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Aaron Pidel. *The Inspiration and Truth of Scripture: Testing the Ratzinger Paradigm* (Verbum Domini; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2023). Pp. 278. 34,95 $. ISBN 978-0-8132-3687-2

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In the structure of this review, two main paragraphs are distinguished corresponding to the title and subtitle of the reviewed item, in which reference is made to Pidel's contentions. Before that, however, the structure and purpose of the monograph is discussed. The concluding part offers a critical evaluation of this valuable publication, which is definitely one to be recommended not only to scholars of Ratzinger's legacy but to all those interested in the doctrine of Scripture.

1. Structure and Purpose of the Monograph

The monograph *The Inspiration and Truth of Scripture* begins with Acknowledgements (over 2 pages), after which the reader is given a list of abbreviations (5.5 pages) and an Introduction (14 pages) entitled, not coincidentally, "Setting the Scene." This section introduces five chapters fairly equal in volume (38, 47, 44, 37 and 47 pages accordingly). The publication also consists of an epilogue (exact title: "Epilogue: Three

1 There are more than twenty articles (including chapters in multi-author publications) in the ATLA Religion Database (ATLA RDB). The following are worth mentioning as related to the reviewed publication: Pidel 2014a, 2014b, 2015, 2022.

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Achievements" – over 15 pages), a bibliography (22 pages) and an index (9.5 pages). The division of the bibliography is perhaps all too simple: only Joseph Ratzinger's writings (4 pages) and the remaining literature (18 pages) are distinguished.

The author takes as the aim of his book the search for answers to the questions: what it means that the Bible is the word of God (and not just a word about God), and how true the Bible is and to what extent the word of God expressed in human language can be expected to transcend the cultural level of its time. From the outset, he reveals his conviction that it was Joseph Ratzinger who put Catholic reflection on Scripture on a new trajectory, taking into account both orthodox enduring doctrine and the challenges carried by scientific and historical reason. It is noteworthy that Pidel draws almost exclusively on Ratzinger's writings as a theologian who writes in his own name (this means that the author deliberately omits Ratzinger's statements as Benedict XVI) and presents his theology against the background of historical thought on the inspiration and truth of Scripture developed from the 19th century to the present day. As the Jesuit notes, after Vatican II, reflection on the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible was neglected by those for whom it should be of particular interest – that is, biblical scholars. Benedict XVI called for in-depth theological reflection on the inspiration and truth of Scripture (*VD* 19), and Pidel's monograph is intended to show that it was Ratzinger who "laid a groundwork for a comprehensive theory of biblical inspiration and truth" (p. 8).

In the introduction, the author reveals his conviction, which would later make itself known in the pages of the book, about the constituent elements of Ratzinger's synthesis. He would owe most to his study of the legacy of St Bonaventure.[2] Ratzinger juxtaposes the basic intuitions drawn from him with the most important insights of theologians concerned with biblical inspiration (and the corresponding inerrancy or truth of Scripture), the findings of biblical exegesis and the pronouncements of the Magisterium. However, the author of the monograph under review did not intend merely to present Ratzinger's theology of Scripture, but to demonstrate that it is more useful than other proposals. Accordingly, in his research, he set up the standards of evaluation: the standard of faith (mainly dictated by *Dei Verbum* as the normative expression of the Church's doctrine of Scripture), the standard of reason (here it would be mainly about the correspondence of the model of inspiration with the results of research carried out using the historical-critical method) and the comparative standard of alternative theologies of inspiration.

2 It is precisely the Bonaventurian metaphysics of Scripture that would constitute the distinguishing feature of Pidel's monograph in comparison with the earlier publications to which Pidel refers (p. 14, n. 40): Rausch 2009; Ramage 2013.

2. Ratzinger's Theology of Scripture Against Other Models

2.1. Towards a New Paradigm of Inspiration and Truth

The comparison of proposals for a theology of Scripture announced in the introduction begins with the presentation of alternative models in chapter one ("The Search for a New Paradigm of Biblical Inspiration and Truth"). Pidel selects, in his view, the most influential ones that emerged after the publication of the encyclical *Providentissimus Deus*, when historical consciousness gained dominance, and in which some theory of biblical inspiration developed in philosophical terms can be distinguished. Pidel characterises the models proposed by Pierre Benoit (1906–1987), Karl Rahner (1904–1984) and David Tracy (b. 1939). The author believes that the list of approaches proposed, although not exhaustive, is nevertheless representative of Catholic theology: "they typify the interpretive styles still prevalent today" (p. 11). Pidel uses a double term for these models: the first word in the name designates the school of thought to which the model can be attributed, the second characterises the way in which God becomes the true Author of Scripture. These are:

(1) Benoit's Thomist-instrumental model of inspiration
(2) Rahner's Molinist-predefinitive model of inspiration
(3) Tracy's Heideggerian-disclosive model of inspiration

Each of these models is characterised by Pidel, and he then shows the interpretative implications of the model and evaluates it.

Benoit, the author of the first model, drew on Thomas's notion of prophecy and instrumental causality, both narrowing the concept of prophecy (the divine impulse to write) and broadening it (to include not only truths beyond the reach of the human author's mind). In this model, God uses human instruments, with the result that Scripture is fully human, and at the same time God is its "Author." God and humans "author" Scripture in ways appropriate to their natures and on their own level. As the primary Author, God transcending the limitations of human tools, determines the "*fuller sense*" and inerrancy of Scripture (what the biblical author teaches, is also taught by God). This means that the *sensus plenior* is attributed to God alone, and the *sensus literalis* to God and human tools. In this model, it is not the text (or the tradition prior to it) but the human authors who are inspired. This model resonates with magisterial statements and displays a *metaphysical elegance*. Weaknesses include inappropriate assumptions about the origin and purpose of Scripture, the difficulty of taking into account the communal dimension of its genesis and explaining questionable (erroneous) biblical content, and the reduction of biblical truth to propositional assertions.

The second model was based on the theory of predestinating grace promoted by the Jesuit Luis de Molina (1535–1600) and took into account communal consciousness (a legacy of German Romanticism). Karl Rahner limited his speculations to God's

assistance in the origin of Scripture. Molina and his followers held that God does not so much move the will and determine it towards a goal, but arranges (divine providence) external circumstances in such a way that man can freely choose what God desires. Situating himself in this heritage, Rahner argues that true human authorship is incompatible with the concept of subordinate instrumentality, as is inspiration if it is not to be reduced to God's creative action. He therefore advocates seeing inspiration as a combination of providential circumstances and divine grace. In the Jesuit's view, it should be recognised that God "predefines" the substantive message of the Bible, while the literary form is the work of human authors. Scripture is the unique word of God because it is part of the same type of predefinition that also characterises the apostolic Church. Since the fullest and most perfect revelation was given in Christ, God, as it were, "authors" the Church in the apostolic era. The New Testament is the "incarnation" of the Church's original faith, and God is the author of the mind of the Church; human authors determine the concrete literary shape of that mind. God is treated here as the *originator* providing the revealed ideas rather than an *auctor*. Divine and human authors are seen from different perspectives (cf. also Rahner 1969).

For the interpretation of Scripture, this is of considerable importance, because in addition to determining the intention of the human author, the intention of the Church must also be taken into account. A hagiographer wrote as a member of the Church and thus remained integrated at least implicitly into the universal theology of the Church. Post-apostolic ecclesial doctrine does not obscure but illuminates his intention, and an error-free interpretation of Scripture is linked to the infallibility of the Church's teaching authority. Exegetes should therefore treat magisterial teaching not as a negative limitation of exegesis, but as an intrinsic, positive principle of exegetical research. The evaluation of this model emphasises that it does not explain the apostolic conviction of the Church according to which it received the Scriptures from people chosen by God. By subjecting the role of the prophets and apostles to ecclesiastical consciousness, it deprives inspiration of its meaning. Besides, it can hardly explain the inspiration of the Old Testament. Nor does it provide any natural analogy to illustrate the "mechanism" of the interpenetration of individual and communal intentions; it seems to explain one mystery with another, even greater one.

