⁶ and, the relation between Scripture and the Magisterium.¹²⁷ Since the question of canonicity mainly concerns us, we shall treat that separately, and at length, while merely presenting a summary of the critics' views on the other two problems.

With regard to the consciousness of the sacred writer in the process of inspiration, critics are not self-committing in singling out this aspect of inspiration. We might say that it is implied in the criticism concerning the charism considered in its social context. What would seem to be implied is that if Rahner's solution is to be held as valid—that the sacred writer had neither a direct nor reflex consciousness of his inspiration, but an implicit awareness—then it would exclude the traditional theory. This question is closely linked with that of canonicity, which we shall treat at length in the next section.

125 Cf. Rahner, op. cit., pp. 62, 63.

126 Ibid., pp. 63-69.

127 Ibid., pp. 70 ff.

In treating the question of the relation between Scripture and the Magisterium, which Rahner calls two moments of the same event linked to each other, not two infallible 'Greatnesses', he also brings out the connection between Sacred Scripture and Tradition. This of course brings us into the present controversy of the 'Two Fonts' of revelation. Suffice it to say in regard to this question that Rahner's critics will fall into two categories: those in favor of admitting a constitutive tradition, and those who argue for the sufficiency of Scripture. It is not considered relevant to our study to pursue these views. Therefore, let us move into the question of canonicity as explained by Rahner's theory, and examine its reception by the critics.

The Problem of Canonicity

In the previous chapter we saw how Rahner claims that his theory of inspiration throws light on the question of how the Church recognized the inspired character of Scripture. We recall that he explains it through a distinction between the fundamental Revelation as such, and the reflex comprehension and expression of this Revelation.¹²⁸

¹²⁸ Cf. Rahner, op. cit., p. 65.

For Rahner, the fundamental Revelation originated as the authentic Wesenvollzug, or 'fullness of reality-characteristic' of the Church—its self-understanding—an implicit awareness of the inspiration and canonicity of a book.

This fact can then, according to Rahner, be comprehended reflexively and expressed again in post-apostolic times without there being a new Revelation. This explains the history of the formation of the Canon in all its variations.

Further, the New Testament writers were implicitly aware of the inspired character of their writings insofar as they were aware that they formed part of the concrete life of the Urkirche. We have seen in the previous section that Rahner claims that the writers, because of this awareness, were conscious of their inspiration without perhaps reflecting on it.

One of Rahner's most outspoken critics against this theory of explaining the canonicity of the sacred books is Father Joseph Crehan, noted English theologian. He holds that Rahner places too much stress on the "connaturality" of the knowledge. He claims that the "appeal to connatural knowledge for the expansion of doctrine" needs to be handled carefully, and he cites Dz. 2324.¹²⁹ He continues

129 Crehan, op. cit., p. 324, col. 1.

as follows:

When one speaks of the Church 'reflecting upon her treasures', one is either making an appeal to distinct acts of early bishops who approved this book or that as 'first-class matter', or else making use of that very difficult hypostasis, 'the mind of the Church'. (By rights, the Holy Spirit is the mind of the Church, and to appeal to a created mind involves one in the responsibility of deciding in what body this created mind inheres.) ... Father Rahner claims that by making a distinction between the basic revelation of the fact that a book is inspired and the reflex comprehension and expression of that revelation he has left room for the slow elaboration of the Canon.¹³⁰

Father Crehan accuses Rahner of suppressing the distinction between content and act of inspiration in order to account for the first stage (basic revelation). According to Rahner, then, what the primitive Church becomes conscious of as her own is at once inspired. Father Crehan finds this hard to accept: "This seems a difficult notion, which puts too much weight on the 'mind of the Church'."¹³¹

In his own mind, Father Crehan thinks that there was a period of clarity early in the second century about the Canon, and the uncertainties developed after that; and that in the final analysis, it was the existence of two categories of matter for reading in Church that accounted for this clarity-uncertainty-final agreement pattern. He

¹³⁰ Crehan, op. cit., p. 324.

¹³¹ Ibid.

says that "it is a pity" that Father Rahner denies that there is any evidence for this early clarity, and that he would dismiss it as an a priori supposition.¹³²

In applying Rahner's theory on canonicity to the Books of the Old Testament, Crehan does not find it acceptable; in fact, its weakness is exposed:

The wider extension of his theory to the OT (which he takes as acceptable to the Church only as the prehistory of Christ and His redemption) shows up one of its weaknesses, for if a book (such as Esther, Job or Proverbs) had no passage where a typical sense might surely be detected, it would be hard on this theory to account for its acceptance as canonical by the Church. It would be hard to suppose that when after the Resurrection Christ expounded to the disciples (Lk 24:27, 44) 'the things that concerned Himself' in the OT, He expounded the whole text of that work.¹³³

Elsewhere Crehan says that Rahner's theory is quite unsatisfactory in explaining the canonicity of the Old Testament. We quote Father Crehan:

Rahner's way of bringing in the Old Testament is not very successful. He claims that the Jewish Canon of books was inchoate and incomplete and could not be regarded as finally settled until there was an infallible Church to settle it. This is a travesty of what actually happened. The Jewish canon was fixed before the advent of Christians, and was cut down at the so-called synod of Jamnia after the fall of Jerusalem in order to exclude some books which were being used against orthodox Jewry by Christians and other

132 Crehan, op. cit., p. 324.

133 Ibid., p. 323.

sectaries. Ignatius of Antioch is on record (Eusebius Eccles. Hist. 3:36) that for the safety of apostolic tradition it must be put into writing; it is at least curious that Ignatius did not seem to realize that (as Rahner would have us believe) the task was already completed by the formation of the New Testament.¹³⁴

On this particular point, i.e., the application of the theory of inspiration to explain the canonicity of the Old Testament Books, the majority of critics find it inadequate. Fitzmeyer sums up the general reaction in these words:

But there is much that needs further reflection. It is a theory excogitated to explain the New Testament and only applied après coup to the Old Testament.¹³⁵

Likewise Dubarle, and others,¹³⁶ indicate a need for further reflection and development of Rahner's thesis for application to the Old Testament.

Ibañez Arana says that he "does not share Rahner's optimism"¹³⁷ in solving the difficulties of the Old Testament. His reasoning proceeds as follows:

134 J. Crehan, Opening address at the Contemporary Theology Institute, Loyola College, Montreal, June, 1964, p. 5 of manuscript.

135 Fitzmeyer, op. cit., p. 51.

136 Jensen, Cherian, Stanley, McKenzie, and Brinkmann are among those who consider Rahner's theory inadequate as applied to the Old Testament. Cf. the respective works cited.

137 Ibañez Arana, op. cit., p. 208.

If God inspired the Holy Scripture inasmuch as the primitive Church makes the Scripture, or makes itself in making the Scripture, it is essential in the theory [of Rahner] that the Church of Christ already exists...¹³⁸

He continues by pointing out that inspiration was realized (according to Rahner) at this eschatological, divine and definitive moment of the Church being founded. Thus, the minor premise, according to Ibañez Arana, using Rahner's thesis, must follow as such:

But in the Old Testament this Church does not yet exist, not even the Church that-is-being-born (Iglesia naciente). All the actions of God still have a provisional character ... assuming that the inspiration of the Old Testament is an undeniable dogma, we would have to say in good logic that it is inspired inasmuch as it is the genuine expression of that Church of the Old Testament.¹³⁹

As a result of this, Ibañez Arana says we must conclude that the inspiration of the Old Testament is of an essentially inferior grade; not only is it so according to its content, but also by the process by which God becomes its Author.

138 Ibañez Arana, op. cit., p. 208.

139 Ibid.: "Pero en el Antiguo Testamento no existe aún esa Iglesia ni siquiera naciente. Todas las acciones de Dios tienen aún un carácter provisional ... supuesto que la inspiración del Antiguo Testamento es un dogma innegable, habríamos de decir en buena lógica que es inspirado en cuanto que es la expresión genuina de aquella Iglesia del Antiguo Testamento."

Prescinding from the fact that, according to Rahner, the inspiration of the Old Testament was not fully constituted until officially received by the Church of the New Testament, the Spanish theologian maintains that Rahner does not support or demonstrate his assertion, since one becomes an author of a book when he composes it, not later. For the same reason also he understands that the canonicity is not a constitutive element of inspiration. The only thing that Rahner proves, according to Ibañez Arana, is that inspiration does not have meaning without its being destined for canonicity; that a divine book has no razón de ser but to be delivered to those for whom it was intended, and received by them. He says:

Therefore, at the moment when the book was written, it was already inspired, otherwise it would never be. But all inspiration includes in its concrete concept an interior destiny to canonicity.¹⁴⁰

He sums up by saying that no book of the Old Testament has its fullness—its plena razón de ser—if it is not ordered to or related to the canonicity of the New Testament.

