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God's "Inspired and Inspiring" Word in Acts 1:15–26

Słowo Boże „natchnione i inspirujące” w Dz 1,15–26

Abstract. Published in 2014, the Pontifical Biblical Commission's document *The Inspiration and Truth of Sacred Scripture* mentions the “inspired and inspiring” (*inspirato e ispirante*) character of biblical texts. The use of this expression clearly indicates that the inspiring character of the Bible remains an essential effect of its inspiration. The aim of this article is to illustrate the above truth in light of the story of the reconstitution of the Twelve after Judas's betrayal (Acts 1:15–26). The two scriptural references to the Old Testament's Book of Psalms (69:25 and 109:8) found in that passage and the way in which Luke proposes to read them perfectly demonstrate not only the inspiration of the word of God, but also its inspiring character, which should not be considered solely in terms of creative inspiration or from the perspective of the reception history of the text. The Holy Spirit speaks to the Church and through the Church. A community that is open to the Spirit's presence and power listens to the word of God and accepts it together with the interpretation that actualizes it as being true, that is, as corresponding appropriately to the intention of God who spoke it to humanity, containing dynamic content that is fully coherent with God's demands and humankind's aspirations, and bearing the whole newness of Christ and being capable of communicating it to believers. In this way, the word of God “breathes the Spirit” so that the community comes to know God's will and engages lovingly in its fulfillment.

Streszczenie. Dokument Papieskiej Komisji Biblijnej „Natchnienie i prawda Pisma Świętego”, wydany w 2014 roku, wspomina o „natchnionym i inspirującym” (*inspirato e ispirante*) charakterze tekstów biblijnych. Użyte wyrażenie jednoznacznie wskazuje, że inspirujący charakter Biblii pozostaje istotnym efektem jej natchnienia. Tematem artykułu jest zilustrowanie powyższej prawdy w świetle opowiadania o uzupełnieniu grona Dwunastu po zdradzie Judasza (Dz 1,15–26). Znajdujące się tam dwa odniesienia skrypturystyczne do starotestamentowej Księgi Psalmów (69,26 oraz 109,8) oraz sposób ich odczytania zaproponowany przez Łukasza doskonale ilustrują prawdę nie tylko o natchnieniu słowa Bożego, ale także o jego inspirującym charakterze, którego nie należy ograniczać wyłącznie do inspiracji twórczej czy historii oddziaływania tekstu. Duch Święty mówi do Kościoła i przez Kościół. Wspólnota otwarta na obecność

Ducha i Jego moc słucha i przyjmuje słowo Boże, a także interpretację aktualizującą je jako słowo prawdziwe, to znaczy odpowiadające adekwatnie intencji Boga, który je wypowiedział do człowieka, zawierające dynamiczną treść, w pełni koherentną z wymaganiami Boga i aspiracjami człowieka, niosące całą nowość Chrystusa i będące zdolnymi do komunikowania jej wierzącym. W ten sposób słowo Boże „tchnie Duchem”, dzięki czemu wspólnota poznaje wolę Boga oraz angażuje się w jej wypełnianie z miłością.

Keywords: inspiration, inspired, inspiring, Acts of the Apostles, interpretation, actualization.

Słowa kluczowe: natchnienie, natchniony, inspirujący, Dzieje Apostolskie, interpretacja, aktualizacja.

Published in 2014, the Pontifical Biblical Commission's document *The Inspiration and Truth of Sacred Scripture* mentions the “inspired and inspiring” (*inspirato e ispirante*) character of biblical texts four times: twice with reference to the Old Testament (Pontifical Biblical Commission 2014, 21, 51) and twice with regard to the New Testament, especially to the Book of Revelation (Pontifical Biblical Commission 2014, 50, 116). The fact that the expression “inspired and inspiring” is used three times to describe biblical texts (Pontifical Biblical Commission 2014, 21, 50, 51) clearly indicates that their inspiring character is an essential effect of their inspiration (see O'Collins 2018, 195–196).¹ This, however, gives rise to a legitimate question: How should one understand the “inspiring character” of the Bible? Does this phrase refer to some kind of “creative inspiration” (Witczyk 2020, 27)² that makes the sacred texts of the Old and New Testaments a “great code for cultures” (Benedict XVI 2010, n. 110) because “down the centuries the

¹ The author introduces a distinction between inspiration seen as a “cause” and inspiration interpreted in terms of “effects,” or, in other words, between the action of the Holy Spirit which produces inspiration and the “results” of that action, that is, the reception history of the text (*Wirkungsgeschichte*). See Zatwardnicki 2022, 268–269.