Originating from an American theologian, the third model draws on the model of disclosure of truth proposed earlier by Martin Heidegger and developed by Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur. Reaching the truth depends on one's attitude to reality (a more open or manipulative stance) and on the history of effects ("effective-history," German *Wirkungsgeschichte*).[3] David Tracy postulates that Scripture should

3 The history of the text's effects was pointed out, also with reference to Gadamer among others, by the Australian Jesuit Gerald O'Collins, whom Pidel does not quote in his monograph (O'Collins 2018, 22, 157–59). One Polish biblical scholar (Linke 2017, 41) argues that the history of effects only "superficially" concerns Scripture's inspired character.

not be regarded as a collection of dogmatic and ethical propositional claims, but rather seen as a "classic" – a work of art that opens up to a more authentic world. "The Bible is finally true because the overall world that it projects is most true to life – that is, least inadequate to Jesus Christ's vision of reality. The historical authors' intentions do not govern the ever-expanding meaning of the text, nor are their judgments, even if solemnly proposed, always true" (p. 45).

This leads to a new understanding of the authorship of the Bible and the tasks of the interpreter. Not the "world behind the text," i.e. the hagiographer's intentions, historical circumstances, etc., but the "world in front of the text" – the vision evoked by the text itself is relevant here. The books of the Old and New Testaments represent, admittedly, a normative (because they are a primary testimony), but only a "relatively adequate" expression of the Christ event (this rather than a different set of symbols and narrative techniques does not reveal the whole). Tracy recognises God as the "implied author" whose vision of the world becomes available through the biblical text. In analogy with classical literature, which imbues the world with meaning, being above such classics, Scripture carries meaning by relating to the world in its liminal situation (the transcendent totality manifest in the humanity of Christ). In other words, the truth of Scripture is not so much to be found in propositional judgements as it is an "event" analogous to a deeper recognition of reality through a work of art. "For Tracey, Scripture is true not so much because its propositional judgments are always true but because it makes truth appear and human authenticity possible" (p. 42). The regulative and determining role of what is "behind the text," which determines the scope of legitimate interpretations, is relativised. One can only speak of an internal and an external correction of interpretation. The internal one is based on accountability to the overall canonical witness, the external one is based on historical-critical, literary-critical and social-scientific methods through which it is possible to identify arbitrary interpretations. In turn, the role of Tradition as giving access to the full meaning of biblical words is emphasised in hermeneutics (e.g. "classical" figure of Jesus is revealed through *Wirkungsgeschichte*). One can thus speak of a symbiosis between the religious classic and the supra-historical community of readers. Tradition is subject to reform and correction in the community, and Scripture and the Church constitute a type of hermeneutic circle, as each serves as a standard for the other.

In Pidel's view, this model better explains the *sensus plenior* than Benoit's model. It frees exegetes from the burden of interpreting dubious biblical historical, scientific or ethical-religious ideas, but it does so at the expense of transforming the inerrancy of Scripture – it abandons the truthfulness of propositional judgements in favour of the truthfulness of life, thus failing to do justice to the historical dimension of Christianity. What is missing here is the translation of existential truth into concrete directives and doctrines. "For those who feel Scripture discloses not only an existential landscape but also, at least on some occasions, concrete

and abiding norms for belief and action, Tracy will have painted with too broad a brush" (p. 48).

Most important, however, is Pidel's assessment of all the models discussed. None of them adequately corresponds to the Church's teaching on divine authorship and interpretive implications, especially the whole theory of Scripture as expressed in the constitution *Dei Verbum*. Our author argues that "[t]he council lays down the doctrinal 'pegs,' in other words, leaving it to theological ingenuity to stretch a theoretical fabric over them. Each of the models of inspiration surveyed covers some pegs better than others" (p. 48). The models presented do not cover all of them: "neither Benoit nor Rahner nor Tracy accommodates with equal elegance everything that *Dei Verbum* wants to affirm about the reality of Scripture" (p. 52). In the following chapters, Pidel will argue that it is Ratzinger who has been able to build on the strengths of the various models and offer a more adequate theology of Scripture as the word of God.

2.2. Biblical Inspiration as Seen by the Bavarian Theologian

Pidel, in his second chapter entitled "Ratzinger on Scripture as God's Word," calls Ratzinger's proposal the "Bonaventurian-ecclesial model of inspiration." As our author writes, "transposing Bonaventure's thought, Ratzinger begins to advance a model of biblical inspiration that is mystical, historically progressive, subject-inclusive, and rationally corrective" (p. 53). This model emerges in dialogue with philosophical hermeneutics, personalism and critical exegesis.

Following Bonaventure, Ratzinger emphasises that mystical "revelation" (*revelatio*, but also *inspiratio* or *illuminatio* in medieval terms) is at the root of the recognition of God's action in history and the creation of the books of the Bible ("inspiration" in the modern sense). A similar transition from *mundus sensibilis* to *mundus intelligibilis* must also accompany the interpreter of inspired texts, since revelation has been expressed in words, but is somehow hidden behind them and demands to be unveiled. Inspiration, therefore, would be a special type of revelation associated with the creation of a textual creation.

From Bonaventure, the Bavarian theologian also adopts the conviction that the subject receiving revelation belongs to revelation itself; consequently: the believing subject is to be seen in indissoluble connection with inspired Scripture, without which it remains a mere dead letter. Revelation encompasses both the text and the ecclesial subject, the material and formal principle. In Ratzinger's view, Scripture, Tradition and the Magisterium constitute one living organism of the word of God that lives in the Church. It is in it as the place of transition from the human spirit to the *Pneuma* that inspiration becomes possible. The authorship of Scripture is seen by Ratzinger triadically, as the mutual interaction of three entities: the individual author, the People of God and God. Pidel uses a telling illustration in this

context – the divine-human structure of God's word in Ratzinger's model is "like a set of Russian dolls. God enfolds the faith of the Church, which enfolds the individual author or interpreter, which enfolds the otherwise inert text" (p. 64). In this way the two worlds, behind the text and in front of the text, are integrated with each other.

If, on the other hand, the Church, with its memory, is the primary created subject of Scripture, then, in Ratzinger's view, the ongoing dimension of *inspiratio* must be valued, at least in the receptive sense (the understanding of inspired texts). Pidel argues that Ratzinger owes this element of the model to Bonaventure as well; having rejected the historical isomorphism of Israel and the Church, the Bavarian theologian recognises that Scripture only reveals its full meaning as the People of God develop in history, in the context of new experiences. "Divine discourse not only enters history but has a history" (p. 67); or: "Bible remains embedded within history, but a history that is itself in motion" (p. 69). From the other side: this word is characterised by the potentialities that can develop over time (in which, according to Ratzinger, inspiration "shines through").

All these views are summarised by Pidel as follows:

> Ratzinger takes from Bonaventure the idea that *inspiratio* constitutes a kind of mystical perception, necessary for both consigning *revelatio* to writing and for interpreting biblical writings in their revelatory sense. The basic form of such mystical perception is none other that the faith of the Church. This means that Scripture does not already constitute revelation in its naked verbalness, but only in conjunction with an "understanding subject" – the People of God. And as this understanding subject gains experience throughout its historical journey – a journey that includes epochal transitions from Israel to Church and from Apostolic Church to post-Apostolic Church – Scripture gradually accrues new layers of text (in the canonical period) and unfolds new layers of meaning (in the periods after the closure of each canon). Ratzinger thus presents the Word of God as living and active "organism," accruing meaning until the eschaton […] (p. 97).