Finally, this critic disagrees with Rahner in trying to apply the theory on the criterion of canonicity to the Old Testament, in the explanation of the formation of the Canon. If the post-apostolic Church acknowledged a book as inspired insofar as she could see in it an 'authentic

140 Ibañez Arana, op. cit., p. 209.

physiognomy' of the Urkirche, why then, were such books of the Old Testament admitted, in which there was hardly a shadow, much less a true pre-figuring of the Church of the New Testament?¹⁴¹

Van der Ploeg,¹⁴² the eminent Dominican professor, seems to share Ibañez Arana's conclusions, if not his method of argumentation. As Van der Ploeg understands Rahner's thesis, God is Author of the Scriptures in the measure that He is Author of the Urkirche, of which the Scriptures are a constitutive element. He continues in reference to the Old Testament:

And the Old Testament? It seems that it is inspired only inasmuch as it contains the pre-history of the Urkirche, the pre-history that the Urkirche has retaken, and which God has appropriated to Himself to form and pre-form His Church.¹⁴³

As might be expected, the Protestants do not accept Rahner's thesis as applied to the Old Testament, since they refuse to accept the foundation of the thesis as applied to the New Testament, namely, that Scripture is a constitutive element of the Church, founded in the same will-act by God. Again, as we have already seen, they maintain that this problem is biblical and cannot be

141 Ibañez Arana, op. cit., p. 209.

142 Van der Ploeg, op. cit., p. 315.

143 Ibid., p. 316.

relegated to the area of dogma. This is implied in the words of Dr. Young:

Surely there is no evidence in Scripture that would support the proposition that the inspiration of the Bible was simply a part of God's activity in establishing the church as the guardian of the deposit of faith.¹⁴⁴

In relation to the Old Testament he says:

Nor can we rest content with the treatment meted out to the Old Testament [by Rahner] in this connection. The Old Testament is truly a preparation for Christ, and the Old Testament is God-breathed. Its authority ... rests not on the fact it is a preparation for Christ, but on the fact that it is the Word of God.¹⁴⁵

He stresses that even though there is a break in time between the last book of the Old Testament and the coming of Christ, this does not nullify a genuine redemptive history, which, in his view, does not depend on a continuity of time. "It is ... the Word of God, not because it is the prehistory of the Church, but for the simple reason that God has spoken it." He concludes: "Hence, we cannot accept this effort of a Roman Catholic [Rahner]..."¹⁴⁶

We have dwelt at some length on the application of Rahner's theory on canonicity to the Old Testament, and have seen that the majority of writers criticize it as

144 Young, op. cit., p. 122.

145 Ibid.

146 Ibid., p. 123.

being at least inadequate, if not totally unsatisfactory. One writer, who claims not to have had Rahner's formulations in mind, has nevertheless, contributed something to the development of Rahner's ideas. We have seen some of McCarthy's ideas in connection with the social aspect of inspiration.

McCarthy says:

It is revealing to ask in this regard why the community preserved some books and not others. The fact is certain. We know from references in the Bible itself that ancient Israel had collections of songs and stories which are lost. Why these and not our historical books? Surely because these and not the others nourished the life of the community.¹⁴⁷

McCarthy cites as an example the preservation of Jeremiah's words, because "his were verified in the historical experience of the Jewish community." But he emphasizes that he is not equating inspiration with canonicity. Jeremiah's words as written and handed on were already inspired, but it was through the community's experience that this was recognized and their meaning appreciated. Because the divinely chosen community was 'unformed' and 'unstructured' it was not yet equipped with definitive norms and definitive authorities, so that its criterion had to be its own life, its own utility—the criterion which guided the production

147 McCarthy, op. cit., p. 574.

and recognition of the inspired writings.¹⁴⁸

McCarthy does not agree with Rahner on the making of the distinction between the Old and the New Testaments absolute. Granting that the Old Testament community was not the final, definitive object of divine choice, and as such did not possess a definitive criterion, nevertheless, the Old Testament community was the object of an extraordinary pre-definition "antecedent to man's acts."¹⁴⁹ Therefore, this distinction made by Rahner is not absolute.

In summary, McCarthy points out that:

The Old Testament texts from their very nature and mode of growth are not closed within themselves ... They belong to God's people, at a lower stage of development it is true, but still specially guided so that it could produce and discern God's word in the sacred texts, if not in definitive, still in significant, valid form. It is a matter of record that it did so, producing and preserving the inspired and dropping other writings.¹⁵⁰

David Stanley, admitting the difficulties inherent in applying Rahner's theory to the Old Testament, nevertheless thinks that the notion that the Urkirche lived and experienced God and Christ in such a way as to give an

148 These ideas follow along the lines of those suggested by Charles Henkey, when he speaks of the pragmatic necessity for the Canon. Infra, pp. 183, 184.

149 McCarthy, op. cit., p. 575.

150 Ibid., p. 576.

indelible character to the Church could be applied

analogously to the qahal of the Old Testament. He says:

It is clear that the New Testament writers were aware of the repetition of the Old Testament in the life of Christ; the same is true of the life of the Church, which is the alter Christus. The words of Pius XI reflect this: "We are spiritually Semites."¹⁵¹

Returning now to the Rahner's thesis on canonicity, prescindng from its particular application to the Old Testament, we find that the noted translator of Rahner's work, Father Charles Henkey, in complete accord with what Rahner proposes. Henkey accepts Rahner's view and in fact, regards it "almost as the only possible and basic answer,"¹⁵² which however, he admits, is not yet elaborated in full. Concerning the Canon, Father Henkey sees in Rahner's thesis a contribution from yet a different angle.

Henkey says:

To my knowledge Rahner was the first calling the attention to the fact, that the supernatural case of the Bible in the Christian realm does have its natural parallels almost everywhere in the history of high religions.¹⁵³

151 Stanley, op. cit., p. 89, in reply to Cyril Vollert's question concerning the application of Rahner's theory to the Old Testament.

152 Charles Henkey, Letter to this writer, Feb. 10, 1965.

153 Ibid.

He explains in terms of a canon as a pragmatic necessity:

All religions do have a more or less stiffly determined canon of their sacred books. This is a pragmatic necessity of historical self-identification. The case is similar to that of national histories at their early stage especially in regard to the mythological roots of the nation. One could say many more things about the mystifications in determining the self-identity and destiny of nations: how do they think of themselves?¹⁵⁴

He points out that Rahner, in one or two sentences, suggests that it would be interesting to pursue the idea of "what is the role of the book in the historical existence of the nations and of religions."

In particular reference to the Church, Henkey goes on:

Obviously in the Church beyond this pragmatic necessity of historical existence, the theological problem of the canon emerges out of the fact that the Church must also have a self-consciousness and self-identification as an eschatological community. Consequently her self-identification which is displayed in the realm of history could not be a merely historical, pragmatic necessity, but must have the seal of the Spirit: it is eschatological identity.¹⁵⁵

As for the criterion of canonicity, Henkey says:

Rahner says, in discussing magistry and Bible, that the magistry recognizes the Bible as inspired as the magistry itself is directed by the same Spirit. So then in virtue of the Spirit she recognizes her authentic spiritual history (inspired

154 Henkey, Letter to this writer, Feb. 10, 1965.

155 Ibid.

by the same Spirit). The Bible is a pragmatic necessity of the historical life, however as the life of the Church is not only historical but also eschatological, therefore the beginning history of the Church is exactly that of the eschatological fulfillment.¹⁵⁶

In conclusion, on this point, Henkey points out that we might "call the Bible in a specified sense sacramentum revelationis: not only a history of sacred revelation, but a sacred history of the revelation."¹⁵⁷

Thus far, we have considered the criticism of Rahner's thesis on canonicity in more of a general manner, and in areas more or less on the periphery of the question. We come to the criticism of Rahner's views on canonicity by probably his severest critic, Bernard Brinkmann,¹⁵⁸ whose ideas touch the very heart of the question which is the formal object of our study.

In a general review of Rahner's work, Brinkmann first presents four major points of disagreement with Rahner, the last of which concerns us presently.¹⁵⁹

156 Henkey, Letter to this writer, Feb. 10, 1965.

157 Ibid.

158 Bernard Brinkmann, S.J., "Inspiration und Kanonizität der Heiligen Schrift in ihrem Verhältnis zur Kirche," Scholastik, 33 (2, 1958), pp. 208-233. All references will be made to this article.

Review of Über die Schriftinspiration, Scholastik, 33 (1958), pp. 624-625.

159 Cf. Gerard, New Testament Abstracts, W 4 (2, 1960) cites Brinkmann, Dubarle, Nober, Zerwick among reviews of Rahner's Über die Schriftinspiration.

Brinkmann considers as unconvincing the discussion of the inspired books in relation to their apostolically approved canonical status and their binding force.

Using this criticism as a point of departure, the eminent professor of St. Georgen (Frankfort), sets out to give further details of his criticism of Rahner, and to show how he has developed this area of theological discussion.

Two questions are posed: 1) How does the Church know that the books she has listed in her canon of Scripture, with all their parts are inspired writings? 2) Were there perhaps inspired books which are not listed, as for instance, Rahner admits?

Space forbids the inclusion of a comprehensive treatment of Brinkmann's views. Nevertheless, because he is in open disagreement with Rahner, and his views add to the present-day discussion on inspiration and canonicity, we consider them relevant to our study, and important to the extent of giving a summary of the main points. Further, we shall indicate at least in a general way the underlying reasoning for his conclusions.

Brinkmann answers the two questions posed above. In an excellent synopsis at the end of his article he summarizes his points under twelve headings:

Synopsis

The results can be recapitulated in the following summary:

1. The fact of the Inspiration of the Books of the Old and New Testaments with all their parts is a supernatural fact that can be established as certain only through Revelation and is defined by the Councils of Trent and Vatican.
2. With the Inspiration of a Book, its canonicity is also immediately given, in the sense that, as inspired Word of God in actu primo and as long as its inspiration is certain, for all those who know about it, it is also according to rule, canonical in actu secundo.
3. The consciousness of faith of Early Christianity saw the canonicity given to a writing, when it was certain that it was composed or written by a Prophet, or by an Apostle in the exercise of his mission, because it was conscious, by reason of the Word of the Lord, of the mission of the Apostles and the Promise of the Holy Spirit and above all, for the reason of the Event of Pentecost, as well as for the reason of an implicit Revelation, that the Prophets or the Apostles thereby acted under the influence or the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit and could then speak or write.
4. What they believed about the canonicity of the writings of the Apostles they applied also to the writings of their disciples as cooperators who took part in their apostolic mission and thereby according to the conviction of Early Christianity, took part also in their Apostolic Charisma.
5. The human authors were considered only as instruments of God, since they had composed the Holy Scriptures, not from their own initiative with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, but only under the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
6. Since, according to the comprehension of the Early Christians, the Prophets and Apostles and their disciples and collaborators in the exercise of their mission also come under this inspiring influence of the Holy Spirit, whether they

announced the message of salvation orally or in writing, all their writings, which they composed to this end, were inspired and canonical. The writings conformed to the rule and were binding for all who knew about their prophetic or apostolic origin, and thereby implicitly, about their Inspiration. This applies also to the writings that are no more extant, as well as those, if any, not received into the Canon.