² See also Jelonek 2009, 6. The biblical scholar makes the point that biblical inspiration cannot be “equated with inspiration in the mental sphere, which has produced great works of poetry, painting, music, and so on.” Therefore, the inspiring character of the Bible that is inextricably linked with its inspiration must not be interpreted solely in terms of creative inspiration that manifests itself in various forms of human culture. Nonetheless, as Hareźga (2021) observes, “the presence of the Bible in the world's culture ultimately leads to the conclusion that it is a book which fascinates readers with its remarkability and uniqueness as a work of divine and human origin, a work that responds to humankind's most funda-

word of God has inspired different cultures, giving rise to fundamental moral values, outstanding expressions of art and exemplary life-styles" (Benedict XVI 2010, n. 109) and because "the relationship between the word of God and culture has found expression in many areas, especially in the arts" (Benedict XVI 2010, n. 112)? The Pontifical Biblical Commission's document itself suggests how the inspiring role of the words of the Bible should be understood: these words are capable of "illuminating and encouraging the understanding and passion [*passione*] of believers" (Pontifical Biblical Commission 2014, 21), and when they are "duly received, [they] become inspirational in the one who welcomes them and implant the ever new and renewing Christ, of whom they are bearers" (Pontifical Biblical Commission 2014, 117). Another important observation is that the Old Testament, especially when it is referenced in the New Testament, "becomes inspired and inspiring [*ispirato e ispirante*] when read in Christological terms" (Pontifical Biblical Commission 2014, 51).

The aim of this article is to illustrate the above truths in light of a specific biblical text from the Acts of the Apostles that treats of the reconstitution of the Twelve after Judas's betrayal (1:15–26). The narrative opens with the first address of the Apostle Peter (Acts 1:15–22), which is an articulate testimony to Luke's understanding of the Old Testament as the inspired word that, "beginning with Moses and all the Prophets" (Luke 24:27),³ has not only spoken of Christ but also acted as "His bearer," which is why it has become inspiring for the community of Jesus's disciples. I would like to begin by taking note of the literary context of the pericope and then proceed to find certain important features in the text that point to the inspired and inspiring character of God's word.

1. Between the Ascension and Pentecost

During their last meeting with the Risen Christ, the apostles were explicitly ordered not to depart from Jerusalem (Acts 1:4) but instead to await the fulfillment of the "promise of the Father" (1:4), that is, being baptized with the Holy Spirit (1:5). Furthermore, Jesus assured them that they would receive the power of the

mental existential and philosophical-theological questions," which is why one may speak of an "inspirational role of Sacred Scripture in human culture" (264).

³ This and all subsequent quotations are from the English Standard Version of the Holy Bible.

Holy Spirit who was to come upon them and that they would thus become His “witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).⁴ After the Ascension (Acts 1:9–11), heeding the Lord’s command, the apostles returned to the city and stayed together, devoting themselves to prayer in anticipation of the fulfillment of God’s promise (1:12–14). However, before he proceeds to recount how that promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1–13), Luke⁵ tells us about the one event that took place between Jesus’s Ascension and the sending of the Holy Spirit.⁶ The passage in question is the pericope on the reconstitution of the Twelve (the *narratio* in Acts 1:23–26) preceded by the Apostle Peter’s speech (the *oratio* in Acts 1:16–22). As one reads the Acts, it becomes quite evident how important that moment is in the lives of the community of Jerusalem and of the Apostle Peter himself.⁷ Staying true to Christ’s command, the community awaits the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, but it is incomplete and inconsistent with its Founder’s design (Luke 6:14–16) because one of the apostles is missing (Acts 1:13–14). As Fausti (2015) aptly notes, “awaiting the Spirit, they are preparing their hearts by ‘devoting’ ‘themselves’ ‘with one accord’ ‘to prayer.’ They are also preparing the body: there are twelve of them except one. Twelve patriarchs, twelve tribes, twelve pillars of the new temple that must be strengthened” (68). Therefore, a way out of this difficult situation has to be found.

