

**TRADITIONS AND MODERN SCIENCE.
TRANSFORMATIONS OF UNDERSTANDING
INSPIRATION AND INFALLIBILITY OF THE
SCRIPTURE IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**

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Abstract

In this contribution the author deals with the question of the conception of inspiration in the Catholic Church at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. The authority of the Bible as a sacred canonical text normative for the community and faith of the Church had to be confronted with findings of natural and social sciences knocking the traditional interpretation and questioning infallibility and even inspiration of the Scripture. One of the answers of biblical exegetes was searching for the new conception of inspiration, taking into consideration both the sacred character and divine origin of the Bible on the one hand, and the role of the sacred writer, the human co-author of the sacred text on the other. Thanks to the creative grasp of the conception of inspiration by Saint Thomas Aquinas and its modern application on the modern methods of the historical-critical method the crisis has been successfully overcome.

Keywords: theory of inspiration, the Catholic Church, the Bible, sacred writers

1. Introduction

One of the critical moments of every religious tradition in the modern era is the confrontation of its sacred texts and their traditional exegesis and the results and methods of modern social and natural sciences. It often appears to be a painful process threatening to undermine totally the very bases of faith and tradition. This problem arises even more intensively in the religions based on a revealed text inspired by God or a directly 'dictated' one which is the basic and normative source of the given religion. The fact that the set of the books of the Old and New Testament canon, as defined by the Council of Florence and later the Council of Trent, is inspired by the Holy Spirit is considered to be obligatory

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teaching for a Catholic exegete or theologian. It is the ancient tradition of the Church confirmed by the words of the Scripture itself.

The Church confesses the canonical writings to be of God's origin, God's writings, suggested by the Holy Spirit, and thus inspired (*Spiritu sancto inspirante*). The inspiration is the basic characteristic in which the Bible differs from all other books. The fact that God is the main author of the Scripture guides us to the opinion that God's revelation, comprised in the Bible, is referred to truthfully. One of the results of inspiration is the truthfulness of biblical books. The Holy Spirit affects every human author, co-operating on a respective biblical book, with the charisma of inspiration. God had chosen particular people to record the sacred books and had made use of their particular abilities and talents, had affected them and through them so that they wrote exactly what God had wished. The Church Fathers of the ancient times attempted to represent the charisma of inspiration by means of various pictures (God's letter). They realized it was a mystery hard to be expressed in words.

The revelation means the communication of the religious truths by God, the communication of supernatural truths about God and his redeeming intentions with the man, which cannot be grasped by the man himself and the strength of his reason. It is God who initiates it and addresses the man. The revelation is carried out through actions and words during the history of salvation. The biblical revelation is a historical event, its mediators are known and the respective statements are recorded either directly or by means of safe oral tradition. The main place of revelation to God's people of the Old Testament is the history of Israel. The revelation of God in the history of salvation was carried out through centuries and it culminated by the self-revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ. The revelation, begun in the Old Testament, is completed in the New Testament. The contents of the revelation are recorded in the Bible, which is therefore marked as an inspired book by the Church [1].

The problems appear with further questions. How is the concurrence of the human and divine activity in creating the inspired books being actualized? Also the question of the character and the extent of inspiration is connected. What is the teaching of infallibility of the Bible related to? Which facts in the Bible are protected by the dogma of inspiration? Is everything in the Bible really infallible and inspired directly or 'dictated' by the Holy Spirit to the human author of the biblical text or it is somehow more complex? In the 19th century some findings appeared to subvert the opinion of the total exceptionality of the biblical text due to the new discoveries of older oriental originals and the discoveries of the natural sciences proved e.g. much higher age of the Earth than what corresponds with the statements of the Bible. New discoveries of the natural and historical sciences questioned many traditional attitudes and explanations and required a new, appropriate exegesis of the biblical text.

Scientists of the 19th century were excited by the possibilities of the historical-critical method being applied even to the text of the Bible especially in the area of German Protestant universities. Rationalistically oriented biblists

questioned a great amount of facts on the authorship and age of single books of the Bible, their historical plausibility, integrity or originality. The attacks of the rationalistic criticism of the Bible contested its supernatural value and its infallibility, general as well as doctrinal, which led the Catholic apologists to the attitude excluding the chance of any errors in the inspired books. They drew on the idea that acknowledging the human side of the Scripture, and thus the error, would lead to questioning the religious truths, dogmas that were principally based on testimonies of the Bible and that would necessarily result in the destruction of the whole Church. The Catholic exegesis hit the brick wall when refusing new methods as a whole without distinguishing and tried to harmonize the new discoveries of the natural sciences with the traditional interpretation of the Bible rather ineffectually.