7. Since the inspired authors were conscious of their prophetic or apostolic mission they must also have been conscious about the canonical (or according to its being a rule of faith, and binding on the faithful) character of their writings, at least implicitly, about their Inspiration.

8. As for which of the inspired writings and consequently canonical writings were received into the Canon, this is not certified through a revelation, but was left to the choice of the Church, who, in virtue of her infallible magisterium has defined positively (not exclusively) that all the Books of the Old and New Testaments with all their parts (in the sense of Trent) are inspired and thereby canonical, and are to be held as such by the whole Church. There may have been still other apostolic writings which were also inspired and canonical, but not to be held as such by the whole Church.

9. In the choice of the Books, the Church restricted herself to those which are composed by the Apostles or at least admitted as such, without wanting to determine the question of authorship, in all cases, while She considered among the writings of the Apostolic disciples only those of Mark and Luke on account of their special significance and relation of their authors to Peter and Paul.

10. It would not be fundamentally impossible that the Church could receive into the Canon some writings composed by an Apostolic disciple (first) in the second century after the death of the Apostles, as long as the book contained no new revelation; this book might not be extant in the remaining deposit of the faith.

11. Concerning the question of whether there are any more inspired and consequently canonical writings from the post-apostolic period, such as writings of certain saints or founders of religious orders (their Rules), the Church has not expressed herself. But there is to be considered the possibility of this being so, as well as the possibility of a private Revelation. But there is no question about an admission into the Canon.

12. On the contrary, it could be theoretically possible that the Church could still receive into the Canon a once lost Epistle of an Apostle, if it were found one day and considered authentic with certitude. But She considers the Canon as closed, that is, She declares herself only for the Books received until now in the Canon, that they are inspired and consequently Canonical, because they were transmitted to her as inspired.¹⁶⁰

From these points of Brinkmann's summary we can see how he answers his first question: How did the Church recognize the inspired character of the books of Scripture? His answer is not startling—it is that which is commonly held by theologians, namely, that since inspiration is a supernatural event it can be known only through revelation. But as to how it was revealed, he answers by way of conclusion, not explicitly, and rejects Rahner's view that some kind of revelation is necessary for the inclusion of inspired books in the Canon. In this refusal to postulate a special revelation, Brinkmann has David Stanley firmly on his side, since as the latter points out "there is no trace anywhere (of a special revelation) and such is excluded by the

160 Brinkmann, op. cit., pp. 232-233.

history of the canon."¹⁶¹ Brinkmann simply says that the selection of certain of these inspired writings to form the Canon of Scripture was left to the Church's choice—a choice which is positive, but not exclusive.¹⁶² Thus his answer to the second question.

Let us look at the reasoning that has led Brinkmann to these conclusions. He seems to have two principal bases for his conclusions: 1) The belief found in both Jewish and Christian tradition that the deciding factor is the prophetic or apostolic origin of the holy Books (3-7, Synopsis), and 2) the silence of Trent and Vatican I regarding the criterion of inspiration (8-12, Synopsis).

Brinkmann sees in the belief of the Early Christians a foundation for his conclusions and points out that regardless of whether this reflex consciousness that the canonical acceptance and obligation were based on the fact that the Apostles, during both the oral and written proclamation, stood in the same relation to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit—regardless of whether this always existed—that this canonical acceptance and obligation are not thereby reduced to a mere assistance of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the early Christians held the

161 Stanley, op. cit., p. 92.

162 Brinkmann, op. cit., pp. 229-231.

writings of the apostles, composed by them in the exercise of their mission, as canonical not only because they were derived from them as such, but because they were held as inspired.¹⁶³

Just as with Trent, the word apostle was not taken in the strict sense, by the early Christians. They were convinced that Mark and Luke, because of the dependence on the Apostles in the exercise of their mission, were under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Their writings were considered therefore, inspired and canonical. This conception is suggested in the exposition of St. Paul about the gifts of the Holy Spirit—the charismata.

Brinkmann investigates Paul's teaching on the charismata and shows that, for Paul, among those so endowed are first the Apostles, then the prophets, and then in third place teachers. Here, Brinkmann says, it is evident that Paul considers as Apostles not only those in the strict sense, i.e., the Twelve and himself, but generally the regular messengers of the Gospel, as most exegetes also hold.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ Brinkmann, op. cit., pp. 218-223. Brinkmann develops these two aspects under a) Der apostolische Ursprung als Grund de Kanonizität, and b) Die Inspiration als Grund de Kanonizität.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 225-227.

Brinkmann then makes a comparison with the Didache, which he considers instructive. There is question of the Apostles and the Prophets. About the first it is said that they should not remain as guests in a community more than two days and should not ask for any money, otherwise they would be taken for false prophets. But about the Prophets it is said that the real Prophets who speak in the Spirit, will not tempt nor criticize... but not every Prophet who speaks in the Spirit is a Prophet, but only if he has the "manner or conduct of the Lord; therefore, by their conduct of life can they be distinguished from the false prophet."¹⁶⁵ In this, Brinkmann says, it is understood that the faithful themselves can differentiate the false prophets from the true Prophets. Paul says: "Do not extinguish the Spirit. Do not despise the 'gifts of the Prophets'. But prove all things."¹⁶⁶

Brinkmann points out that St. Paul does not indicate in precisely what the difference between an Apostle and Prophet consists, but what is important is that St. Paul does show that each fulfills his mandate under the special influence of the Holy Spirit. This understanding was applied also to the Apostolic disciples and co-workers

165 Brinkmann, op. cit., p. 225.

166 1 Thess 5, 19.

of the Apostles, therefore, Mark and Luke. Brinkmann sums up this point by saying that St. Paul's writings and also the Didache, reflect the understanding of early Christianity—that their writings were held as inspired, totally disregarding the fact that the Apostles and Prophets could be the same persons.

According to Brinkmann there are undoubtedly different species and degrees of Inspiration;¹⁶⁷ but all have one thing in common, that is, the inspired person fulfills his task or mandate, as the instrument of the inspiring God. Here Brinkmann points out a disagreement with the distinction made by Benoit between scriptural inspiration and prophetic inspiration.¹⁶⁸ We shall mention this elsewhere.

For Brinkmann, no express Revelation is required, so that it would be known that the Apostles, in the oral or written proclamation of the message of salvation, were under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This was sufficiently implicitly revealed in their mission through Christ, in the promise of the Holy Spirit, who would teach them everything, remind them of everything He had taught them (Jn 14, 26) and who would give testimony about Christ

167 Brinkmann, op. cit., p. 226.

168 Ibid.

(Jn 15, 26). Above all, in the event of Pentecost, but not merely on that day when they were filled with the Holy Spirit, this action of the Holy Spirit took place. There was no reason, however, to restrict it to that Day, as Pentecost was only the beginning of their mission.¹⁶⁹

Brinkmann also points out that the Apostolic charismata are proper phenomenon of the primitive Church to a greater extent, even though they may never have completely ceased. Thus, there exists the possibility that, in later times also men, in the exercise of their 'apostolic mission' in either the oral or written teaching of the message of salvation, have been under the influence of the Holy Spirit, so that their writings were inspired.¹⁷⁰ But, Brinkmann says, this would be the exception, and the Church has never declared herself on such writings, any more than she obliges herself to pronounce on private revelations. For the apostolic office as such, there is question only of the assistance of the Holy Spirit who protects against error the bearers of the message of salvation. By this fact alone, they are not instruments, and therefore, there is no question here about inspiration in the proper sense.

169 Brinkmann, op. cit., p. 227.

170 Ibid.

There is also the possibility, that there would exist writings of the Prophets and Apostles, composed in the exercise of their mission, that were inspired and as a consequence, for those to whom they were directed, they were also "according to rule" or canonical.¹⁷¹ For example, this would apply to a 'pre-canonical letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians and an 'in-between' (Zwischenbrief) letter to his community—if such existed. Or, as another example, it might apply to the letter of Paul to the Laodicians, mentioned in Col. 4, 16, if this is not identified with the Epistle to the Ephesians. Brinkmann also cites as possibilities in the writings Luke mentions in the Prologue to his Gospel, provided they are not of a private character, in addition to occasional writings of the Apostles and their co-workers, that are not mentioned anywhere.

Seen in this way, Brinkmann says that it is entirely conceivable to claim the First Letter of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians as inspired and canonical in this sense, because Clement is mentioned in Phil. 4, 3 as a co-worker of Paul and as such, has been not only bearer of an Apostolic office, but has been also bearer of the Apostolic charismata. That he has written the letter in the fulfilling of his Apostolic mission is, according to the content of

¹⁷¹ Brinkmann, op. cit., p. 228.

the letter, almost without doubt. So it is, in Brinkmann's view, understandable that in the first century, in some places, and for a time at least, this letter was considered canonical, in the sense of "belonging to the Canon."¹⁷²

Thus Brinkmann shows that 'canonical' in connection with Scripture, had a wider meaning earlier in the Church, i.e., prior to the present meaning of a 'list of inspired books'. It was held as a rule of doctrine or discipline. Intimately connected with the notion of inspiration of a book is its authoritative and binding character, since it is the Word of God. Every inspired book, therefore, is canonical in the second sense. The belief of the early Church was that the prophets of Israel and the Apostles of Christ were endowed with a special charism to preach and to write. Moreover, what they spoke or wrote in virtue of their office was inspired. Brinkmann holds also that they were at least implicitly conscious of possessing this charism and of the fact that their spoken and written testimony was authoritative or canonical. We have treated this question elsewhere.