Ratzinger's attention to salvation history as a means of understanding Scripture is also seen by Pidel as having been taken over from the legacy of Bonaventure. The Franciscan emphasised that in the present circumstances (after sin), human reason needs the light of faith to function properly. Ratzinger adds to this the historical and communal determinants of reason and draws the conclusion that there is no perfectly neutral (so-called *view of nowhere*) alternative to the Church's faith-based tradition of rational examination of Scripture. The Bavarian theologian also elaborates on the need to inscribe private reason in the historical tradition from the anthropological side. Just as reason cannot operate outside the community of language (with its historical conditions), biblical inspiration is a dimension of the mystical tradition. In this way, communal inspiration appears not as a *sui generis* phenomenon, but

rather a supernatural elevation of tradition inherent in human nature. There is thus (unlike in Rahner) a natural analogy for the ecclesial dimension of inspiration, and the emphasis on the role of language additionally takes into account the linguistic turn that has taken place in philosophy (Ludwig Wittgenstein's aporia that language shapes rather than merely reflects thought). If individual thought is only possible through the mediation of a common language, the linguistic community in turn expresses itself through the thought of the individual. Similarly, inspiration expresses the mind of the Church, as hagiographers share the supernatural virtue of faith and cultural and linguistic community with the entire Church.

The Jesuit argues that the model is all the more adequate the more compatibility it shows with the "pegs" established in *Dei Verbum*, while not leaving other doctrinal guidelines unfulfilled. The following doctrinal data, which Ratzinger's model respects, shall be highlighted in turn:

(1) Organic unity of Scripture and Church
The triadic model of authorship (especially the emphasis on the People of God) makes it possible to preserve the unity of Scripture, Tradition and the Church's teaching office postulated by *Dei Verbum*. This model enters into the question of communal authorship left open by the Council Fathers. Precisely by virtue of the fact that Scripture takes its shape from the mutual exchange of the individual, the community and the Word, it is marked by an organic relationship to the Church. Ratzinger's model: "better accounts for the organic interpenetration of Scripture and ecclesial tradition by recalling that every linguistic community constitutes something of a collective personality, whose authority must be accepted for the sake of initiation into thought and communion. The interdependence of Scripture and Church represents, therefore, only the supernatural elevation of a natural dynamic everywhere evident […]" (p. 97).

(2) Scripture's unique authority as God's Word
For Ratzinger, the primacy of Scripture demands the mystical preeminence of Christ and the apostles. The Jesuit also emphasises that for Ratzinger both the "once only" of revelation and its "forever" are important. The fullness of revelation, in Ratzinger's view, has its metaphysical roots in the hypostatic union – which happened once only – transposed in Ratzinger's theology into the personal-mystical categories of the Son's relationship with the Father. And the Apostles were included in this intimate dialogue between Christ and God. "For Ratzinger, both the apostles and Scripture seem to fall within the penumbra of the unrepeatable Christ-event and share in its revelatory *preeminence*" (p. 84). If, then, the mystical model of inspiration by itself cannot so satisfactorily justify the distinction between the word of God and the words about God as Benoit's model did, then combining it with a Christological approach linking the unique authority of Scripture to the Incarnation and

its witnesses already does. The God who is the subject of Jesus' words and deeds becomes, through the apostolic witnesses, also the subject of Scripture. In contrast to Rahner, who could acknowledge the primacy of the apostles simply because they belonged to the apostolic Church, Ratzinger links the primacy of the apostolic Church to the mission of the Twelve.

(3) Inspiration of the Old Testament

About inspiration, the Church has made the unequivocal statement that it originates not from the Church's acceptance of the books of the Old Testament (Vatican Council I), but from God, who inspired both Testaments (Vatican Council II). This means at least that the Old Testament remains the word of God more than any other uninspired religious literature and that it must be seen in continuity with revelation in Christ. In the constitution *Dei Verbum,* there is a passus stating that the word of God is present in a special way (*praecellenti modo*) in the New Testament (cf. *DV* 17), which could suggest some type of analogous (different) intensity of inspiration in the two Testaments. In Ratzinger's model, this kind of "unity-in-difference" between the two testaments is clearly indicated. Pidel also sees here the influence of Bonaventure, from whom Ratzinger would take the correspondence between Israel and the Church, only not in a "one-to-one" form. The Jesuit argues that other insights of the Franciscan (e.g. the mystical, subjective-inclusive and historically progressive aspects) may open the way to recognising different intensities of inspiration, according to the stage of salvation history. "After all, if the People of God is Scripture's 'understanding subject,' itself subsisting in the diverse historical modalities of Israel and Church, it follows that the charism of inspiration, too, may know various intensities" (p. 89).

Taking over from Erich Przywara the principle of *analogia fidei*, Ratzinger excludes two types of "false directness" (German *falsche Direktheit*) in the approach to the Old Testament. On the one hand, it is unacceptable to allow for a Judaising exegesis granting the Old Testament only immanent-historical significance (this would be a denial of the dynamic of self-transcendence – *Selbsttranszendierung*). On the other hand, a naïve Christian immediacy that would deny the integrity of the Old Testament testimony[4] and thus also cross out a Christianity derived from an Old Testament source is unacceptable. It is therefore necessary, and this is what Ratzinger does after Przywara, to assume an "analogical unity" of Scripture. The Old Testament is already Christian, since the early Church could read it "Christianly," but it had to undergo a "Christological transformation" (a shift from *gramma* to *Pneuma*).

On the line of contact between Ratzinger's conception of the People of God (covenant people) as the inspired subject of Scripture and Przywara's conception of

4 The "own" character of the Old Testament, quoted by Pidel on a couple of occasions, is perhaps most forcefully pointed out by Christopher Seitz (cf. 2011).

analogous covenants, one could, according to Pidel, speak of an analogous model of inspiration in Ratzinger (the alternative models of Benoit and Tracy suggested a rather homogeneous inspiration). It is not only the canonisation of the Old Testament by the Church that makes it inspired (as Rahner's model seems to suggest), but on the other hand, the Church nevertheless determines the inspiration of the Old Testament by reading it in the Spirit of Christ. The analogical hermeneutic of Scripture (Ratzinger in his later years more readily writes of the *analogia scripturae*) is justified by Ratzinger's personalist metaphysics of history. "The *analogia fidei* comes to rest ever more decisively in the analogical unity of the faith of the People of God, understood as both Israel and Church" (p. 92).

2.3. Ratzinger on the Truth of Scripture

In the third chapter ("Ratzinger on the Truth of Scripture"), Pidel looks at the interpretative implications arising from Ratzinger's model of inspiration concerning the truthfulness of the Bible in its negative and positive aspects. In order to evaluate Ratzinger's model, he assesses it against the theological field and examines the ability to reconcile the basic traditional doctrinal claims with the picture of the Bible drawn from historical-critical exegesis and contemporary hermeneutics. This mainly involves reconciling the doctrine of inerrancy (*DV* 11) with historical, scientific and religious errors in the Bible. The Constitution on Divine Revelation does not so much reject the anti-modern tradition on the infallibility of Scripture as it reconciles the conviction of inerrancy with the historical-salvific perspective. The compromising statements, in which a certain tension is clearly made known, demand a theological elaboration.

Pidel is of the opinion that Ratzinger's solution is more inclusive, in terms of conciliar claims, than other solutions, in turn being more complex than them. In order to present them, it is necessary, firstly, to explain how Ratzinger changed the classical notion of authorial intention from the individual to the People of God; secondly, to explain the "tests" used by Ratzinger to discern the extent to which the People of God affirm the enduring significance of an idea materially contained in Scripture.