⁴ Many commentators use this verse as a basis for the internal division of the book. This division emphasizes the role of the apostles in proclaiming the Good News across the different geographical regions: after presenting the activity and growth of the Church in Jerusalem (Acts 1:6–5:42), the book of Acts recounts the early missionary work and the proclamation of the Gospel in Samaria and Caesarea Maritima (6:1–12:25), and then in Antioch, whence Saul/Paul embarks on his missionary journeys (13:1–21:17) that finally lead him to Rome (21:17–28:31), the central hub of the world at the time (see Blajer 2022, 10).

⁵ It is accepted in accordance with the Tradition that the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles were written by one author named Luke.

⁶ For a discussion of how the pericope fits in the immediate and wider contexts, see Styra 1997, 89–93. The author notes that the account of the reconstitution of the Twelve was edited by Luke “in order to obtain a logical sequence of events between Jesus’s time and the present time of the Church so that his two books could be joined into a whole” (Styra 1997, 93).

⁷ Some biblical scholars believe that the Acts of the Apostles comprises two major parts: the first part is devoted to Peter’s activity (1:6–12:24), and the second one to Paul’s (13:1–28:31). This alternative approach has many supporters, especially due to fact that it points to similarities in the portrayal of the two apostles’ endeavors (see Blajer 2022, 10–11).

The pericope begins with an introductory verse (Acts 1:15) which tells the reader that Peter spoke to Christians, referred to characteristically as “brothers,” who were gathered in a group of “about 120” persons (literally: “names”⁸). Although Luke mentions “about 120” (ὡσεὶ ἑκατὸν εἴκοσι) disciples, it cannot be ruled out that this number has a symbolic significance, referring first to the twelve tribes of Israel (see Fausti 2015, 72) and then to the Twelve Apostles, who are seen as a sign of the renewed Israel promised by Jesus (Luke 22:29) (see Drzewiecka 2012, 70).⁹ In this manner, the author would reemphasize the absolute necessity of reconstructing the body of the apostles (see Pesch 1992, 99), and the presence of “about 120” followers of Jesus would constitute a sufficient quorum to make such an important decision (see Klinkowski 2007, 291).

Peter’s direct speech (*oratio*) that opens the pericope (Acts 1:16–22) comprises three parts:¹⁰ (1) an extended introduction (1:16–19) that explains the incompleteness of the body of the apostles and emphasizes the fact that Judas’s fate was a fulfillment of the prophecies (1:16), and also offers a characterization of Judas as an apostle (1:17), an account of his fate, that is, his purchase of land and tragic death (1:18), and an etiology of the name “Akeldama” (1:19);¹¹ (2) two scriptural arguments taken from the Book of Psalms (1:20); and (3) a summary of the requirements to be met by a candidate for apostleship (1:21–22).

The second part of the pericope is the narrative (*narratio*) of the reconstitution of the Twelve, which also comprises three parts: (1) an account of the presentation of the two candidates (Acts 1:23); (2) a quotation from the communal

⁸ The use of the noun “name” in the sense of “person” in Greek literature is discussed by Fitzmyer (1998, 222).

⁹ According to Kurz (2013, 59), this is a reference not only to the twelve tribes of Israel, but also to the *minyān*, that is, the quorum of ten men required to begin a prayer. In the author’s words, “the 120 members of the Christian community at prayer may symbolize a quorum of all twelve tribes of a restored Israel.”