According to Brinkmann, then, everything the Apostles wrote, like everything they preached, was considered part of the regula fidei. However, Brinkmann goes

¹⁷² Brinkmann, op. cit., p. 228.

on to show that the Canon of Scripture as such, was the work of the Church.

This brings us to the second question and answer, and the underlying reasoning as given by Brinkmann. Why were the writings, composed by the Apostles and disciples of the Apostles, not all received into the Canon? Surely not because the extent of the Canon was already revealed to the Apostles—history disproves this. Neither from the official ecclesiastical definitions, nor from the history of the formation of the Canon can we subscribe to such a revelation.

The Councils of Trent and Vatican I have positively defined only that the Books of the Old and New Testaments with all their parts are to be admitted as holy and canonical, that is, as 'conforming to rule', a norm of Faith for the whole Church, but not that it considers canonical any particular writings which may have been considered such in particular districts or temporarily such. According to Brinkmann, then, the extent of the writings that are inspired and consequently canonical and belong to the Canon, is not to be traced back to a Revelation, but only to the fact that these writings were transmitted to the Church distinctly as writings composed by the Apostles or Apostolic disciples in the exercise of their Apostolic mission. There may have been other Apostolic writings, i.e.,

'occasional' writings, which were not included when the Church began to gather the Apostolic writings. This may have been due to the fact that either they were no longer extant, or that they treated such concrete questions in reference to a particular community (for example, a pre-canonical letter of Paul to Corinth), that the Church did not receive them among the writings which were to be held as canonical for the whole Church.

We immediately think of the Epistle to Philemon which might pose a problem for Brinkmann. He anticipates this objection by pointing out that this epistle treated of a very fundamental position of baptized slaves.¹⁷³

If the Church had not accepted Clement of Rome's first Epistle (although according to what Brinkmann has shown, could have passed for an Apostolic letter of one of the disciples of an Apostle, the reason was perhaps that the Church accepted primarily, as a matter of principle, only those writings composed by Apostles in the strict sense, or writings attributed to them. So that, on this principle, the Church received only the two Gospels and the Acts by those not Apostles in the strict sense; even these had the strong testimony and authority of Peter and Paul behind them.

173 Brinkmann, op. cit., p. 230.

On the hesitation of Hebrews and others, Brinkmann says that the reason is clearly to be found in the question of hesitation over authorship.

Brinkmann claims that in the final reception into the Canon of these writings the question of authorship is also resolved, but only insofar as the authors, in the conviction of the early Church, were Apostles or disciples of the Apostles. She shows this because She has openly restricted her choice to writings of Apostolic time, without committing Herself on whether there is or was anything more inspired, i.e., of later Scriptures. Fundamentally, therefore, it would be thoroughly imaginable that the Church could have received into the Canon the writing of one of the disciples of an Apostle composed after the death of the last Apostle.¹⁷⁴ Brinkmann's reason is that this does not deal with the question of Revelation being completed with the death of the last Apostle, but only with the question of the Church's receiving an inspired and therefore canonical writing into Her Canon. In virtue of Her infallibility, the Church could declare such a book inspired and therefore canonical, provided that it contained no new revelation, which would not already be contained in the deposit of Faith. This could also be done if the Fact

174 Brinkmann, op. cit., p. 231.

of belonging to the Canon could be traced back to a special Revelation, but could not have been written after the death of the last Apostle. However, this is highly improbable, though theoretically possible, in view of what has been said above.

Therefore, Brinkmann shows that the Church, when She declared the Books to be holy and canonical, and to be received as such, merely established or confirmed that they are inspired because the stipulated conditions of the Revelation for the inspiration and canonicity of a Book were fulfilled relative to these writings, without the need for any new Revelation. The role of the Church, according to Brinkmann, is fundamentally none other than the same that She plays in declaring a certain council as a legitimate general council, and therefore as a legitimate norm of faith. For the latter the Church needs no new revelation, but only has to establish the dogmatic fact, that the conditions for a legitimate general council are fulfilled. Nevertheless, we can say that this respective council is infallible, established as such by revelation.

By analogy with the establishing of a general council, Brinkmann shows that in the case of the Canon the Church has only to establish the dogmatic Fact that these Books are written by men with prophetic or Apostolic charisma in the exercise of their prophetic or Apostolic

mission;¹⁷⁵ for as we have seen, the early Church supposed at least an implicit Revelation that the writings which were a product of the mission of the prophets or Apostles, was canonical because inspired.

Brinkmann concludes by saying that he considers that his theory avoids the difficulties inherent in the other explanations being offered, and that it best fits the historical facts of the formation of the Canon in addition to the official declarations of the ecclesiastical magisterium. As such, he thinks it warrants preference over the other theories proposed in reference to the inspiration and canonicity and its relation to the Church.

In lauding both Rahner and Brinkmann for their contributions on the question of inspiration of the Bible, David Stanley nevertheless openly gives preference for Brinkmann's theory in the area of canonicity.¹⁷⁶

Stanley finds it difficult to see, in the theory of Rahner, "how the Catholic critic could avoid an aprioristic rejection of certain fairly cogent arguments for dating 2 Peter in the second century."¹⁷⁷ We recall that in Rahner's theory a revelation to the Church of the New Testament

175 Brinkmann, op. cit., p. 231.

176 Stanley, op. cit., p. 92.

177 Ibid., p. 84.

Canon is demanded. As such, it would have had to be made prior to the death of the last Apostle. For Rahner, the formation of the Church comes to an end with the death of St. John, and since inspiration is part of this process, in his view, it would cease also. Brinkmann's distinction between inspiration and revelation provides his theory with an explanation which could account for a later composition, e.g., of 2 Peter, when and if this becomes factually established.

In the previous section we discussed Congar's criticism of Rahner's theory insofar as it does not do justice to the role of the Apostles as efficient instrumental causes. We pointed out that, for Congar, the normative character of the writings of the apostles is what we can call the canonicity of these writings. This normative character, we saw, was based on their election, mission, fullness of the charisma, and their authority. The reader will recall that we reserved treatment of Congar's specific views on canonicity for the present section. This was not done without reason. Not only does Congar develop Rahner's explanation of inspiration as applied to the particular question of canonicity, but in so doing, he lines himself rather closely with Brinkmann's views.

Congar considers the opinions on whether or not this or that writing should be admitted as having little

meaning for us in this discussion. What is important in his opinion is as follows:

To say simply that Scripture is the written formulation of the faith of the Church, even of the primitive Church, falls short of expressing the consciousness which the Church itself had that it not only possessed the Scriptures, as a written and fixed formula of its faith, but also that it had received them from men chosen by God, who had spiritual gifts from God, and had received a mission and authority from God, for this purpose.¹⁷⁸

We can see here that Congar in emphasizing the words 'possessed' and 'received', is actually opposing them to some extent to show wherein Rahner's theory falls short of expressing the complete reality. Let us look at Congar's reasoning behind this statement.

The normative character which he mentioned as what can be considered the canonicity of these writings, has always been recognized at least as a formal principle in the Church. The drawing up and fixing of the Canon is a subsequent and secondary phenomenon, according to Congar. (He cites the Muratorian Canon, ca. 200.) He points out that it is fortunate that the history of the Canon is a chapter in the history of dogma, which, like so many other dogmas, was not defined as such until rather late in the Church. (Feb. 4, 1441) Aside from this point, the important and essential fact here is the general

178 Congar, op. cit., p. 41.

acknowledgement of the canonicity, that is, the normative value of the apostolic writings. From the very beginning of the Church everything that came from an Apostle was considered normative, 'canonical', because it came from God in virtue of the sequence mentioned previously by Congar: the Father—Christ—the Apostles. Mark and Luke belong to this group in virtue of their relationship to Peter and Paul, respectively. Congar emphasizes that canonicity is linked with apostolicity.

Congar then shows that the ancient writers attribute to a tradition going back to the Apostles themselves the transmission to the Church of Apostolic writings having for this Church a normative value and character. For them it was not merely the possession of canonical value that was linked with apostolicity, but the attribution of this value to this or that writing. As a consequence, Congar goes on to show, that the Canon, in its first form, not yet as a dogma, was considered apostolic. Thus, we see Congar's conclusion, summarized at the beginning of this explanation of his view, that not only did the Church have consciousness of having possessed the Scriptures, but also that She had received them from divinely chosen men. Rahner's accent on the first aspect leaves something to be desired, according to Congar and therefore, he balances the picture with an evaluation of the second aspect—the role

of the Apostles as efficient instrumental causes.

Summary and Conclusions

What, then, can be said concerning the assessment of Rahner's explanation of inspiration in its particular reference to the question of canonicity?

Perhaps the clearest negative view of Rahner's theory lies in the area of applying it to the Old Testament. All critics see a need for further study and development of Rahner's explanation as applied to the Old Testament. They openly denounce it as being at least inadequate an explanation, and with some totally unsatisfactory.

Crehan, we saw, is representative of those who would say that Rahner's view places too much stress on the "connaturality of the Church's knowledge" (of the inspired Books). On the other hand, Henkey defends Rahner by pointing out that not only is the Canon of the Church marked with the 'seal of the Spirit', but of its very nature it is a pragmatic necessity. As a community, the Church had to manifest her self-consciousness and self-identity. This is true of any community considered even on the natural order. It is also paralleled in the history of high religions. But the point that Henkey makes is that Rahner is correct in viewing the criterion of inspiration and therefore canonicity as stemming from the

'connatural knowledge of the Church.'