The process of reconciliation between the tradition of the Catholic Church and the new scientific methods lasted for quite a long time and its culmination is Vatican II (1962-1965). In our contribution we would like to point out one aspect of the problem – the search for the new conception of inspiration that would conserve the traditional conception of the Bible as the vehicle of the divine revelation and enable the interpretation of the biblical text, corresponding with the new scientific findings and methods at the same time. It was not a theoretical question of the scientific research. The inability to give an appropriate interpretation of the Bible alienated a large number of intellectuals, teachers, doctors, office workers or scientists who succumbed to fideism or even atheism. The Catholic Church came through this crisis and we would like to refer to some moments concerning the way it managed this process.

The up-to-date, commonly used theories failed to meet the solutions of many serious problems in the exegesis of the inspired text. In order to overcome this critical moment, Catholic scholars pointed their attention to the past, which is an interesting fact. Paradoxically, it was the tradition where they found their inspiration for the change of the traditional exegesis. Precisely speaking, to overcome the stagnation of the shallow tradition from the 17th to the 19th century, they resorted to the deeper tradition from the 13th century and to the work of the classical theologian, Saint Thomas of Aquinas, who drew on the Church Fathers, especially Saint Jerome. The older tradition, creatively grasped, enabled to prepare the way to the future. The whole process gives evidence to the sense of theological work for the respective Church community and to the importance of free and creative environment for the theological work.

2. The traditional conception of inspiration and the problems with modern scientific discoveries

The question of inspiration requires thorough knowledge of the principles of Dogmatic theology, tradition and, of course, biblical science. Catholic exegetes consider this research more demanding than the exegesis of single biblical pericopes and they also fear a possible misstep. Therefore, they yielded the study of inspiration to dogmatic theologians for a long time. The most

influential conception of inspiration in the last quarter of the 19th century [2] is that of Jesuit Cardinal Franzelin SI (1820-1886), the head of the Roman school of neo-Scholasticism of the 2nd half of the 19th century. This scholar was especially an expert on and reviver of the Christian tradition and played an important role in the preparation of many Church documents. It is the question of the biblical inspiration which belongs to the most original deeds of his. The authorship of the respective part of the constitution *Dei Filius* accepted in Vatican I on 24th April 1870 is ascribed to him [3]. Franzelin draws on the conception of the author [4]. He attempts to distinguish the formal element (*ratio formalis*) and the material element (*ratio materialis*) of the inspired book. The first includes thoughts (*veritates, sensa, res et sententiae*) and originates in God. The second refers especially to the vocabulary used (*signa, vocabula, formulae, verba*) and it belongs to the human element. Inspiration relates to the thoughts first of all, whereas the assistance of the Holy Spirit guaranteeing infallibility is sufficient for particular words.

As much as the thoughts are concerned, the book was created by God at first and then suggested to the writer whose choice of vocabulary cannot violate the divine content. It reminds of a dictation when God passes the complete book to the man who is entrusted to write it down. The man is always being led by God neither to omit to write anything he is supposed to nor to add anything of his own [5]. The problem consists in the fact that this dualism resulted in serious difficulties relating to intellectual operations of the inspired author. How to explain the existence of older documents being used by some of the sacred writers while writing down the inspired books? The exegetes had noticed different depictions of some historical events for ages. How to understand these differences if God made up the book and suggested it to the writer in an almost complete state? Besides, the individuality of the writer would fade away entirely and he would become interchangeable.

There were also other systems presenting the origin of the inspired text as a simple dictation mechanically and authentically written down by the writer. Other systems assumed it was a mystical ecstasy in the manner of prophetic visions, the writer being totally under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Others reduced the inspiration to the questions of faith and morals; although it eliminates the conflict between divine infallibility and human weakness on the one hand, it reduces the Bible to a handbook of morals, on the other hand. The theory according to which God only approved of the written text or adopted it afterwards seemed inefficient, too, as it would restrict and actually minimize the participation of God on the preparation of the text. In the period of intellectual unrest of the end of the 19th century, there were far more similar experiments, of course.