¹⁰ Kucicki (2018, 259, footnote 29) divides Peter’s speech into two major parts. The first one focuses on Judas (Acts 1:16–20), and the second one on the need to reconstitute the Twelve (1:20–22). The first part is structured as follows:

A—Judas’s fate foretold by David (1:16);

B—Judas’s act (1:17);

B’—Judas’s fate (1:18–19); and

A’—Judas’s fate foretold by David (1:20).

¹¹ Some commentators treat Acts 1:18–19 as a digression, which was a common feature in ancient literature. See Keener 2000, 238.

prayer directed to the Lord (1:24–25); and (3) a narrative of the casting of the lots and the enrollment of Matthias as one of the Twelve (1:26).¹²

In the context of this discussion, particular attention should be paid to the first part of the pericope, that is, Peter's speech, which contains direct references to the inspired and inspiring character of biblical texts.

2. Scripture Inspired by the Prophetic Words of the Holy Spirit

Peter begins his speech by addressing his audience as “brothers” (ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί) in faith. The idiom used in this passage, characteristic of Luke's style, should not be interpreted to mean that only men were listening to Peter's address (see Pesch 1992, 100). The term has a broader meaning and does not exclude women, especially in the context of Acts 1:14, where their presence is explicitly mentioned. Named first in the list of the apostles (Acts 1:13; see Klinkowski 2007, 289), acting in the spirit of responsibility for the community, and undertaking the mission to strengthen his brothers in faith (Luke 22:32) entrusted to him by Christ Himself (Kurz 2013, 60), Peter explains the painful and, presumably, partly incomprehensible fate of the Apostle Judas as the necessary fulfillment of Scripture: “Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus” (Acts 1:16, ἔδει πληρωθῆναι τὴν γραφὴν ἣν προεῖπεν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον διὰ στόματος Δαυὶδ περὶ Ἰούδα τοῦ γενομένου ὁδηγοῦ τοῖς συλλαβοῦσιν Ἰησοῦν).

Peter's speech begins with a verb in the imperfective aspect (ἔδει) followed by an aorist passive infinitive (πληρωθῆναι), a combination which indicates that it was necessary for the prophecy to be fulfilled and that it was indeed fulfilled. In Luke's writings, the impersonal form δεῖ often expresses the immutability of God's will and the fulfillment of specific passages from Sacred Scripture (Luke 22:37; 24:26,44; Acts 17:3). Judas's fate, and in particular his betrayal and tragic death, are therefore consistent with God's will and with Scripture (τὴν γραφὴν).¹³

¹² For a more detailed discussion of the macrostructure and microstructure of the pericope, see Styra 1997, 96–97.

¹³ The fact that God's plan foresaw Judas's fate does not entail any form of predestination, nor does it reduce Judas's personal accountability for his actions. See Peterson 2009, 122–124; Keener 2012, 756; Kurz 2013, 59.

In other words, they are inscribed in God's plan of salvation equally with other events of the Passion of Christ (see Linke 2008, 167). The use of the singular noun "Scripture" may imply a reference to a specific biblical passage, such as that from Psalm 69:25 or that from Psalm 109:8 subsequently quoted in Acts 1:20. Alternatively, it may refer to the first scriptural argument only, that is, to Psalm 69:25, since the "Scripture" prophesying the tragic fate of Judas has already been fulfilled, whereas the passage from Psalm 109:8 that follows, ordaining the appointment of Judas's successor, is yet to be fulfilled.¹⁴

Peter makes it clear whence "Scripture" takes the power of prophecy that carries with itself the necessity of being fulfilled: it is what "the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand" (προεἶπεν τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον). Here, Luke uses the verb προλέγω, which means "to announce beforehand," "foretell," or "predict." Since two specific quotations from the Book of Psalms are involved, the author adds that this took place in the past (προεἶπεν) "by the mouth of David" (διὰ στόματος Δαυίδ) because the authorship of the Psalter was traditionally attributed to King David (Luke 20:42,44; Acts 2:25). A similar introductory formula (ὁ τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου στόματος Δαυίδ παιδός σου εἰπών) can be found in Acts 4:25 as part of a communal prayer addressed to God: "*Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, 'Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed'*" (Acts 4:24–26).¹⁵ It is worth noting that the emphasis here is on the fact that it was God Himself who spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of David (2 Samuel 23:2–3; see Urbanek 2018, 343). The king is referred to as a "servant" of God, and the praying community accepts him as its "father"—the ancestor to whom God spoke through the Holy Spirit. Now, the word spoken by David under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (see 2 Peter 1:21) and recalled in the minds of the praying Church is recognized and heeded (accepted) as the word of God—spoken by the Holy Spirit to the followers of Jesus, the seed of David. In this manner, the formula used in the Acts of the Apostles—invoking Scripture "which the Holy