Rahner's strongest criticism in the area comes from Bernard Brinkmann, who considers as unconvincing Rahner's discussion of the inspired words in relation to their apostolically approved canonical status and their binding force. Brinkmann holds that the fact of inspiration is revealed by way of conclusion, not explicitly, and rejects the view that postulates a special revelation for the inclusion of the Books in the Canon. The Canon of Scripture is the result of the infallible choice of the Church.

As a result of his disagreement with Rahner, Brinkmann sets out in a lengthy article to give an 'unbiased' opinion on the material content contained in the notion of canonicity in the sense of 'apostolisch', and consequently binding for the Faithful; and also the manner of considering the words of Trent "Spiritu Sancto...". Brinkmann claims that they have been mistakenly applied to the inspiration of Scripture rather than to oral tradition, as is indicated by their context.

In the area of applying his theory to canonicity, Rahner again fails to bring out the role of the Apostles according to Congar. Not only did the Church possess the Scriptures, but She received them from divinely commissioned men—the Apostles. This criticism follows from what was

said in a previous section by Congar. Congar seems to contribute with Brinkmann to the 'material content' found wanting in Rahner's exposition.

David Stanley sees in Brinkmann's theory on canonicity an improvement over that of Rahner. His main reason is that Brinkmann's view allows for the possibility of a book being composed after the death of the last Apostle, provided that the book would contain no new revelation. In other words, the difference lies in the fact that Rahner insists on a revelation for the recognition of the inspiration of a given book; whereas Brinkmann maintains that it suffices that the Church recognize the book as the authentic teaching of an apostle or a prophet. Stanley thinks that Brinkmann's theory broadens Rahner's both on the question of the formation of the Canon and on the question of the criterion of inspiration and canonicity.

In conclusion, the majority of critics, although fundamentally in agreement with Rahner's explanation of the canonicity of the Books of the New Testament, consider it in need of development in the area of both the New, but especially, the Old Testament.

Let us now summarize the overall reaction of critics to Rahner's thesis. We shall do this by way of answering the questions posed at the beginning of this section.

Conclusions

We have seen that Rahner set out "to see the old truths and facts in a perspective in which certain correlations will become visible between these old truths..."¹⁷⁹ This general aim characterizes the overall purpose of the Quaestiones Disputatae. Within this series Rahner has a more specific threefold purpose in his study of inspiration:

- 1) to expose some related problems concerning the traditional concept of inspiration;
- 2) we shall submit the outline of a systematic structure, which in 3) will have to prove itself as the answer to the problems raised in the first place.¹⁸⁰

Thus it is clear that he limited himself to "those problems which give rise to the hypothesis proposed in the second part of the essay." Rahner prescinds from treating the positive foundations of inspiration, and uses as his point of departure the doctrine of the Church on the concept of author. He also abstracts from treating inspiration in relation to allied questions such as inerrancy and the extent of inspiration. He further refrains from any detailed treatment of any of the particular problems that he does mention. For example, we have shown how he does not

179 Rahner, op. cit., p. 8.

180 Ibid.

pursue the question of precisely how the efficient causality in the process of inspiration works in the human author (which McKenzie develops). Also, Rahner does not treat the Old Testament as such, but confines his thesis primarily to the New Testament in the context of the Church, and applies it analogously to the Old Testament.

It seems to us, therefore, that Rahner has presented a general treatment on the nature of inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, in terms of specific problems which give rise to his thesis.

In terms of the limitations which he imposed on himself we have seen that the critics in general have welcomed his contribution, and that although most have reservations on one part or another, they see his contribution as a "remarkable synthesis." This is what Rahner intended. He advanced his thesis, not as the final solution to the difficulties inherent in the concept of inspiration, but "as a systematic structure" which he hoped might "stir up all theology."¹⁸¹ Rahner has been true to his own blueprint or the designs which he set up for solution, then, in the eyes of his peers.

Within these limitations, however, has Rahner answered the problems both 'quantitatively' and 'qualitatively' well?

¹⁸¹ Rahner, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

Quantitatively, or 'how much', it would seem that critics generally consider his essay inadequate in one area or another, especially with regard to the Old Testament.

Qualitatively, or 'how well', his central thesis, situated in the context of the Church is generally considered as a great step forward in the concept of biblical inspiration.

But the question remains: Was Rahner right in limiting himself to this particular area? Further, is this area important to the whole question? We shall attempt to answer these questions in the following section where we shall present our personal evaluation of Rahner's contribution in the light of the Magisterium and secondly in the light of the teaching of theologians.

PERSONAL EVALUATION OF RAHNER

Introduction: External Critique

Just as we started our Internal Critique with preliminary remarks on procedure, so too, we shall state a few principles of operation which will guide us in this second aspect of assessing the value of Rahner's contribution.

Whereas the internal criticism was primarily concerned with content, the external centers upon the work

taken as a whole, independent of the signification of its contents, (but not independent of an understanding of the contents). The criteria for making a judgment, therefore, will be mainly external: the Magisterium of the Church. This judgment will be based upon the answers to two questions: 1) Does Rahner's theory do justice to the Magisterium? and, 2) How does his theory clarify the teaching of the Magisterium?

The first question will be treated by way of an assessment of the orthodoxy of Rahner's theory with the teaching of the Magisterium.

The second question will present the occasion for a comparison of Rahner's theory with those treated in Chapter II. Since these earlier theories had the approval of the Church, however indirect, a comparison of them with Rahner's will be fruitful in determining precisely what his theory adds to the clarification of the teaching of the Magisterium.

We shall proceed, therefore, along the lines suggested by these two questions. Another problem arises, however, which is peculiar to translated works in general, and to Rahner's difficult German in particular. We have a further critique: that of assessing the fidelity of the translation to the original thought of the author. Therefore, in addition to evaluating Rahner's work in the light

of the teaching of the Magisterium, we shall present a few remarks pertinent to the English translation.

The Doctrine of the Magisterium and Rahner's Theory

In the Definitions of the Vatican Council I and the succeeding authentic teachings of Leo XIII (Providentissimus Deus), Benedict XV (Spiritus Paraclitus), and Pius XII (Divino afflante Spiritu), the Church presents her concept of the nature, extent and effects of the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. With reference to this teaching there is still room for theological discussion. We shall present some pertinent texts first of all relative to the general aspects of inspiration, and secondly, relative to the particular question of canonicity. Against this background of the Magisterium we shall assess 1) Rahner's orthodoxy, and 2) whether his theory expands or elaborates the present understanding of the Church.

In Providentissimus Deus, Leo XIII says: "Spiritu sancto dictante conscripti sunt",¹⁸² "Spiritus sanctum assumpsisse homines tanquam instrumenta ad scribendum."¹⁸³

Benedict XV, following the doctrine of Jerome, affirms: "Spiritu sancto inspirante, vel suggerente vel

182 Acta Apostolicae Sedis, XIII, p. 355.

183 Ibid.

insinuante, vel etiam dictante compositos esse,"¹⁸⁴ "com-
 paratione illustrat artificis, qui in aliqua re factitanda
 organo seu instrumento utitur,"¹⁸⁵ "Inter Hieronymi verba
 et communem de inspiratione catholicam doctrinam nihil
 omnino interesse ... Deum, gratia collata, scriptoris menti
 lumen praeferre ad verum quod attinet 'ex persona Dei'
 hominibus proponendum; voluntatem praeterea movere atque
 ad scribendum impellere; ipsi denique peculiariter assiste-
 re continenterque adesse donec librum perficiat."¹⁸⁶

Finally, Pius XII, in "Divino afflante Spiritu":

<p>Catholici theologi ... inspi- rationis biblicae naturam et effectus aptius perfectiusque explorarunt ac proposuere. ... Ex eo enim edisserendo profecti, quod hagiographus in sacro conficiendo libro est Spiritus sancti organon seu instrumentum, idque vivum ac ratione praeditum...</p>	<p>Catholic theologians ... have examined and explained the nature and effects of bibli- cal inspiration more exactly and more fully ... for having expounded the principle that the sacred writer in com- posing the sacred Book, is the living and reasonable instrument of the Holy Spirit, ...¹⁸⁷</p>
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Keeping in mind the texts just cited, they would
 seem to indicate inspiration as a direct and immediate in-
 flux on the faculties of the sacred writer.

184 Acta Apostolicae Sedis, XII (1920), p. 396.

185 Ibid.

186 Ibid.

187 Ibid., XXXV (1943), p. 314, (Tr. "On the Promo-
 tion of Biblical Studies," (Washington: National Cath. Wel-
 fare Conf., 1943), pp. 17-18.)

It might seem apparent that Rahner, in concentrating on the text of Leo XIII, has overlooked this interpretation. Rahner seems to accept Leo's words as an explanation of the text of Vatican I, and also as an adequate description of inspiration. Rahner is definitely at fault here, as we have seen in the criticism of his peers in the previous section. The defect lies in interpreting the words of Leo XIII in a greater extension than the author intended. His Holiness did not intend in this text to define inspiration. Rather, he underscored those elements which would be sufficient to exclude the possibility of error. In Leo's encyclical, there are very essential elements missing in the notion of inspiration—that God is the Author, and the instrumentality of the sacred writer. Without these elements inspiration loses its proper physiognomy, and all is reduced to the fact that the sacred writer, in the final analysis, writes what God has determined that he write. Obviously, from what we have seen, this condensation of the doctrine of the Magisterium into the 'definition of Leo XIII', opens the way for Rahner's theory. For Rahner, the only important thing is that man writes that which God wishes, by a formal pre-definition.