Ratzinger's reformulation of the truthfulness of Scripture was made possible by the compilation of two elements of a subject-inclusive approach to Scripture: the first is the existence of a historical intention transcending that of the individual authors, and the second is the fact that the communal bearer of this intention underwent epochal changes in history. Ratzinger, therefore, takes the position that determining what Scripture actually (and without error) teaches requires determining the intent of the communal author, and this is not possible without taking into account the multi-layered history of God's people. As a result, "Scripture itself, not the hagiographers considered severally, now stands as the grammatical

subject of the intention to affirm" (p. 110). The supra-historical unity of God's people is determined by the manifold relationship to Christ (prophetic anticipation, direct testimony, retrospective interpretation), so the interpreter must take into account the distinction and unity of the various 'layers' in order to find what Scripture actually affirms. "One can ascertain the *vere enuntiata* only by considering both the passage's historical position vis-à-vis Christ and the relevance of its contents for the Christian mystery" (p. 111). Scripture will be characterised by Christological unity: each part will derive its meaning from the whole, and the whole will take its meaning from the end, from Christ.

In the history of the People of God, two important points of decisive interpretation of Scripture can be distinguished: the reinterpretation of Israel carried out by Christ in the Holy Spirit, and the reinterpretation of Christ's establishment of the Kingdom of God carried out by early Christianity (as a result of which, as a decision made in the Spirit and complementing Christ's foundation, the Church of the Gentiles could come into being). Pidel reminds us that, according to Ratzinger, there is not only an Old Testament theology of the Old Testament, a New Testament theology of the Old Testament or a New Testament theology of the New Testament, but also an ecclesial theology of the New Testament that goes beyond its historical meaning (although not contradicting it). The difference between biblical and ecclesial theology is for Ratzinger nothing less than Tradition. "At the most global level, tradition encompasses nothing less than the 'entire mystery of Christ's presence' in history, the surplus of meaning in revelation that can never be exhaustively captured in writing" (p. 113). Therefore, every element of the word of God, from the Old and New Testaments, through ecclesial dogma or *sensus fidelium* plays a role in the expression of this fundamental mystery.

If it is necessary to arrive at what Scripture actually intends to say (*vere enuntiata*), this means that there is an orthodox (non-Bultmannian) demythologisation to distinguish between true claims and an accompanying non-binding worldview. The *case study* presented by Pidel in this context concerning the existence of the devil and alleged geocentrism (Galileo casus) is very interesting. Ratzinger, in his search for the actual truth conveyed by Scripture (demythologisation), applied, according to Pidel, four interrelated criteria ("*standards*"), largely reflecting Ratzinger's understanding of the layers and elements of Tradition. These criteria, which seek to distinguish the extent to which Scripture intends to affirm formally the ideas that are contained in it materially, include:

(1) The relationship between Old and New Testament (this corresponds to Old Testament theology and New Testament theology);
(2) The relationship to the New Testament portrait of Jesus (New Testament theology is invoked here);
(3) Reception into the faith of the Church (which in turn correlates with, but is not reducible to, New Testament theology of the Church);

(4) Compatibility with scientific knowledge (which in turn correlates with scholarly reason) (cf. pp. 116–17, 153–64).

Applying these criteria leads to the conclusion that belief in the devil positively passes the normativity test, while geocentrism does not. Of course, the above criteria are only approximations, since Tradition cannot be objectified all the way through and the faith of the Church circled with absolute clarity. For this reason, Ratzinger will make variations of the above tests, adapting them to each individual case: "the variable enumeration of these criteria suggests that Ratzinger often formulates them *ad hoc* and seldom expects them to function with algorithmic precision" (p. 121). As will become apparent especially in chapter four, "the normative interpretation of Scripture [...] remains more an art than a science" (p. 165).[5]

Pidel then goes on to show the positive implications of the fact of inspiration: in addition to the inerrancy of Scripture, there is an *inexhaustibility of meaning* that can manifest itself in the Church. "The same corporate model of inspiration also allows Ratzinger to account for the inexhaustible depth of meaning and irreducible multivalence ascribed to the Bible from the beginning of the Christian tradition" (p. 12). Ratzinger justifies the conviction present in pre-modern hermeneutics by the findings of modern exegesis and philosophical hermeneutics and by reference to *Dei Verbum*, which distinguishes between two interpretative horizons intended to form a synthesis, the human and the divine (the intention of the hagiographer and what God intended to express through them, the departure from the intention of the human author to the meaning of the canonical text itself, the reading in the Spirit), one related to the historical context, the other to the ecclesial-pneumatological. "[T]he Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation appears to entrust the theoretical integration of these hermeneutical poles to future generations of theologians" (p. 136).[6]

Ratzinger's statements lead one to conclude that, at least later in his theological career, he saw the proper reception of the interpretative principles distinguished in *DV* 12 (methodological bipolarity) in the traditional doctrine of the four senses of Scripture (or rather, as he preferred the term, the four dimensions of the word[7]),

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5 Cf. also p. 194: "The tests were only 'aids to judgment,' not algorithmic inputs generating unambiguous results."

6 The tension in the constitution was written about somewhat differently by, unquoted by Pidel but a member of the editorial board of the series in which the monograph under review appeared, William M. Wright IV. The American scholar argues that *DV* 12 speaks of inquiring into the intention of the hagiographer (attention becomes focused on the text as an expression of *intentio auctoris*), while on the other hand, *DV* 2 is dominated by a sacramental theology of history (focusing on the history of salvation as presented in the biblical word and bearing the mystery of God) – cf. Wright IV 2017, 83–85.

7 Cf. e.g. Ratzinger 2007, xx (Polish translation in: Ratzinger 2015, 125–26): "The four senses of Scripture are not individual meanings arrayed side by side, but dimensions of the one word that reaches beyond the moment."

to which he gives a new theoretical foundation (e.g. the findings of source criticism confirming the potentiality of the word, the role of *Wirkungsgeschichte* once the final version of the texts has been established, etc.). In Ratzinger's view, literal and spiritual sense organically intermingle and serve as an interpretative standard for each other. "Ratzinger's retooled fourfold sense, by aligning the literal sense with the historical-critical meaning and the spiritual senses with their effective-historical meaning, sets the two approaches in a mutually conditioning relationship" (p. 138). According to Pidel, a concrete illustration of the application of the fourfold sense can be found in the discovery of literal, allegorical, moral and anagogical dimensions in the biblical word about Mary.

3. Testing Ratzinger's New Paradigm

3.1. Jesus' Teaching on Marriage and Divorce

In chapter four ("The Ethically Normative Interpretation of Scripture: Jesus' Teaching on Divorce"), Pidel addressed "Ratzinger's evolving assessment of the permanently normative content of Jesus' teaching on divorce" (p. 12). Special attention was given to the so-called Matthew clause (cf. Matt 5:32; 19:9), for the interpretation of which it proves necessary to apply a wider range of interpretive tests than those mentioned above. Especially since on exegetical grounds it is not possible, as the contradictory results of research indicate, to come to a firm conclusion as to what the exception clause would consist of. And the Church obviously cannot construct doctrine and practice on uncertain exegetical hypotheses.

Pidel, although Ratzinger does not enumerate the tests he uses, identifies three of those previously mentioned: the relationship between the Old and New Testaments, the reception in ecclesial faith and Tradition, and the relationship to reason. In this case, natural reason is involved, which, however, in Ratzinger's opinion, will not be able to make a binding statement on the indissolubility of marriage. The criterion related to the New Testament portrait of Jesus cannot play its role, as it is not possible for the historian to arrive at conclusions that can be certain on this matter. The test of the history of effects and reception by the Church will prove decisive.