Inspiration was also the topic of the first encyclical on the question of the Bible, edited by Pope Leo XIII on 18th November 1893, named *Providentissimus Deus* [6]. This document has the features of the school of neo-Scholasticism from the circle of Cardinal Franzelin's pupils [7]. The sense of the attempt of the Catholic exegetes is to conserve the teaching of infallibility of the Scripture and

to search for new solutions with the help of exegesis, both traditional and progressive. The infallibility of the Bible in all its parts was confirmed without any essential specification, which meant the victory of the traditionalistic school, as well as the reference to Vulgate as the basic text for exegesis. The encyclical uses exclusively the expression writers (scriptores), not authors (auctores) in the meaning of sacred writers, in the same manner as Cardinal Franzelin does.

In the times of greatest excesses of the rationalistic science, the emphasis of the encyclical on infallibility of the inspired text of the Scripture was fully understandable. In order to be able to defend the authority and truthfulness of the inspired text, Catholic exegetes were assigned by the Pope to acquire new scientific methods, to learn ancient languages perfectly, and to cope with the scientific discoveries of the time. While searching for the answers, the biblical science was not to overstep its limits given by its scientific and technical character, i.e. not to generalize untimely its momentary results, not to claim the theory of preliminary hypothesis as a definitive one, and to consider the truth of Revelation. This conception of Catholic hermeneutics of the Scripture was to be developed also by new academic workplaces. It was Pope Leo XIII who founded e.g. the School of Biblical Studies in Jerusalem or the University of Fribourg which played the key role in the development of the Catholic biblical science.

3. Inspiration of the Bible, Thomas Aquinas and the Dominicans at the turn of the 19th and 20th century

It may sound surprising but in the second half of the 19th century the Church was actually re-discovering the work of a Dominican of the 13th century. Until then Theology had been learning especially from various commentaries and manuals referring to Aquinas but hardly anybody was reading his original texts. In his encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (1879), Pope Leo XIII stated his work as a model and inspiration for theological work in the Church. Several schools and centres of Thomistic movement emerged. The most important was the Roman school of neo-Scholasticism which was determining the theological production until Vatican II. Besides this school there were other centres, e.g. the team of Dominican theologians and historians deputed by the Pope to prepare modern editions of Aquinas's original pieces of work (Leonina). Since the late 19th century, the Dominican regular intellectual formation has been focusing on the study of *Summa Theologica*, both in Dogmatic and Moral theology.

Thomas Aquinas perceives prophecy as a gift (charisma) which improves reason and guides the prophet to the recognition of truth and to its communication to other people [8]. The divine illumination is the creative element of the prophetic recognition. The Holy Spirit does not give only pictures and visions but also their perception and interpretation. According to the principle neither does grace destroy nature but it improves it and makes it perfect, nor does the charisma of prophecy paralyze the prophet's ability to think and infer but it strengthens it and makes it perfect. The evidence of delicacy of God's effect on the prophet is also the fact that he need not be aware of it. The

human instrument remains itself even in God's hands. In the case of the prophet, the divine charisma of inspiration affects his intelligence whereas in the case of a sacred writer it is primarily his will.

Although the history of the Catholic exegesis does not lack an array of extraordinary scholarly and human personalities, only few of them have reached such an importance as the Dominican biblical scholar and theologian Marie-Joseph Lagrange (1855-1938) [9, 10], the founder of modern Catholic exegesis [11, 12]. We are going to focus on his influence within the discussion about complex questions of inspiration, infallibility and truth of the biblical text. Being deputed by the superiors of the Dominican Order to lead the newly founded School of Biblical Studies in Jerusalem in 1890, Lagrange was engaged primarily in Archaeology and exegesis of the Old Testament but he could not avoid the theological questions lying on the very bases of biblical science. Having sound theological education [13] as well as knowledge of modern scientific exegesis, he could set his sight on success also in dealing with the question of inspiration.