It would seem also that, even limiting ourselves to this 'definition' of Leo XIII, the "supernatural power" of which he speaks, is understood as actually and directly

influencing the inspired subject, and not indirectly through the Church. For, in the words of Leo XIII:

Quare nihil admodum refert Spiritum sanctum assumpsisse homines tamquam instrumenta ad scribendum ... Nam supernaturali ipse virtute ita eos ad scribendum excitavit et movit, ita scribentibus adstitit, ut ea omnia eaque sola; quae ipse iuberet, et recte mente conciperent, et fideliter conscribere vel- lent, et apte infallibili veritate exprimerent...

The Holy Spirit ... employed men as instruments to write. For, by supernatural power, He so moved and impelled them to write, He so assisted them when writing—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...¹⁸⁸

Rahner's explanation seems to be different from, if not incompatible with this interpretation.

This writer sees in this interpretation of Rahner—prescinding from the other definitions—as dangerously close to the condemned "subsequent approbation" theory. (Dz. 1787) Intimately connected here is also Rahner's concept of author which we have discussed, and which also might be seen as in proximity to this condemned theory.

Despite the fact that we point to this danger, and that we do not condone Rahner's overlooking the other pertinent texts, nevertheless, it would seem that any identity between his theory and the "subsequent approbation" theory is in appearance only.

188 Acta Apostolicae Sedis, XIII, p. 358, (Tr. "On the Study of Sacred Scripture," (Washington: Catholic Biblical Assoc., 1943), p. 24.)

The condemned opinion holds that inspiration consists in the approbation of the Church, whose authority comes wholly from God. No divine intervention is necessary.

On the other hand, Rahner submits that this same act of approbation by the Church is necessary, but with this difference: the subsequent act of approbation given to a writing by the Church is sufficient for the writer to become author, and actually is such by the act of approbation. But, since this act is inspired by God, God makes Himself by this act, a true Author as He is of the Church. Rahner clears himself of certain obstacles and dangers by adding to his hypothesis the traditional elements contained in the notion of the divine influx on the faculties of the sacred writer.

Inspiration does not act immediately on the faculties of the sacred writer, but in an indirect manner, in so far as God is Author of the Urkirche. It is this point that distinguishes and saves Rahner's theory from the condemned "Subsequent approval" theory. In the latter there is no provision made for the fact that "God is the Author of the primitive Church, including all its constitutive elements, in a unique manner.

On the notion or rather concept of author, we also wish to point out one further way in which Rahner avoids treading on dangerous ground. If we recall, his

suggestions on the concept of author were made 'marginally' rather than in his proposal of the central thesis.

In summary on this point, it seems to us that Rahner's theory preserves the traditional elements considered essential to the traditional interpretation of the Magisterium. This remains true despite the inadequate consideration of pertinent texts from the Teaching Church.

Thus, we have seen Rahner's general theory in the light of the Magisterium, on its teaching on the nature of inspiration. This brings us to the question of the relation between Rahner's thesis of inspiration in explaining the canonicity of the sacred Books, and the teaching of the Magisterium on this point.

In Chapter II we saw the solemn declaration of Trent; therefore, we merely add here the corresponding canon for those who would not accept the decree:

If anyone, however, should not accept the said books as sacred and canonical, entire with all their parts, as they were wont to be read in the Catholic Church, and as they are contained in the old Latin Vulgate edition, ... A.S.¹⁸⁹

We also saw that Vatican I referred to the decree of Trent, repeated it, and then added the reasons why the Church regards these writings as holy and canonical. We repeat here only the second part:

189 Dz. 784.

Those books, however, are held to be sacred and canonical by the Church, not on the grounds that they were produced by mere human ingenuity and afterwards approved by her authority; nor on the mere score that they contain revelation without error. But they are held to be sacred and canonical because they were written as a result of the prompting of the Holy Spirit, they have God for their author, and as such, they were entrusted to the Church.¹⁹⁰

From these statements two things seem evident:

- 1) The Church holds these Books of the Old and New Testament with all their parts as holy and canonical, and
- 2) The ground for such a belief in the Church is the fact that they are inspired, and as such, are handed over to the Church.

It is not said that they are holy and canonical because they were handed over to the Church as inspired, so that only those books are holy and canonical. In other words, this statement of the Church is positive, but not exclusive.

On this point, Rahner's thesis, there is room for improvement, although it cannot be said that Rahner goes contrary to the teaching of the Councils. In the words of David Stanley, "... no room appears to have been left [in Rahner's thesis] for the possibility of the composition of an inspired book after the death of the last Apostle."¹⁹¹

190 Dz. 1787. Cf. supra, p. 12.

191 Stanley, op. cit., p. 84.

As to whether there were other inspired books not transmitted to the Church and therefore not received as canonical, the Council made no pronouncements. The Council Fathers merely intended to declare as an article of faith that the enumerated Books with all their parts were received into the Canon. They did not intend to settle matters of authenticity or merely historical questions.

From the infallible decrees of these two Councils, then, it is clear that the discussion of the criteria held and applied by the early Christians remains an open question. No scientific defense of the Canon was given, and this purposely omitted, as we have seen. Thus, Rahner's thesis on the natural kinship binding the Scriptures to the Church and guiding it in the determination of the Canon is wholly compatible with orthodox belief.

Let us now consider Rahner's theory in the light of other theologians' teaching.

The Teaching of Theologians and Rahner's Theory

Just as in the comparison of Rahner's theory with the teaching of the Magisterium we proceeded by considering his general theory on inspiration first, and secondly its application to the question of canonicity, so too shall we proceed in this section.

Rahner is quite aware of the fact that one does not propose a new theory without first demonstrating the insufficiency of the old. Thus his main attack is centered on the traditional manner of exposing the doctrine of how God and man are true literary authors of the sacred Books.

Rahner defends the characteristics of a true author in the human sacred writer. The latter is not a simple secretary of God; he does not merely write 'what is dictated'; he is as much author as any other author of a book which is not inspired. According to Rahner, the traditional explanation through instrumentality would hold greater meaning if the writer were merely a secretary of God! At least in his view the traditional explanation reduces the human author to something 'less than' an author in the strict sense. In Rahner's view, the divine authorship not only "tolerates human authorship, but positively calls for this..."¹⁹²

By way of introduction we might point out that Rahner sometimes confuses the thinking of a few authors with the majority of whom they are not representative. In other words, he accepts the explanation of a few authors to be representative of the 'traditional view'. The case in point involves the distinction made between related but

192 Cf. Rahner, op. cit., p. 14.

different concepts of biblical inspiration and prophetic inspiration. In both it is necessary to admit a Divine Light, but whereas in prophecy it is to know, in inspiration it is to affirm in writing that which is already known.¹⁹³ Accordingly, to avoid any obstacles, it suffices for Rahner to distinguish between the orders of execution and intention in the effects attained by God in this work ad extra.

In the order of execution (the intention of God is eternal) this theory places nothing prior to the intelligent and free acts of the human sacred writer. God does not make Himself Author through any concepts prior to the time that man becomes author, but rather uses man as His instrument, and both become authors simultaneously, by actions numerically the same.¹⁹⁴ The only Divine priority lies in the order of intention: God has planned all from all eternity. As a work of God ad extra it does not begin to exist in time until it exists as a work of man in the mind of the sacred human author.

Rahner criticizes also the traditional explanation of the transcendental concursus of God in the actions of secondary causes, which, however, is not intended to be an

193 Cf. Grelot, op. cit., p. 349.

194 Cf. Rahner, op. cit., p. 15.

absolute likeness between the two.¹⁹⁵ It is a question only of illustrating the possibility of an efficacious action of God which places in action the free and spontaneous movement of His creature, without any impediment to the latter.

Rahner considers that God and man can be authors of the same Book as incompatible, if 'authors' is understood in the current manner. To avoid the metaphysical absurdity which might appear on the surface as against the principle 'The same work, considered under the same aspect, cannot have more than one cause,' theologians have for some time called upon the notion of instrument. They apply the Thomistic principle "The same effect is wholly attributed to the instrument, and wholly attributed to the principal agent."¹⁹⁶ Rahner does not accept this explanation, because then he says, in virtue of this axiom, the secretary, and even the pen, would be true authors.

It would seem that Rahner has misinterpreted the sense in which the theologians have used this axiom. They are speaking of instrument in the strict sense, whereas Rahner's application to the secretary is using instrument in a wider sense. In the case of the secretary, there are

195 Cf. Rahner, op. cit., p. 15.

196 Cf. Lagrange, op. cit., pp. 171-174.

not actions common to author and secretary, but rather two series of actions, which mutually influence one another, each in its own way, in a conjoined work. In order to have an instrument in the strict sense, and consequently a case where the axiom can be applied, it is necessary that the effect be common, since all the actions are such in exerting their influence in bringing about the effect.

Applying this principle to the sacred human author, it is clear that the case is different from being a mere secretary. All the actions which have had an influence on the Book are common. The same vital actions, surging spontaneously in the rational faculties of man, and by which he is made a human author, at the same time are placed by God so that He also is true Author. This is true because God is the Principal Cause of these actions and works in and through the instrument.

With this understanding it is difficult to see how it can be said that inspiration would be more perfect were the human author a mere secretary. On the contrary, the concept of inspiration, according to the traditional view, requires that man be a true author. If he were not true author, then there would be no true inspiration; the Book would be totally Divine and only human through some kind of designation.