Pidel also notes Ratzinger's changing interpretations over time. This interesting and gripping chapter is virtually impossible to summarise because of the rich content and the numerous threads that determine the evolution of Ratzinger's position – while, importantly, the very method he employs is consistent and enduring, the conclusions changing depending on the data taken into account and the knowledge of the *Wirkungsgeschichte*. It is therefore worth going straight to the conclusions formulated by the author of *The Inspiration and Truth of Scripture*:

> Ratzinger also seems to imply that the Church's sacramental theology and marital canons evolved from the exception clauses in much the same way that the Marian doctrines evolved from the Marian pericopes in Luke – namely, by meditative relecture in a canonical context. In the end, Ratzinger concludes that the Matthean unchastity clauses do not intend to affirm a real exception to the principle of marital indissolubility. But they do typify an effort to clarify what the Lord means by marriage and divorce, a task that the Church must face anew in every age (p. 180).

What appears most interesting in Ratzinger's entire argument is to point out that Matthew's clauses were neither an editorial retouching of the early Church to invalidate the words of Jesus or to delimit them, nor a casuistic definition of an exception to the indissolubility of marriage. Any concession for pastoral reasons – which is what the scholar was leaning towards earlier – violates the *Grundform*, the "basic form" of marriage. Ratzinger, who is usually (rightly) associated with a defender of the identification of the Jesus of the Gospels with the real Jesus, in this case, having carefully traced the reception history of the words recorded by Matthew, "seems to feel obliged to open distance between the Matthean Jesus and the 'real' Jesus in order to close distance between the 'real' Jesus and the Catholic Church" (p. 177). The mature Ratzinger treats the passage in Matthew's Gospel under discussion as a so-called case-type (German *Falltypus*), a case-type of editorial addition to Jesus' *ipsissima verba*, which testifies, in Ratzinger's view, to the early Church's awareness of its competence and responsibility for the task of constantly probing the scope and limits of application of the Lord's utterance. In Ratzinger's view, the Matthean "scheme" is like a seed which, in the face of challenges, new experiences and sufferings, will only be opened (the role of *Wirkungsgeschichte*).

In other words, the πορνεία clause is a precedent not for a specific marital impediment, but for the process of defining such impediments and establishing them in specific cases. It was the Church that defined the normative scope of Jesus' call by recognising that only marriage as a sacrament between two baptised persons remains indissoluble. The same Church has at the same time indicated the conditions that must be fulfilled for a marriage to be considered valid. At the same time and above all, it is the Church's responsibility "to strengthen the faith of believers to the point where they can live the 'basic form' of marriage prescribed by Christ [...]" (p. 171).

Pidel regards Ratzinger's mature interpretation as meeting the criteria of internal consistency and historical reason.

3.2. Historicity of the Gospel Accounts of the Last Supper

Also in "The Historicity of the Gospels through the Lens of the Last Supper," the final chapter, Pidel evaluates Ratzinger's thought according to the double criterion of

doctrinal tradition and historical reason. The author begins by presenting additional doctrinal and rational criteria relevant to the question of the historicity of the Gospels and, more specifically, the Gospel accounts of the Last Supper. To this end, he briefly reviews the genesis and content of *DV* 19 and refers to Ratzinger's philosophical analysis of the historical-critical method. Together with the abovementioned four tests, this will provide a sufficient basis for the Bavarian theologian's judgement on the historicity of the Gospel accounts. Pidel maintains that, moving within an "elliptical logic," Ratzinger "continues to employ all four tests, even when he does not expressly enumerate them" (p. 206).

According to Ratzinger, exegetes have not sufficiently separated historical reason from scientistic assumptions (positivist and functionalist hermeneutics, imitation of the natural sciences, application of the evolutionary model to the field of history, etc.). Ratzinger advocates a hermeneutics of faith with a simultaneous responsible attitude towards historical reason. He is concerned with a hermeneutic of interdependence: on the one hand, solid historical arguments would concretise the "historicity" postulated in *DV* 19; on the other hand, a perspective of faith would allow the pseudo-scientific pretensions of historical reason to be dismissed. This viewpoint of faith is accessible, Ratzinger believes, through a supra-historical community – in a communal diachronic listening together with the disciples of Jesus, through which a certain knowledge of the true Jesus is attainable. Pidel takes the position that, just as in the case of the existence of the devil one had to distinguish between what in the Bible constitutes the revealed core and what is merely a peripheral accompanying worldview, something analogous occurs when one wants to distinguish between the historical "foundation" of the Gospels and the editorial elements introduced by the evangelists (various degrees of theological elaboration). Where the historical evidence compels him to recognise in the chronology a theological symbol, Ratzinger will opt for a symbolic chronology that is "realistic," that is, that has a greater *fundamentum in re*. Ratzinger thus remains faithful to the claims of the constitution, which states that the evangelists shared with us "the honest truth about Jesus (*vera et sincera de Iesu*)." (*DV* 19)

The scope of the study is reduced to the substantive historicity of the Last Supper: chronology and narrative content. Ratzinger opts for John's chronology, and sees a greater use of theological symbolism in the Synoptics. With regard to the first test, that is, the relationship between the Old and New Testaments, the Ratzinger notes both discontinuity (the Last Supper falls outside the meal on a different day in the Jewish calendar) and continuity (the Last Supper in the atmosphere of the Passover feast, as Jesus intended to celebrate a new and definitive Passover, bringing the old one to fulfilment). The *analogia fidei* therefore does not stand against John's historicity. When it comes to compatibility with the New Testament image of Christ (test two), Ratzinger emphasises that Jesus adhered to Jewish feasts, and that a Paschal Christology is present in the New Testament texts with a certainly historical basis. The third

test (reception in the faith of the Church) also indirectly confirms the historicity of the fourth Gospel (Last Supper on Thursday, Crucifixion on Friday).

As Pidel rightly concludes, Ratzinger's exegesis is characterised by the fact that he infers from the "world in front of the text" a proportional and probable historical cause. Consideration of the *Wirkungsgeschichte* allows Ratzinger to draw the bold conclusion that Mark, in presenting Jesus' death as a permanent Passover, presupposes a "sacramental transference" already lived out in the Church between the Passover mystery and the Last Supper. In other words, Mark anticipates future magisterial statements speaking of the Mass as the making present of the Sacrifice of Christ. The fact that this Sacrifice transcends spatial and temporal locality allows him to treat chronology more flexibly; the evangelist's conviction would be difficult to express in a mere historical narrative devoid of symbolic restructuring. In turn, this indirectly testifies in favour of the historicity of the narrative of John's Gospel. As does the fourth test, which takes into account the knowledge of scholars – Ratzinger recognises that those scholars are right who emphasise that the temple authorities of the time could not have chosen Passover as the time of the actions culminating in Jesus' execution.

As far as the words instituting the sacrament of the Eucharist are concerned, Ratzinger argues that the meal, the expiatory theology and the foundational intention derive from Jesus himself, even if the evangelists, in order to bring out the theological meaning, made some editing of the Lord's words. The Bavarian theologian is led to these conclusions, as Pidel again maintains, by the analogical application of the four tests. The relationship between the two testaments (test one) leads one to recognise the substantive historicity of Jesus' words spoken over bread and wine, and at the same time also explains the phenomenon of the redaction of these words. This is because the tradition of Jesus' words was adopted by the early Church, which remained conscious of its obligation to be faithful to the essentials, and at the same time, by relating the event of the Last Supper to the multi-layered history of the covenant and the books of the Old Testament, felt free to place emphasis differently. The broader picture of Christ in the New Testament (test two) would suffer if the Last Supper were "cut out" of the "critical biography" of Jesus. It is Jesus' words and actions in the Cenacle that reveal an original figure of unparalleled authority; only the Lord could express his sonship in such a way, while remaining faithful to the Law and the Prophets, and focus the Jewish feast on his person. The third test – the reception in the life and faith of the Church – also speaks in favour of the historicity of the institution of the Eucharist. The testimonies of Scripture (the accounts of Mark and Paul) indicate that the Eucharist is as old as Christianity itself, so it most likely originated with Christ. Variations on the words of Jesus can be explained by the fact that Jesus only established the essential elements of the new worship, and it was up to the community to work out the definitive liturgical form. In Eucharistic practice, the early Church experienced the same event in the horizon of different experiences.