¹⁴ According to Conzelmann (1987, 11), the noun "Scripture" was used in a general sense rather than in reference to a specific passage. Here, one can see some similarity to "all Scripture" (2 Timothy 3:16) and "prophecy of Scripture" (2 Peter 1:20). See Haręzga 2021, 58–61.

¹⁵ Psalm 146:6 and Psalm 2:1–2 are cited here.

Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David” and introducing quotations from the Psalms—clearly affirms the belief in the inspired nature of Scripture (Kurz 2013, 59) as the word of God. At one time, through the Holy Spirit, God gave David the prophetic word¹⁶ that was to be fulfilled in the future. David did not need to know the full meaning of that word, since the sense of Scripture reveals itself gradually with the events of the unfolding history of salvation. Now, the same Holy Spirit uses the same words to address the community of believers in Christ, who in his light become empowered to interpret the current events as a divine plan that consistently fulfills itself—foreseen and foretold for ages. The question, then, is what “the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David.”

2.1. Scripture That “Had to Be Fulfilled”

Before Luke begins to tell the story of Judas’s death, he explains to the reader the nature of his betrayal, that is, the fact that he “became a guide to those who arrested Jesus” (Acts 1:16). What makes Judas’s tragedy even more profound is the fact that he had been chosen by Jesus and was counted among the apostles (Luke 6:16), thus being involved in their ministry (Acts 1:17). Following his betrayal of Jesus, he “acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness” (Acts 1:18),¹⁷ which after his death became known to the people of Jerusalem as “Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood” (1:19). The traitor’s death itself was described by Luke as follows: “falling headlong¹⁸ he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out” (Acts 1:18). As W. Linke (2008, 174–177) has demonstrated, the author of the Acts of the Apostles modelled his account of Judas’s death on descriptions of the deaths of persecutors (2 Maccabees 9:1–17 and Acts 12:23).¹⁹

¹⁶ A reference to Psalm 41:9 LXX cannot be ruled out, either. See Kucicki 2018, 260.

¹⁷ It is worth noting that Matthew offers a different account of the event: Judas returned the money to the chief priests, who used it to purchase the potter’s field, which then became a burial place for strangers (Matthew 27:3–10), thus fulfilling Jeremiah’s prophecy. According to Stern (1992, 218), since the priests purchased the field with Judas’s money, it was considered his property after his death.

¹⁸ “Falling” and “fell” are the most frequent translations.

¹⁹ According to Pesch (1992, 106), this is a legend that speaks of the punitive death (“*morte punitrice*”) of an enemy of God. It is also worth adding that the very motif of “falling headlong” (πρηγῆς γενόμενος) in Acts 1:18 may be a reference to Wisdom 4:19, which mentions the punishment for the unrighteous, who will be cast to the ground (ῥήξει αὐτοὺς ἀφώνους πρηγεῖς). See Dąbrowski 1961, 231; Drzewiecka 2012, 77; Kurz 2013, 60.

In his conclusion, he rightly notes that “as the guide to those who arrested Jesus, Judas was the worst of the Lord’s persecutors. His death was a punishment for his crime and had been foreseen in God’s plan revealed in the Hebrew Bible. It is depicted in a vague manner that makes it difficult to imagine, using rare and obscure vocabulary. The aim is not so much to recreate the events as it is to stigmatize Judas as a persecutor” (Linke 2008, 178).