What of the 'pen', which Rahner says, would also be an author? It would seem sufficient to point out that the pen begins to be an instrument only after nearly all the actions of the author have been realized—that is the actions which make him author—therefore the pen, a separated instrument becomes an instrument only by extension in its relation to the ink on the paper. This certainly is not the same as the unique case of the human writer being an instrument in the strict sense. It must be understood that the point of encounter between the Principal Cause and the instrumental involved in inspiration, is prior to any action belonging strictly to an author. Further, this action perdures through the entire process so that the total effect is attributed to the instrument, and to the Principal Agent totally.'

Rahner's other point of contention with the traditional explanation of inspiration lies in the area of the nature of the process in the faculties of the human sacred writer. His main points of disagreement are with the views that inspiration does not mean a communication of any new conceptual matter, nor an infusion of any cognoscitive species, nor is the process necessarily conscious.¹⁹⁷

197 Cf. Zarb, "Num hagiographi sibi conscii fuerint charismatis divinae inspirationis?" Angelicum, 11 (1934), pp. 228-244.

Rahner asks: "What kind of an illumination is it that gives nothing new to the intellect, and is unconscious?"¹⁹⁸ The question seems justified, even with the explanation of some authors that inspiration gives a "brighter light" which illumines the object or increases the keenness of the understanding. This adds up to a contradiction, says Rahner. "A light from the Holy Spirit completely unconscious is a contradiction."¹⁹⁹

This objection made by Rahner seems to us to constitute an example of what we said above concerning Rahner's confusing the explanation of a few authors for the common traditional view. At least it would seem that the point needs further consideration. Let us point out a few things that should be noted.

There seems to be no reason for holding that the illumination proper to inspiration must be understood as a clearer presentation of the object, nor as an increase in the capacity of the subject, both of which would seem to fall under the notion of consciousness. Rather, inspiration can be understood as a direct touch of God on the understanding of the sacred writer, which changes him to His instrument, who follows infallibly in the affirmation

198 Cf. Rahner, op. cit., p. 21, note 11.

199 Ibid., p. 20, note 10.

of truth. It is precisely this characteristic that differentiates inspiration in its opposition to prophecy. The action of God is in the understanding, therefore, not so much to communicate new truths, nor to penetrate more profoundly truths already known, but rather to enable the understanding to proceed with certitude in the affirmation of truth, and this certitude or assurance comes from the Divine impulse. It is a certitude of the ontological, not psychological order. It is the same Divine certitude that is communicated transitorily to the instrument in the person of the human writer. In this view it would seem that inspiration would not be conscious, although some phenomena accompanying inspiration could be so.

In conclusion on this point concerning the very process of inspiration in the mind of the sacred writer, we should like to point out that Rahner's criticism of the explanation which would give to man an illumination of a higher order, is partly superfluous and partly insufficient.

Thus we have presented the main points in which Rahner takes issue with the traditional explanation of inspiration, and have presented briefly the points at variance.

The question remains: "Is Rahner's theory compatible with the traditional teaching of theologians? Can

it be incorporated with it to give us a new and clearer view of scriptural inspiration?

Perhaps not—it might seem that God's act of founding the Church in which Scripture is a constitutive element obviates the necessity for positing a special divine influx in the minds of the human authors. However, it would seem to us that, if one conceives this 'founding' as extending in time, then there is still room for the traditional view which calls for a special influx, and Rahner's view, which considers the Scriptures in a more global manner. It is our opinion, then, that Rahner's situating scriptural inspiration within the context of the early Church casts new light upon the traditional doctrine, and despite difficulties, can be worked out to be incorporated with it.

More important to our study is the consideration of Rahner's theory in the light of the views given in Chapter II, concerning the Canon of the Bible, and especially the criterion of canonicity.

We saw that there are two main schools of thought both of which admit a revelation but differ in the final resolution of how this was made known, scil., explicitly through one or more of the Apostles, or implicitly through the application of some revealed criterion such as apostolicity.

We also saw that the Vosté-Zarb controversy brought out into the open this very question, which had been more or less debated privately. Scholars, then lined up with one or the other side, despite minor differences among themselves within their respective groups.

Further, we saw that not all difficulties were solved. To meet these difficulties, along with others in the notion of inspiration, Karl Rahner has presented his concise essay on Biblical inspiration, and applied it to canonicity. The question now is: "How does Rahner's explanation compare with these older theologians?"

Rahner's theory has a definite advantage over the earlier views in that it can be substantiated by the history of the formation of the Canon. Since there existed no explicit revelation concerning the sacred Books, the Church had to study first as a reflection on her own proper essence, and then pass from this implicit concept of inspiration to the explicit concept.

Exactly how this process took place we simply do not know. But if we accept the historical facts as we know them, and at the same time deny Rahner's basic theory, then this would effectively cast the Church and inspiration into a vacuum, and nothing would be solved.

As for the criterion of inspiration and canonicity, Rahner's theory does not oblige us to overcharge arbitrarily

the concept of apostolicity in accounting for the secondary problem of the inspiration of the Books of Luke and Mark. By a combination of facts known and our concepts of inspiration and canonicity, it would seem that the post-Apostolic Church had received from the Apostles the conviction by which all books represented as genuine expressions of the Urkirche were inspired. It is very difficult to demonstrate that the Church of the second century had this knowledge. To maintain that She did would be an a priori supposition. However, we must admit that any explanation of the origin of the Canon of the New Testament must have recourse in the final analysis to similar aprioristic postulates. Rahner's explanation, therefore, rests on as few as, or even fewer a priori suppositions than other explanations, in regard to the New Testament Canon. We do not hold the same regarding the Canon of the Old Testament. There, Rahner's theory is inadequate.

As a result of our reflection on the contribution of Rahner as compared with that of earlier theologians, one note of similarity strikes us as being worth submitting for the reader's attention. It would seem to us that Zarb, in his conception of apostolicity, was striving to incorporate into his theory of canonicity that which Rahner has so successfully attained today. This is not to say that the theories do not have divergent elements, but merely to

suggest that Zarb's explanation of the '30's seems to us to have set the background for Rahner's theory today.

We refrain from mention of Brinkmann's theory in relation to Rahner's in this section, since we shall present a brief comparison in our final summary.

Let us now consider some notes on the English translation.

Remarks on the English Translation

It would seem that there is a twofold difficulty in rendering the translation of Rahner's work into English. The first difficulty is common to most German works; the second is peculiar to Rahner's mode of expression.

Briefly, the first difficulty springs from the exceeding remoteness between continental and American (also English) cultures.²⁰⁰ To point to a single cause of this rift, if there be one, is beyond our capacity and the scope of this study. However, we might point to some influencing factors. For one thing, the translated works of the existentialists, and especially Heidegger, are only now reaching the American bookstands.²⁰¹ This at least might

²⁰⁰ This is the line of thought pursued by Father Ernst in his Introduction to Theological Investigations, Vol. I, p. ix.

²⁰¹ As an example, thirty years elapsed between the publication of Heidegger's Sein und Zeit, his first major work, in Germany and the translation into English. A propos

be termed an occasion for ignorance of these works. Secondly, in the midst of the confusion over the term "existentialism," any work vaguely connected with it was the object of mistrust. To compound the difficulty the condemnation of Sartre's works led Catholics to the false conclusion that all existentialist works, even though not subscribing to the objectionable theses, were to be avoided. Without this understanding of Heideggerian existentialism, or more properly, philosophy of existence, it is very difficult for the English-speaking world to enter into the thought, and respond sympathetically to a theology which reflects this philosophy.

The second difficulty, in our opinion, is peculiar to Rahner, but is partly a by-product of the first difficulty. That is, Rahner's language is difficult to comprehend because the thought out of which it evolved is not understood. In addition to this, Rahner's "carefully nuanced style and massive erudition"²⁰² may well prove overwhelming to the reader. His sentences are at times

here is the fact that Heidegger's thought falls into two distinct phases, before and after 1940. Rahner reflects the first stage. These works (of the early stage) just were not known to the English reader. Consequently, there resulted the inability to enter into Rahner's thought.

202 A. Wilder in a review of Inspiration in the Bible, Cross and Crown, (June, 1964), p. 226.

interminable and present an added challenge to the reader, i.e., to wade through the thickets of syntax, as it were.

These difficulties are present for one who attempts to read Rahner in his native tongue—German.²⁰³ How much greater, then, will be the difficulty of rendering an exact translation, not only into English, but into any language. Therefore, it is not surprising that there should be derogatory remarks concerning the translation of Über die Schriftinspiration.

The first more outspoken critic of the translation was Father Jensen, writing in the Catholic Biblical Quarterly. We think that his statement is worthy of entire quote:

The translation of R.'s difficult German leaves much to be desired. An attempt is made to make shorter sentences of R.'s interminable ones, but this often leads to obscurity or even misrepresentation of his thought; cf., e.g., p. 51, where a proposition which is introduced only to be rejected in R.'s tightly organized sentence becomes a flat statement. Quotation marks, parentheses, and italics are frequently omitted with consequent loss of clarity. Printing errors also distort the meaning of the original: on p. 22 "predeterminatio" is found for "predefinitio"; on p. 37 R. is contesting or denying the possibility

203 Before the English translation was available, Pierre Benoit in Revue Biblique, Vol. 67 (1960), p. 278, made this remark: "Il est seulement dommage que l'expression de la pensée soit laborieuse et difficile, surtout pour un lecteur non allemand, et aussi pour qui n'est pas versé dans un langage théologique spécialisé."