In line with the fourth test, Ratzinger takes seriously the conclusions of scholars on the "world behind the text" (e.g. the possibility of correcting Jesus' course in the face of the rejection by the leaders of Israel), but at the same time subjects the aforementioned historical criticism to a critique, freeing it from the assumptions that accompany it. He formulates the inference that the Gospel narrative coincides with the historical foundation in what is essential.

Also in this case, Ratzinger's position is evaluated by Pidel on the basis of the standards of faith (the requirements flowing from the *Dei Verbum*) and reason (whose requirements are represented by exegetical criticism). Pidel defends Ratzinger against objections that he has weakened the credibility of the Gospels by introducing theological (or better: sacramental) symbolism into the chronology of the Synoptics (although at the same time he recognises that he does indeed allow for a higher ratio of theological symbolism to historical facts than some editors of *Dei Verbum*). Pidel also counters the accusations of exegetes that Ratzinger insufficiently takes into account intra-canonical diversity or even approaches Scripture in a pre-critical manner. The author of *The Inspiration and Truth of Scripture* writes that such exegetes themselves adopt a certain standard of evaluation, representing a historically conditioned form of rationality that also needs correction. It is interesting to note the comments of scholars cited by Pidel who recognise that contemporary university exegesis conforms to the demands of the post-denominational liberal state with its political order and educational bodies, and fits in with the privatisation of religion and the principle of *sola scriptura*.

„The second criticism often leveled against Ratzinger's book is inconsistent application of the historical-critical method" (p. 225). Although indeed, as Pidel admits, a certain inequality is apparent from the historical-critical point of view, it is always in line with the established and above-mentioned criteria. Pidel explains that different events have a different relation to history (it suffices to compare, for example, the Last Supper with the Resurrection), and also the *sensus Ecclesiae* is related to historical episodes in different ways. If Ratzinger does not point to a single measure for determining the distance between Jesus of Nazareth and the Jesus recounted in the Gospels, then "it is untrue that he lacks a consistent method for estimating this distance, however it may vary" (p. 227). For the Bavarian theologian, the historicity of the Gospels is real (*contra* ahistorical symbolism), but is not a form of photorealism. Until proven otherwise, he assumes historicity; in other cases, he favours symbolic narratives with the most realistic basis. In each case, he combines faith with reason.

3.3. Pidel on Ratzinger's Model and Its Three Achievements

In presenting Ratzinger's new paradigm against alternative models in the second and third chapters, Pidel made a comparison and demonstrated the superiority of Ratzinger's model. Reference is made here to his assessment by linking it to the three,

as he calls them, achievements left by Joseph Ratzinger in the epilogue. It seems to me that this method gives a better idea of the purpose of the monograph, and one can only express one's astonishment that this path was not followed by the author himself, who did not find it useful to collect all the findings in the final conclusion.

Pidel writes in the conclusion of chapter two that, although Ratzinger's model draws on the strengths of alternative models, it does not overlap with them and, by making corrections, achieves originality and greater adequacy in terms of conformity with doctrinal and exegetical data. "I argue that Ratzinger attains a better revelative adequacy overall. This remains true even though other authors excel at securing one or another doctrinal *desideratum*, and even though Ratzinger leaves certain premises speculatively underdeveloped" (p. 74). Among its many advantages, he counts: that the model affirms that it is God who "authors" both Testaments, albeit in different ways; that it allows Christianity to be seen as the fulfilment of Judaism and the intensification of Israel's faith, but does not introduce supersessionism and the nullification of that faith; and that it explains that the development taking place in the history of salvation is reflected in the pages of Scripture in the form of the analogous unity of the two Testaments. According to the author of *The Inspiration and Truth of Scripture*, the failure to explain how the People of God constitute a single (also in a diachronic sense) person who is the author of Scripture, and how it is that the personality of the Church should enjoy a capacity for action superior to that of any kind of juridical person, should be criticised. The reference to the "faith of the Church" is not a conclusion, but another assumption of Ratzinger, which he takes for granted so much that he does not even prove it.

In the last part of chapter three, Pidel makes a comparative assessment – juxtaposing Ratzinger's thought with the views of Benoit, Rahner and Tracy and finding it to be a more adequate attempt at integrating the data than those approaches. The scholar acknowledges that "[t]hough Ratzinger surely did not speak the last word on the truth of Scripture, he spoke perhaps the least inadequate word lately" (p. 102). Among the inadequacies of Ratzinger's model, the author of the reviewed book includes the lack of distinction between organic and inorganic doctrinal development.

In relation to Benoit's model (*sensus plenior* as a sense hidden from human authors), Ratzinger's model better explains how the senses of Scripture develop from the literal sense in the People of God as the "understanding subject," without the need to look for hidden ideas supposedly present in the word from the beginning. The Bavarian theologian also pays more attention than Rahner did to the changing structure of salvation history; the German Jesuit did not sufficiently explain how a single author would encompass the universal theology of the entire Church. Nor did Rahner provide any criteria for determining the correlation between the content of a particular passus and the totality, in light of which the passage could be without error. Not only did Ratzinger elaborate the four tests, but he also took into account the diachronic dimension in the different relationship to Christ at the stage of the two

covenants. By emphasising the *Wirkungsgeschichte*, Ratzinger does not make the mistake made by Tracy, in whose model the interpretive "controls" of *DV* 11 and 12 were not sufficiently taken into account. Ratzinger is also far from claiming that Scripture offers no authoritative and error-free propositional claims. Pidel writes that "Ratzinger offers more resources for clarifying both how Scripture teaches truth 'without error' and how its meaning evolves in continuity with its original sense" (p. 143).

As far as Ratzinger's achievements listed in the epilogue are concerned, first, Pidel places Ratzinger's balance in biblical interpretation between a priori and a posteriori aspects. Second, the argumentation for the superiority of an ecclesial-historical hermeneutic aware of epistemological limitations deserves recognition. It is only in the third place that Pidel points to a new paradigm for understanding biblical inspiration and the truth (inerrancy) of Scripture that remains faithful to the doctrinal tradition. To the reader's surprise, the following scholars, with whose work Ratzinger's thought is compared, appear in this final section of the monograph. They are: Raymond E. Brown and Romano Guardini (first achievement); Alasdair MacIntyre (second achievement); John H. Newman (third achievement).

Ratzinger, like Brown, criticises the purely deductive (a priori) approach to determining the extent of the inerrancy of inspired writings, although Ratzinger's conclusions differ from those drawn by Brown. In this, the Bavarian theologian remains indebted to Romano Guardini postulating a hermeneutical circle (*Denkzirkel*), especially in thinking about faith and revelation. Ratzinger's model of inerrancy presupposes an approach that is both deductive and inductive – a double counterpoint: on the one hand, Scripture participates in unchanging divine truth, on the other, it reflects the signs of the cultural and scientific limitations of human authors. Ratzinger transfers, as already mentioned, the infallible intention from the level of the individual author to that of the People of God. His Bonaventurian-ecclesial model takes into account both enduring doctrinal claims and the results of convincing historical research. It is interesting that of the theologians with whose inquiries Pidel compared Ratzinger's model, only Benoit was an exegete, but it was his model that proved to be the most a priori.