Judas’s brutal death is also prophesied in a passage from Psalm 69:25, “may their camp be a desolation; let no one dwell in their tents” (γενηθήτω ἡ ἔπαυλις αὐτοῦ ἔρημος καὶ μὴ ἔστω ὁ κατοικῶν ἐν αὐτῇ), which is introduced in Acts 1:20 using the formula “for it is written in the Book of Psalms” (γέγραπται γὰρ ἐν βίβλῳ ψαλμῶν). This formula is frequently employed to introduce quotations from the Old Testament (Luke 3:4; 4:4,8,10; 7:24; 19:46; 24:46; Acts 7:42; 13:33; 15:15; 23:5), and the verb form (*indicativus perfecti passivi*) points unambiguously to the authority of God Himself. The particle γάρ refers to Judas’s apostasy and his death as a persecutor. The verse from the psalm quoted above comes from the Greek Old Testament (see Steyn 1995, 63):

Psalm 68:26 LXX: γενηθήτω ἡ ἔπαυλις αὐτῶν ἡρημωμένη
καὶ ἐν τοῖς σκηνώμασιν αὐτῶν μὴ ἔστω ὁ κατοικῶν

May their camp be a desolation;
let no one dwell in their tents.

Psalm 69:25 in Acts 1:20: γενηθήτω ἡ ἔπαυλις αὐτοῦ ἔρημος
καὶ μὴ ἔστω ὁ κατοικῶν ἐν αὐτῇ

May his camp become desolate,
and let there be no one to dwell in it.

It is worth noting that the passage begins with the verb γίνομαι in the aorist passive imperative, and therefore refers to an event which was to happen and has in fact happened. This means that the words being quoted have already been fulfilled (see Kucicki 2018, 260). Using the Jewish rule of interpretation known as *qal wahomer*,²⁰ the author of the Acts introduces some minor but

²⁰ Translating literally as “light and heavy,” this rule means “how much more then.” The argument is the following: if the psalmist used such an expression with regard to the accusers of a righteous man (which is the context of the two phrases in the Old Testament), then how

necessary modifications to make the words of the psalm more applicable to Judas's story (see Fitzmyer 1998, 225): the possessive pronoun "their" (αὐτῶν) is changed to the singular "his" (αὐτοῦ) (see Steyn 1995, 53); the camp (ἡ ἔπαυλις) is to be deserted, which is expressed in LXX using the verb ἡρημωμένη, and in the Acts, using the adjective ἔρημος, which can act as a noun (meaning "desolation," "desert"); and the phrase "in their tents" (ἐν τοῖς σκηνώμασιν αὐτῶν) from LXX is replaced in Acts 1:20 with the pronoun "it" (αὐτῇ), which refers to the "camp" (ἡ ἔπαυλις): since it is desolate, there must not be any inhabitants in it, because it is unclean (see Klinkowski 2007, 304) and cursed (see Pesch 1992, 102).

The argument from Scripture cited by Luke emphasizes the emptiness (ἔρημος) that appeared in the wake of Judas's death. In the literal sense, it refers primarily to the abandoned property which Judas had purchased with the money paid to him for betraying Jesus. Papias also alluded to this idea: "After much agony and punishment, they say, [Judas] finally died in his own place, and because of the stench the area is deserted and uninhabitable even now; in fact, to this day one cannot pass that place without holding one's nose, so great was the discharge from his body, and so far did it spread over the ground" (Holmes 2006, 316; see also Starowieyski 2007, 932).

The desolate dwelling left behind by Judas can also be interpreted figuratively (symbolically) as the vacant place among the Twelve (see Drzewiecka 2021, 92–94). Since Judas betrayed Jesus, he exchanged, so to speak, the "property" that was his share in the apostolic ministry for a paltry piece of land that would remain witness to his disgraceful death as the betrayer and persecutor of Christ. There is one fundamental difference, however: while Judas's field would remain an uninhabited desolation according to the prophecy of Psalm 69:25, the vacant place among the Twelve must be taken by someone else since that is the will of God, as prophesied in another passage in the Book of Psalms.