Lagrange updated Aquinas's theory of prophecy so that it could express the conservation of the human author's integrity without reducing the fundamental thesis on inspiration of the Scripture. He formulated his opinions in the series of articles in *Revue biblique* in 1895-1898 [14-17] and in the third chapter of his well-known book *The Historical Method (Méthode historique)* from 1903. In his studies Lagrange does not work on the author but the very conception of inspiration. According to Thomas Aquinas, revelation is the highest form of prophetic inspiration, however, there are also its lower forms in which God illuminates just one's judgement so the respective prophet certainly and truly judges facts he is able to recognize with his natural sense. Lagrange presumes such inspiration in sacred writers who write down sacred books with the help of God's light. The inspiration as the illumination of intellect (*illuminatio iudicii*) is God's gift enabling the sacred writer to select certain thoughts, perceive them, judge and transform them into a literary form. The sacred writer's intellect illuminated by inspiration is able to judge, reliably and certainly, knowledge gained in various ways (*iudicium de rebus acceptis*), including their suitable written record. The act of inspiration need not necessarily be conscious nor does it imply a message of any new truths. There is no doubt that God may reveal something directly to the inspired author, however, it is not the same as inspiration. Inspiration is God's light, grace, edifying the sacred writer's spirit so that he is able to judge facts which he may learn in a natural way (written sources or oral tradition). God himself is the cause of certain and true judgement of truths; it is God who speaks and teaches [15].

Infallibility is guaranteed by the fact that the sacred writer is being under the influence of the Holy Spirit during the time of his activity. Every human author has his own literary style and unique mind but due to divine illumination thoughts and words are suitably selected. As the sacred texts remain under the influence of inspiration all the time until the final redaction, it is impossible to

separate any passage which would originate only in the human author. All originates in God and in the man at the same time. God is *causa principalis*, the sacred writer *causa instrumentalis*, in a special meaning („Auctor principalis S. Scripturae est Spiritus Sanctus... homo fuit auctor instrumentalis“)[Thoma Aquinatus, *Quodlibet VII*, q. 6, a. 1 ad 5]. Every instrument is used according to its own nature. During the birth of the inspired book, God made use of the writer's intelligence, his heart and will, and also his hand while writing. The final text is the complete work of the sacred writer and the complete work of God according to their manners: „Non sic idem effectus causae naturali et divinae virtuti attribuitur quasi partim a Deo et partim a naturali agente fiat, sed totus ab utroque secundum secundum alium modum; sicut idem effectus totus attribuitur instrumento, et principali agenti etiam totus“ [Thoma Aquinatus, *Contra Gentes*, l. III, c. 70].

The choice of the 'instrument' itself is very important and by no means is it accidental. God chose John, the evangelist, as he was suitably disposed of for such a type of book God wanted to have written. God uses natural talents and dispositions of the sacred writer; these are gifts of God's grace to the person of the writer, chosen for this task by God in the eternal wisdom. According to God's intention, John was already born with a special ability to penetrate and understand the mystery of salvation in Jesus Christ, which is improved and transformed by the charisma of inspiration. It is God who is suggesting the idea of recording sacred words to the writer's soul, and who is guiding him through the whole process of the birth of a biblical book. God affects the reason, illuminated by God's light; but the inspiration affects the human author's will as well, in a mysterious way. Through the grace of inspiration, the sacred writer perceives in God's light which gives him understanding and in return he gives his free approval. The inspired writer remains free and he keeps his intellectual activity, works, judges, does everything other authors of literary work do, only being under the influence of the Holy Spirit all the time.

The charisma of inspiration must also affect the sacred writer's soul in a special way. The sacred words which the writer is recording from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, illuminate his soul with a special light. Through the revelation of supernatural truth and through the concurrence of the writer's natural talent and dispositions and through the effect of the special grace of inspiration, the inspired text is born. The mysterious effect of the charisma of inspiration does not either destroy or deny the humanity of the sacred writer but it transforms him inwardly and disposes him to his work. God's action pervades him without preventing him from free choice of thoughts and words [15]. The final inspired text expresses human thought in a human style so that it can be submitted to the laws of interpretation relating to other ancient or oriental texts. Therefore it is necessary to study Philology, literary genres and the cultural-historical background of the birth of a particular book of the Bible. Neither does inspiration leave any visible traces, nor can the inspired passages be separated from the uninspired ones with any textual sutures. As much as the complex relations of the authorship of gradually composed biblical books using older

profane sources are concerned, it is necessary to admit the fact that the books had been written down, re-written, re-worked and compiled by anonymous authors who were subjected to the grace of inspiration, according to Lagrange. It is also admissible to translate, re-write and develop a sacred text and it may be the fruit of inspiration, too. Neither do redaction changes deny inspiration of the Bible [18].