As far as the Bonaventurian-ecclesial hermeneutic is concerned, Pidel raises the question of whether Ratzinger can acknowledge its superiority without falling into the error of selecting such data that confirm earlier hypotheses (the so-called self-confirming bias). In response, a researcher of Ratzinger's thought suggests comparing Ratzinger's argumentation with that of Alasdair MacIntyre on the topic of the primacy of Aristotelian-Thomistic virtue ethics, which cannot be proven directly, but can possibly be proven indirectly, e.g. by pointing to the inability of alternatives to provide verifiable moral standards. In Pidel's view, analogously, Ratzinger is unable to demonstrate the superiority of his method of interpretation in a way that would make it acceptable to historical criticism. However, he can – and does – propose a model of a hermeneutic of faith that corresponds to historical reason, which

"both yields a stable and coherent way of interpreting Scripture and explains why the alternative, purely historical 'cognitive posture' fails to produce lasting consensus" (p. 242).

The third achievement, of developing a new paradigm in the theology of inspiration, is the result of reformulating Bonaventure's insights and, so Pidel argues, synthesising valuable elements of the concepts of Benoit, Rahner and Tracy. This allowed Ratzinger to draw up a model that was admittedly imperfect, but better able to take into account the doctrinal "pegs" established by successive Councils and open to refinement. This model has not eliminated all tensions, but it can provide a model for further refinement. "I say *preliminary* synthesis because Ratzinger's theology of Scripture itself remains open to further development and clarification. But I nevertheless say preliminary *synthesis* because Ratzinger has brought the data of faith and reason into a stable configuration" – one can read on the penultimate page of the monograph (p. 245). Our author concludes by proposing yet another way of thinking about Ratzinger's paradigm shift, which would be to take Newman's main ideas and give them the expected nuanced and metaphysical (especially Christological) integration. According to Pidel, the Bavarian theologian is close to Newman's intuition of the possibility of God uttering the whole of Scripture "over again" lending it an inspired sense. In Ratzinger's view, such a possibility is provided by Christ and the historical organ of God's people, through whom God can do so.

4. A Sympathetic and Critical Evaluation of Pidel's Study

In my habilitation thesis, I wrote that "in Ratzinger's case, one can only speak of an outline of the concept of inspiration," and while it is difficult to find in Ratzinger a certain type of treatise on inspiration or even a definition of inspiration, "there are, instead, elements which, properly developed, can make an important contribution to the doctrine of inspiration." (Zatwardnicki 2022, 37–38)[8] I also noted that the question of inspiration was explored by Ratzinger "piecemeal and is scattered in many places." (Zatwardnicki 2022, 23) For this reason, Aaron Pidel's effort must be appreciated, as he has managed to create from these reflections, scattered here and there by the future Pope Benedict XVI, a coherent whole that can constitute a preliminary synthesis of the doctrine of Scripture in a new paradigm. To my delight, on many issues his reading of Ratzinger's legacy coincides with mine, which is probably due to Ratzinger's ability to expound his argument in a way that the reader can understand. The monograph *The Inspiration and Truth of Scripture*, however, is more than a mere

8 I characterise the elements that make up Ratzinger's doctrine of inspiration in Zatwardnicki 2022, 280–310.

presentation of Ratzinger's views; indeed, even at this level of recapitulation of his thought, in certain respects (e.g. theological complexity or contextualisation in dialogue with other theologians) it far surpasses the conclusions of my study.

What deserves to be emphasised is the comprehensiveness of the study, the diachronic reading of Ratzinger's legacy (particularly evident in chapter four), which provides insight into the evolution of his views or the difference in his emphasis at different stages of his theological development, and above all the comparative nature of the author's work. The monograph reads very well, it is written in an understandable way and at the same time at a high academic level. The structure of the work is clear, although some issues are questionable. First, why do names appear in the epilogue other than those with which the author previously contrasted Ratzinger? The conclusion should collect the main findings of the research, not introduce new threads. Second, the comparative approach makes itself known in different ways in the structure: in chapter two, the reader is offered a comparison of Ratzinger with Benoit, Rahner and Tracy in the body of the chapter, while in the following chapter, in successive parts of material, Pidel juxtaposes more clearly Ratzinger's views with each under separate headings. In this way, the starting comparative idea has largely lost its appeal in the course of implementation. I also have my doubts that all the ideas are in the right place, e.g. should not the triadic authorship of Scripture be discussed in chapter two instead of chapter three?

Each new chapter begins with a brief reminder of the conclusions of the previous one, the thought is carried through consistently. The only detriment is that the enjoyment of reading is spoilt by presentations of the conclusions of the research in chapter introductions, which should only be at the end. In this way, the author's initial sympathies towards Ratzinger are compounded by a sense of overemphasising the supremacy of his theology over the views of other scholars.

My study of Ratzinger's work allows me to point out some shortcomings of Pidel's publication. Some issues did not attract attention strongly enough: for example, Ratzinger's exploration of the debates and statements of the Council of Trent, which, like the study of Bonaventure's legacy, influenced the theology of the word of God of the Bavarian theologian. I have the impression that the author of the monograph under review has given too little emphasis to the kenotic dimension of the action of the revealing and speaking word of God – a motif clearly present in Ratzinger's work.[9] Pidel's right noting of Ratzinger's debt to Bonaventure, however, seems to me to be overstated. At many points, Ratzinger as the scholar of the Seraphic Doctor's

9 Cf. e.g. Ratzinger 2016, 292–93 (English translation: Wicks 2008, 274–75; German original in: Wicks 2008, 300); Ratzinger 2018, 627: "it is in the human authors that one must see not so much an anticipation as a prefiguration of the figure of Christ. They belong to the future Body of Christ and only in this way are they his voice; therefore only in the light of the Christ who has come can they be correctly interpreted and understood. [...] The sacred authors belong to the future Body of Christ; with them the Incarnation begins, the Logos becomes flesh."

legacy does with his thought what the Franciscan did with the views of Joachim of Fiore: he accepts what is possible and removes what is unacceptable (cf. Zatwardnicki 2023a, 315). Pidel finds Bonaventure's influence even where Ratzinger would have reached the same conclusions without the medieval thinker (e.g. on the question of the analogy between the inspiration of the Old and New Testaments, which I find it really difficult to see as possible to derive from Bonaventure's juxtaposition of Israel and the Church). I also think that Pidel's criticism of Ratzinger's failure to attempt to explain how the People of God constitute a single (also in the diachronic sense) author of Scripture should be nuanced. Drawing on Ratzinger's entire oeuvre (especially the sacramental ecclesiology according to which it is possible to speak of the Body of Christ, which in turn can be seen in diachronic unity with the People of God of the Old Testament) could shed light on what may not have found expression explicitly in Ratzinger's doctrine of Scripture.

Above all, the reading of Ratzinger's model in juxtaposition with *Dei Verbum* by Pidel – who, incidentally, explicitly admits in the introduction that he reads Ratzinger not uncritically, but with undisguised sympathy – goes in the opposite direction to mine. According to the author of *The Inspiration and Truth of Scripture*, it is Ratzinger who is supposed to have made such an adequate theological elaboration of the doctrinal data contained in *Dei Verbum* that – although this is not explicitly stated – the conciliar document should henceforth be read in the light of Ratzinger's theology. And in any case, that Ratzinger's model is precisely what the theological elaboration of the doctrinal data of the Council was waiting for. I, on the other hand, believe that while Ratzinger allows the reader to catch some intuitions not sharply enough articulated as a result of the Council's compromises in the document itself, it is, after all, the content of the Constitution on Divine Revelation that is binding, and it is in the light of this that Ratzinger should be read, perhaps tempering some overly bold theses of the Bavarian theologian.[10]

While Pidel admits that shifting the emphasis from individual authorship to the authorship of the People of God would demand a more in-depth elaboration, which Ratzinger does not provide, he also recognises that his thought is part