(not the impossibility) of citing the sort of propositions discussed; on p. 45 "meaningless" stands for "nicht sinnlos"; on p. 26 it is the lost Epistles which are discussed. Two footnotes are omitted and, on p. 37, five lines of text.²⁰⁴

Father Cornelius Ernst, who is also a translator of Rahner's works, is probably more keenly aware of the flaws of this translation than most critics. He says:

In the essay on inspiration I should say that there are some two or three more or less serious errors a page, e.g., some five examples of negatives wrongly omitted or supplied. Several sentences lack any intelligible English syntax. The punctuation is frequently German, not English, e.g., "In the case of a dogma, for which it is hard to find a Scriptural basis..." (p. 74) Whole sentences, and at least one paragraph, of the original are omitted, so that frequently Fr. R.'s careful qualifications, or his recapitulations, are denied the English reader. Clearly, the translator's intention was to lighten Fr. R.'s notoriously loaded style, but it is not, in my view, open to a translator to take such liberties with his original.²⁰⁵

Father Ernst concludes with a note of apology:

As a fellow-translator of Rahner, I particularly regret having to make these criticisms; but it seems sad that the English reader is unlikely to gain a very clear idea of Father Rahner's views on inspiration... Father Rahner's views are difficult enough anyway.²⁰⁶

204 Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 24 (1962), pp. 185-186.

205 Review of Inspiration in the Bible, Clergy Review, (May, 1964), p. 325.

206 Ibid.

In all fairness to Father Charles Henkey, the translator of Über die Schriftinspiration, it should be said that the majority of critics commend his translation as a whole as carrying the original thought of the author.²⁰⁷ They admit that Rahner's German is difficult to render an exact equivalent in meaning. We should mention also that Father Henkey has made a thorough study of Rahner's works and thought, so that it cannot be said of him that the faults of translating are due to a lack of understanding the thought of the author.²⁰⁸

Let us now summarize in our final chapter the results and conclusions of our investigation.

207 Their opinions are voiced by a reviewer in the Heythrop Journal, Vol. 3 (Jan., 1962), p. 99: "... the English translation as a whole is competently done..."

208 As a final note on the translation we should like to point out that Father Henkey is not the only translator of Rahner to have suffered at the hands of critics; not that this point justifies the faults. It does serve to emphasize the difficulty of rendering Rahner's German into English.

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSIONS

"For if one single theological problem can stir up the whole of theology, we may be sure that it has been correctly asked."
(Karl Rahner, Inspiration in the Bible, p.34)

SUMMARY AND RECAPITULATION

In our opening chapter we set up our end as being an investigation of the criteria of inspiration and canonicity from the human point of view: What constitutes the criterion for placing a book on the Canon from the human point of view?

The essay on Biblical inspiration by Karl Rahner instigated our own study of this question. Not only have we been interested in the question as such, but we wished to assess Rahner's study in the light of both earlier contributions of others, and present day criticism. At this time there exists no such critique in the English language.

To attain the end of our own study, we first presented the final, decisive statement of Trent (and Vatican I) and acknowledged this declaration as the only guarantee for us, the Faithful.

However, prior to Trent there was a long history of the development of the Canon. This was marked by the wholehearted acceptance of some writings, the outright rejection of others, and the continued doubt concerning still others. Thus, we gave a conspectus of this history of the Canon.

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Precisely where, then, is the problem? Since the Canon is a dogma of faith, then it must have been revealed by God in some way, either in Scripture or Tradition. Since it is not revealed through Sacred Scripture, then it must be in Tradition. It is the doctrine of canonicity that is invariably mentioned by those who hold the necessity and existence of an extra-Scriptural, or constitutive Tradition. Because this dogma is invoked as casting a vote for a constitutive Tradition, and is invariably mentioned in the controversy, we considered the dogma of canonicity against the background of the present Scripture-Tradition Controversy. It is in this setting that we see it in perspective. Thus, we presented both sides of the opposing views in the controversy. Out of this, too, we saw that canonicity is itself a unique problem.

Against this background, and that of the history of the Canon itself, we then considered some of the explanations that have been given to account for placing a book on the Canon, from the human point of view.

Abstracting from the internal and subjective norms proposed by Protestants of Reformation times, we considered only those criteria not contrary to Faith. We saw that the Zarb-Vosté controversy opened the discussion concerning the final resolution of the kind of revelation necessary—whether it be an explicit or implicit declaration of the

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inspiration and canonicity of the Scriptures. Special consideration was given to Apostolicity, considered by some as the truth through which the revelation was made implicitly.

This discussion of the '30's has been renewed in our time, with the masterful presentation of Karl Rahner, and furthered by Bernard Brinkmann.

Since Rahner's method is by way of synthesis we considered it necessary to present his complete thesis on inspiration in order to grasp its full significance as applied to the question of canonicity.

For Rahner, the Scriptures are a constitutive element of the Urkirche, recognized by a basic revelation, which is 'simply given by the fact that the relevant writing emerges as a genuine self-expression of the primitive Church.'

This basic revelation is distinct from the reflex comprehension and expression of this revelation. No explicit revelation or statement is needed.

This, in summary, is Rahner's criterion of canonicity. We next offered a critique of Rahner's essay. Because he is obviously influenced by his Heideggerian philosophy, we first presented a brief biography of Rahner.

To this we added our attempts at an objective critique of Rahner's study on inspiration in the light of the

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judgment of his peers, and our own judgment in the light of the Magisterium and teaching of earlier theologians.

From this critique, as presented against the background of the history of the problem, we have arrived at several conclusions on the question of canonicity. We should like to summarize these findings under the heading: The Present State of the Question Concerning Canonicity.

The Present State of the Question of Canonicity

Whereas Benoit started with the notion of inspiration, Rahner began with the Church. Benoit, conditioned by Thomistic principles with emphasis on the scholastic method, contributed much to the understanding of the doctrine of inspiration. This is precisely because of his stress on the analogous character of inspiration.

Rahner, on the other hand, placed inspiration in the historical context of the Church in which the Bible was produced. In so doing he has thrown new light on the social aspect of inspiration. In this respect, contemporary theologians are in general agreement with Rahner.

In applying this social theory of inspiration to the specific question of canonicity, Rahner has indeed advanced our understanding of how the Scriptures were determined, from the human point of view. In his theory he can account for the long period of development, i.e.,

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the history of the formation of the Canon.

Rahner accounts for the passage from implicit to explicit acceptance of the Canon in terms of a rather large gap in time between the death of the last Apostle and the setting up of the explicit Canon. In the connatural process of comprehending her genuine writings, the Church expressed herself through the New Testament.

The application of this theory to account for the Old Testament, even analogously, as Rahner suggests, is probably the weakest point of his entire thesis on inspiration and canonicity.

As a secondary consideration it seems to us most appropriate in an age where social relations have been the subject of so much thought and study that Rahner has situated inspiration in the social context. In addition to being an age of the sociologist, the social psychologist, it is also a time when the philosophers and theologians are orienting their approach to the social nature of man. If theology is to have meaning for our contemporaries, it seems that it should be based on man's social nature.

In our critique of Rahner we noted the contribution and severe criticism of Bernard Brinkmann, and his attendant claim at having furthered our understanding of the question.

Considering Rahner and Brinkmann as the representative spokesmen in this question of canonicity at the

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present time, we should like to submit a few thoughts on the present trends as we see them.

Two theories on canonicity seem to be emerging, arising from the respective interpretations of Trent:

- 1) Scripture is canonical only in as much as it is recognized by the Church with certainty as inspired, and,
- 2) A writing is canonical because the writing that is recognized as inspired is proposed by the Church as inspired.

In the first instance, the authority of Scripture is founded on its inspiration, and in the second instance Scripture gets its normative authority from the Magisterium of the Church.

We submit, that at the present time, Rahner is representative of the first group, whereas Brinkmann falls in the second.

One reason for this trend, as it appears to us, seems to be the fact that there could possibly exist non-canonical yet inspired writings. For Rahner, this would seem an impossibility, since he has so identified the inspired writings with the very life of the Church. On the supposition that there were such writings in existence, and now lost, some of the basic revelation would be lost, according to his theory, which is impossible. Therefore, a different foundation must be sought.

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Brinkmann's interpretation of God's 'authorship' furnishes him with such a foundation. For Brinkmann, the authorship of God in a writing is not a privilege in Biblical writings; rather, God is Author wherever any writing is inspired. This point raises difficulties, as Brändle has pointed out, but our purpose here is merely to mention that authorship, rather than inspiration, is primary for Brinkmann.

Further, Brinkmann's notion of 'Canon of Scripture' is taken in its wider meaning of being a rule of doctrine or discipline. This is what he means when he speaks of an inspired book in actu primo, and as long as its inspiration is certain for all those who know about it, it is also canonical in actu secundo.

As for the stricter meaning of canonical, i.e., belonging to the official list of the Church, that belongs to the infallible decision of the Magisterium. It is in this point—the infallible decision of Holy Mother Church—that David Stanley sees Brinkmann's greatest contribution.

For Rahner, then, inspiration is primary and ordered to canonicity, i.e., official recognition by the Church; on the other hand, for Brinkmann, the Magisterium of the Church gives the normative authority to a Book. A non-canonical inspired book and a canonical inspired Book, for Brinkmann, differ only exteriorly, not in their inner

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character. But as for the reasons why the Church selected this book rather than that one, Brinkmann offers no proposal.

In summary, we submit that both Rahner and Brinkmann have contributed much to our understanding of this question of canonicity of the Sacred Scriptures. However, problems remain, especially in finding a theory applicable to the Old Testament. Both Rahner and Brinkmann seem to have a deep awareness of the 'fullness of life' characteristic of the primitive Church, yet each has come up with a theory which excludes the other on the more important points. Perhaps there is room for further study on the notion of author, in its various meanings, and as used by Rahner and Brinkmann, in order to remove some of the difficulties.

Let us hope for continued study in this area, that the understanding of the doctrine on inspiration may keep pace with the rest of Biblical studies, which is definitely on the move.

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