During his famous Toulouse lectures [10, p. 169], Lagrange refuses contemporary Protestant biblical science excluding some sacred texts completely from the set of inspired books and degrading them only to human literary work of different quality [19]. God's assistance precedes all the writer's activity so it relates to the whole work and even to every single word. However, as the sacred writer made use of all his natural human abilities, God did not impress anything directly into his mind, not even the ideas. A man is no machine and his will cannot perish without ceasing to be a man. A sacred writer need not necessarily be an apostle, a prophet or a thaumaturge, he could be quite an unknown man. A completely unknown and anonymous author seems unacceptable for a certain conception of canon which requires a solemn action but there is no evidence to that even in the Old Testament. Anonymity of some sacred writers is proved by the examples of biblical pseudonyms. In spite of the fact that Salomon, the king, was not the author of the Book of Wisdom, it does not deny its value of an inspired book. The grace of inspiration was simply contributed to an unknown author.

The inspiration leads the man to writing which basically aims at fixing and recording cognition of people of a certain period. God wanted to record important events of the history of salvation and decided to record even imperfect religious ideas people had about God on a given degree of revelation. An extraordinary development of religious ideas can be found in the Old Testament. Teaching of some books, e.g. Proverbs or Ecclesiastes, falls behind the perfection of Christ's teaching in Gospels but it was God who inspired the record of this teaching. Literal reading of the Scripture of those who need neither the Church nor another mediator, results in naivety, fundamentalism and absurdities we may be protected from by reading the Scripture in the Church and with the Church. Everything that sacred writers teach is taught by God himself and so it is true. But, what do sacred writers actually teach? Most of all, God wants to give a lecture on religious truths. However, in the Bible we can find such literary genres as poems or parables used exclusively to pass on the moral instruction. Inspiration does not change the specific character of certain literary genres. Each of them must be interpreted according to its own rules and such an attitude manages to solve objections to the truthfulness of the Bible.

The Bible does not contain God's teaching in the state of finished and separated revealed definitions but in a great number of narrated texts, dialogues, poetic expressions, prayers, and metaphors. The Holy Spirit has the role of a preacher and a pedagogue communicating supernatural truths to the chosen people. God acts according to the principle of incarnation and searches for his way to the people according to their cultural and religious level. Neither does

God teach anything false, nor is he grounded by anything false as the fundamental element of his teaching. However, God is free to use our scientific ideas or our knowledge of history as preparatory material to guide our thoughts to the desirable goal. Even the most conservative people must admit that Paul sometimes argues according to thoughts and preconceptions of the Jews of his time [19, p. 80, 84, 88].

Lagrange draws on Saint Augustine and Thomas Aquinas in their opinion that the Holy Spirit did not want to reveal the mystery of the nature of the created world unless its knowledge was useful for the salvation, so sacred writers describe things as they appear to their senses. Neither can historical texts be understood according to the knowledge of God who knows everything but according to the horizon of the man who is deficient. Not knowing more about history than the others, the sacred writer must use expressions objectively false as it is possible that God will not pass on him any deeper knowledge of this. In a word, sacred writers talk as things appear to them. And this is entirely traditional teaching [19, p. 92, 95].

4. The struggle for adopting the new conception of inspiration

The revived Thomistic conception of verbal inspiration, including the whole of the Scripture and every single word of it, was gradually winning new sympathisers [20]. Lagrange's conceptions of inspiration influenced other Catholic exegetes [21-25], others on the contrary objected strongly against him [26, 27]. Founded in 1902, the Pontifical Biblical Commission quickly changed its character and instead of supporting the development of Catholic biblical science it rather became a supervisory and castigating authority against progressive biblical scholars [28]. Several decrees of the Commission from 1905-1909 narrowed down the space for the Catholic biblical science. Right in the first of them from 23rd June 1905 the question of whether the biblical books marked as the historical ones contain narration that does not belong to the real, objective history in the real sense of the word but in the form of historical narration express and interpret truths not relating to the historical reality of interpretation. The answer of the Commission was negative, with the exception of the cases when the writer uses allegory or parables [29]. Not only Lagrange but also an array of other Catholic exegetes found themselves in discrepancy between this decision of the magisterium that does not take into account specific features of period historiography and the results of modern scientific exegesis. Catholic exegetes had to submit to the decrees of the Pontifical Biblical Commission and to adapt their lectures and publishing. Due to the atmosphere of anti-modernistic hysteria in the Catholic Church under Pius X (1903-1914), progressive Catholic exegetes did not publish new, creative theses on biblical inspiration and historical-critical method but they confined to popularizing and technical theses [30].