10 Cf. Zatwardnicki 2023a, 335: "Ratzinger viewed the statements of Vatican II from the perspective of a relecture of the previous statements of the Magisterium. He himself, however, seems to have carried out a 'rereading of the rereading.' An examination of Ratzinger's work leads to the conclusion that most of his theses are more radical than the statements of the Council fathers. In this way, bearing in mind that the conciliar documents are always the fruit of a certain compromise, Ratzinger's theology makes it possible to grasp that orientation of *Dei Verbum* which, without it, might have escaped our attention. In this sense, Ratzinger would play for us a similar role to that played for Ratzinger by Cardinal Cervini, whose speeches during the Council of Trent, as viewed by our researcher, make it possible to grasp the main lines of reasoning of the Tridentinum fathers of the significant conciliar declaration. If Ratzinger enables a better understanding of the position of the Vaticanum Secundum, in turn, his speeches should nevertheless be seen – and therefore tempered – from the perspective of the final version of the documents. Especially since Ratzinger himself called for the hermeneutics of the Council not to be sought outside the letter of the texts."

of the document's openness to this type of elaboration. Nonetheless, the question that still troubles me is "Is such a shift reconcilable with the traditional teaching on inspiration and even with the statements of the Constitution on Divine Revelation itself?" And further: "But is it only the relativisation of human singular authorship that opens the field to the activity of the Holy Spirit? [...] At some point, after all, the points of his particular influence on individuals must be identified anyway." (Zatwardnicki 2023a, 335) Similarly, it is not entirely convincing in Ratzinger how the People of God of the Old Covenant would hold primacy in the matter of inspiration over the hagiographer himself (what about 2 Pet 1:21?), since it was only in the New Covenant that the Spirit was poured out on all flesh becoming the Body of Christ (cf. Zatwardnicki 2023a, 336). Perhaps a greater reserve would be called for by the aporia that the canonical rank is only held by the whole of Scripture canonised by the Church over individual writings – which is true in itself, but which nevertheless seems to unduly relativise the importance of individual writings (cf. Zatwardnicki 2023a, 337).

The author of *The Inspiration and Truth of Scripture* rightly demonstrates that Ratzinger's proposal relatively better meets the need for a "new paradigm" in the theology of Scripture and does justice to the demands of faith and reason, but wrongly in my view argues that Ratzinger has made use of the strengths of alternative models (cf. e.g. pp. 52, 97 and esp. 242[11]) – this would suggest that he benefited from the thought of those scholars with whose views Pidel juxtaposed Ratzinger. The very choice of such and not other representatives of the different approaches to the theology of the Word of God is defensible, but a somewhat biased "competition" is conducted here for the model that best corresponds to the doctrinal data of *Dei Verbum*, since we know of Ratzinger's influence on the document and can therefore assume a high degree of convergence between the content of the document and the scholar's work in advance (after all, Pidel himself writes on pp. 218–19: "But we should not forget that Ratzinger himself was a redactor of *Dei Verbum*"). At times, the promoter and at the same time the defender of Ratzinger's theology introduces new threads in order to justify a verdict in favour of the one we know from the outset that he will "prevail" (this is the case, for example, in chapter two).

Perhaps this remark applies to all theological geniuses, but it seemed to me, as a reader of Ratzinger's recapitulated arguments, that his theology of the word of God is so sophisticated, multifaceted and nuanced (more art than science, as Pidel admits in the context of the tests applied by the Bavarian theologian in interpreting Scripture) that only Ratzinger himself could say what should be read from Scripture and in what way. For it is also only he who would be able to apply the tests of

11 "He combined elements of Rahner and Benoit by appealing to the intention not of individual authors but of the People of God. He combined elements of Rahner and Tracy by explaining Scripture's growth in meaning as a function of its ongoing reception by the People of God."

interpretation, adapting them to the problem at hand (e.g. The reference to reason in the case of the Matthew clause suddenly becomes a reference to natural reason – are these surely the same criterion?). In spite of this, Pidel is to be commended for pointing out what, for example, the undersigned completely missed – that it is indeed possible to distinguish certain fixed tests (criteria) in Ratzinger's research. I think that many a theologian will benefit from this valuable contribution, both in understanding Ratzinger's argumentation and in interpreting Scripture and justifying Catholic doctrine.

I appreciate that Ratzinger's dubious (in my opinion erroneous) view of a certain conviction of Thomas Aquinas has also not escaped the attention of our conscientious scholar. The Bavarian theologian sees a devaluation of the allegorical sense in Aquinas' claim that theological argumentation can only proceed from the literal sense. Pidel is conscious to criticise this assessment and notes that such an opinion of Ratzinger's stems from his anachronistic identification of the literal sense with the historical-critical sense (p. 135), whereas it is known, after all, that the Common Doctor understood literal sense differently.[12] Pidel himself, however, has not escaped some mistakes either. He claims, for example, that the *Dei Verbum* constitution postulates the priority of Scripture over the teaching of the Magisterium (cf. p. 19, nn. 14, 74, 81 and p. 83 – in the latter case, it would be Ratzinger who would subordinate the Magisterium and dogma to Scripture), whereas the document refers to the primacy of the word of God (rather than the written word of God).[13]

I also question the treatment of Ratzinger's Mariology as an illustration for his application of the fourfold sense. It would have been better here to refer again to Ratzinger's tests and to point to the role of the dynamically understood Tradition of the Church[14] (the reception of revelation, also through the *sensus fidei*[15]) and the typological interpretation based on the unity of the two testaments. In Ratzinger's

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12 To demonstrate this, just this one sentence from the *Summa Theologiae* (*ST* I, q. 1, a. 10, resp.) should suffice: "Since the literal sense is that which the author intends, and since the author of Holy Writ is God, Who by one act comprehends all things by His intellect, it is not unfitting, as Augustine says (*Confess* xii), if, even according to the literal sense, one word in Holy Writ should have several senses" (English quoted from: https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~ST.I.Q1.A10; Polish translation: Tomasz z Akwinu 2023, 38).

13 This distinction indicated in *Dei Verbum* by the Council Fathers between the word of God and the written word of God was clearly pointed out by the long-time secretary of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, Albert Vanhoye (cf. 2008, 106–7).

14 Cf. Ratzinger 2016, 145; Wicks 2008, 274–75; Ratzinger and Messori 1985, 107 (Polish translation: Ratzinger and Messori 1986, 90–91): "The *four* Marian dogmas have their clear foundation in Sacred Scripture. But it is there like a seed that grows and bears fruit in the life of tradition just as it finds expression in the liturgy, in the perception of the believing people and in the reflection of theology guided by the Magisterium." Cf. also Szymik 2015, 227.

15 Cf. Ratzinger 1993, 105 (cf. Ratzinger 2018, 610): "The development of dogma in the last 150 years is a clear index of how closely these three elements hang together: the dogmas of 1854, 1870 and 1950 became possible because the *sensus fidei* had discovered them, while the Magisterium and theology followed its lead and tried slowly to catch up with it."

view, Marian dogmas "can become visible only to a mode of perception that accepts this unity, i.e., within a perspective which comprehends and makes its own the 'typological' interpretation […]."[16] The Bavarian theologian even claimed, as I pointed out in my article, that "this will not be a Mariology constructed piece by piece out of its New Testament components; instead, I shall propose immediately the three great Marian dogmas: their biblical foundations will emerge almost spontaneously to the reflective spirit."[17]

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16 Ratzinger 1983, 32 (Polish translation: Ratzinger 2002, 25–26). Ratzinger viewed "Old and New Testaments in an interior unity of promise and fulfillment. As a form of interpretation typology includes analogy, similarity in dissimilarity, unity in diversity" (Ratzinger 1983, 63 [Polish translation: Ratzinger 2002, 42–43]). Cf. Zatwardnicki 2023b, 125, 131.

17 Cf. Ratzinger 1983, 33 (Polish translation: Ratzinger 2002, 26); Zatwardnicki 2023b, 125.

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