

## Concerning Inspiration

The three elements of the classical (orthodox) theory of the verbal inspiration of scripture are *impulsus ad scribendum*, *suggestio rerum*, and *suggestio verborum*.

Inspiration, more generally, has its proper place in several theological contexts: in the context of the doctrine of creation as well as in the context of the doctrine of salvation and in the context of the doctrine of revelation. It is by the Holy Spirit that we are raised above the level of mere animals to the level of spirit, even as it is the Spirit's work that empowers us to conform to the archetype of God by being, materially as well as formally, God's image or likeness. But, then, it is also by the Spirit that this original inspiration, having once been lost through human sinfulness, is restored. Finally, the Spirit, which is universally presented in human existence both originally and savingly *post lapsum*, is decisively *re-presented* through apostolic-prophetic revelation.

But what is it, exactly, that is inspired in this revelation? Obviously, the apostles and prophets themselves are inspired. But the judgment that they are so is not a judgment about *their* personal existence in relation to the Holy Spirit; it is a judgment about their decisive re-presentative role in *our* existential relation to the Spirit. What is inspired, then, is their "doctrine"—not, I should insist, its *verba* (= formulations), but its *res* (= assertions). And inspired it is, whatever the form of its communication, be it oral, written, or sacramental.

This "divinely inspired doctrine" (*doctrina divinitus inspirata*) is appropriately described formally as the understanding of human existence explicitly authorized by Jesus as the Christ, as the decisive event of salvation. As such, it is explicitly communicable either orally (directly as proclamation, indirectly as teaching), in writing (as scripture), or by certain acts or gestures (as sacraments).

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