The older conception of inspiration was confirmed in the new Church document from 1920. The encyclical *Spiritus Paraclitus* [29, p. 440] refused resolutely to distinguish between “the fundamental or religious truths” which the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible would relate to, and “the profane elements”. The opinion that the historical books of the Old Testament were not based on the absolute, objective truth in the description of historical events and that the sacred writer could record events according to folk tradition was rejected, too. All biblical narration stakes a claim for the same type of “absolute and historical” truth. The theory of literary genres (*genera quaedam litterarum*) was refused directly. There were no revolutionary changes under Pius XI (1922-1938) either, however, the terrain for the change of the official line was being prepared. In the middle of the 1930s new people entered the Pontifical Biblical Commission, some of which were directly Lagrange’s pupils or friends like Cardinal Tisserant [31] or J. Vosté OP [32].

The encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* from 30th September 1943 became the breakthrough. Pope Pius XII decided to transform radically the attitude of Papacy to some new methods and conceptions of biblical exegesis and to support the development of modern biblical science against its critics. A great number of programme elements draws on Lagrange’s principles and actually it was a posthumous appreciation and rehabilitation of his work. The main task of exegesis is to interpret the actual sense of the Scripture that was intended to be expressed by the sacred writer himself [29, p. 538]. During the interpretation it is necessary to distinguish literary genres, to give authentic interpretation. Exegetes must study old oriental literature and must free themselves from a priori judgements. The right understanding of biblical inspiration takes into consideration the fact that the writers of the Bible as well as other ancient authors use forms of description and narration characteristic of the Semitic languages, including the paradox expressions which serve to imprinting things deeply into one’s mind.

However, in August 1950 the very same Pope Pius XII edited the encyclical *Humanis generis*, renewing restrictions on a whole range of scientific and theological fields, including exegesis [33], so it is the dogmatic constitution on Revelation *Dei Verbum* in Vatican II (18th November 1965) which is to be considered the truly definitive victory of the new conception of inspiration. There was a lengthy struggle [34] for the definite form the result of which is rather a short text but a rich one in theological respect. In the basic attitude it draws of Lagrange’s distinction of revelation and inspiration which means consideration of the difference between the revelation of God’s truths and the text of canonical books. Of course, the Scripture contains revelation of God’s truths, salvific and supernatural truths are recorded in the Bible, however, they are not identical with the words of the Scripture. The sense of those utterances is to be found, sometimes it is easy, sometimes much more difficult, but the literal reading in the manner of fundamentalists goes by the sacred writer’s and God’s intention. The understanding of the Holy Scriptures is growing by time not only through bishops’ preaching but also through “thinking and studies of the

believers". After all, the Church is always aiming at the fullness of God's truth during centuries.

5. The importance of theological work

Neither did Lagrange share the enthusiasm of some of his colleagues trying to apply new theories of Psychology to the conception of inspiration, nor could he adopt neo-Scholasticism of the Roman school. He preferred turning directly to Aquinas's teaching. It resulted in a theory able to defend authentic as well as real authorship both of God and the sacred writer, both of them being fully responsible for the text as real authors, each of them in his own manner. Lagrange attempted to keep the balance and the true conception of the Scripture against the conservatives suppressing its human part, and against the rationalists denying its divine origin. He goes back to the roots of Western theology and works on the original teaching of Saint Thomas supplemented with other motifs by great Church Fathers, Saint Augustine and Saint Jerome.

It is no wonder that the Catholic theology of the second half of the 19th century turned to the person of Saint Thomas Aquinas. It had to cope with two extremes: rationalism absolutizing the capabilities of rational perception and denying the possibility of supernatural revelation as a whole; and on the other hand, fideism which does not care for the rational evidence of faith and renounces it consciously. Thomas was the master of synthesis, also with regards to faith and reason. They cannot contradict each other constantly and truly as they stem from the only source of Truth, the divine Logos, affecting the creation as well as the work of salvation. Provided they are exploited correctly, they must lead the man to Logos again. As the man perceives supernatural truths by means of revelation, the truths not being accessible to the human reason only, the religious perception does not become irrational. Having exploited the all knowledge of his time, Aquinas managed to get to precise and penetrating formulations of the truths of faith in which the truth as a gift of faith, becomes clearer and better accessible through our reflexion [Thoma Aquinatus, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 1 a. 8 ad 2]. It was by no chance that the Catholic Church turned back and emphasized Aquinas's conception of mysterious unity of faith and reason in the encyclical of Pope John Paul II *Fides et Ratio* in 1998, in the time of new militant-atheistic movements that deny rationality to religious thought and take up the position of religious agnosticism.

Nevertheless, the encyclical following Aquinas emphasized the fact that reason and faith use different methods of perception, in spite of their being in accord. The reason accepts the truth by means of its inner direct or indirect evidence. The faith accepts the truth on the basis of the authority of the Word of God being revealed to the man. The reason can reach the existence of the only God but it is the faith which can perceive the mystery of God's Trinity [Thoma Aquinatus, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 1 a. 1 co]. Aquinas essentially believed in the capability of the reason which, despite all its limits, is able to perceive not only the empirically material world, but also, being illuminated by faith, to

perceive and understand supernatural truths. So it is not only possible but also necessary to put all rational abilities into the service of faith and theological perception. The Thomistic conception of God's effect on the sacred writer revived by Lagrange makes the mechanism of inspiration more easily understandable and also more human without becoming less divine. Textual criticism and modern methods of the study of the inspired text are only new, effective instruments to a better understanding of the biblical message. Yet, this seemingly non-homogenous connection was created by an internally homogenous system corresponding not only to empirical data but being also compatible with the traditional Catholic theology and philosophy.

The search for adequate theory of inspiration cannot be considered luxury of the Systematic theology which the exegete may easily give a miss to, on the contrary, it is the key element for the right interpretation of the Scripture. Without adequate conception of inspiration, respecting the role of both the human and the divine agents, adequate interpretation of the biblical text cannot be reached. Lagrange's permanent merit is the fact that understanding of inspiration must be derived from the study of the Scripture, not from a priori opinions and constructions. Inspiration relates to what the sacred writer intends to express, what he intends to teach. It is the task of an exegete to find out what the sacred writer wanted to express, and he may find the historical-critical method very helpful. Being entrusted by God as the guardian of the Scripture, it is the Church who always has the last say in fundamental or controversial questions. Lagrange's conception could have guaranteed freedom, reliability of the doctrine and development of the Catholic exegesis unless the Pontifical Biblical Commission had turned into a committee of vigilance after 1903 [35].

Lagrange distinguishes several types of historicity of biblical texts out of which only relatively small part belongs truly into the category of historical books to all intents and purposes. Even if the sacred writer wants to write history and uses the instruments of the period historiography, it is never profane historiography itself but the writer always tries to communicate some important truth about God and God's intentions with the humankind. Therefore, inspiration does not protect him from errors in chronology or in historical facts. If this happens in historical books, the more naive it would be to persist on the historicity of events recorded in poetic or didactical texts or in etiological myth.

In spite of the fact that we consider these findings about the cultural relativity and the need to read and especially to interpret texts with the knowledge of the original context of their authors and receivers, obvious, History of the culture and Anthropology started to develop only at the beginning of the 20th century and the Eurocentric, western civilization canon still prevailed. The historical-critical method offered the way how to overcome the barriers separating the sacred writers and the content of the inspired books from the modern reader. Just at the moment when it was not possible to claim every word of the Bible to be a divine statement with the authority of a dogma, Lagrange offered the way how to distinguish the real basis of the inspired text. Due to the interruption of his scholarly reflexion, Lagrange did not have enough time to

develop, work out and ripen his theory of inspiration and the truth of biblical books. Yet, his influence has even endured adverse times and has guided future development of the Catholic exegesis to the right track.

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