2.2. Scripture That Needs to Be Fulfilled

Peter's intention is not only to explain Judas's death, which in light of the inspired word of God is consistent with God's will, but also, and above all, to convince the community to reconstitute the Twelve. This sentence is an express command

much more appropriately can this rule be applied to the ultimate embodiment of wickedness, that is, to the man who betrayed the Messiah. See Keener 2000, 239.

from the Holy Spirit, who decrees the following through the mouth of David: “let another take his office” (καί²¹ τὴν ἐπισκοπὴν αὐτοῦ λαβέτω ἕτερος). This time, Psalm 109:8 is quoted:

Psalm 108:8 LXX: τὴν ἐπισκοπὴν αὐτοῦ λάβοι ἕτερος
may another take his office!

Psalm 109:8 in Acts 1:20: τὴν ἐπισκοπὴν αὐτοῦ λαβέτω ἕτερος
Let another take his office.

This time, Luke’s intervention only concerns the form of the verb, but it is important to the interpretation of the text in the new context. The Septuagint uses λάβοι, that is, the *optativus*, which is a grammatical mood that expresses a wish, a hope, or an option for the existence of a certain state of affairs, whereas in Acts 1:20, the author uses the imperative λαβέτω, which clearly indicates a command, an order for something to happen. In this manner, Luke²² emphasizes the binding character of the inspired word of God through which the Holy Spirit not only encourages (*optativus*) but also decrees and demands (*imperativus*) that the position left by Judas be taken by someone else. The noun ἐπισκοπή used in the text means “oversight,” “supervision,” “charge,” “control,” or “office”; it refers to the share in the ministry (ἔλαχεν τὸν κληρὸν τῆς διακονίας) of the apostles (Acts 1:17) that the traitor abandoned. The word of God invoked by Peter and read (actualized) in the new reality of the community expressly demands that the body of the Twelve be reconstituted. Therefore, the apostle continues his speech and concludes that in order to heed the Holy Spirit’s command, “one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out²³ among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must [δεῖ] become with us a witness to his resurrection” (Acts 1:21–22). The Greek verse

²¹ It is worth noting that the two biblical quotations are joined with the conjunction καί, which makes the text appear more coherent.

²² Drzewiecka (2012, 88) rightly notes that while Luke changes the mood of the verb from the optative to the imperative, he leaves the past perfect tense (aorist) in place—as was the case in LXX. This is justified because from the perspective of his narrative, the choice of Judas’s successor has already taken place.

²³ The phrase “went in and out” is a Hebraism that means “stayed” or “was present” (see Acts 9:28). See Dąbrowski 1961, 233.

begins with the verb δεῖ, which conveys the necessity of what the community is expected to do and refers back to Acts 1:16, which says that “Scripture had to be fulfilled” (ἔδει πληρωθῆναι τὴν γραφὴν πληρωθῆναι τὴν γραφὴν). Since the first part of the prophecy “had to [ἔδει] be fulfilled” and since this has indeed taken place, the second part also “must” [δεῖ] be fulfilled (see Styra 1997, 100). After all, such is the will of the Holy Spirit spoken ages ago (see Kucicki 2018, 261–262) and of Christ Himself²⁴ as the One who established the Twelve. Thus, the word of God interpreted by Peter becomes inspiring: it puts things into motion in absolute accordance with God’s will, guiding the community to act in a specific way that fulfills what the Holy Spirit has foretold and allowing it to stay true to Christ’s original plan.

Actualizing the Holy Spirit’s command, Peter lays out the necessary criteria that a candidate for Judas’s replacement has to meet, making a clear reference to the prospective apostle’s identity as well: he should be one of the men who followed Jesus from the beginning of His public ministry (i.e., the baptism of John) to the Ascension so that he can be a reliable eyewitness to Jesus’s resurrection (see Keener 2000, 239). Following this premise, the community of Jerusalem puts forward two candidates—Joseph called Barsabbas, also known as Justus, and Matthias (Acts 1:23)²⁵—so that God Himself can make the right choice (see Fausti 2015, 80). Judging by the manner in which the two men are presented, it might seem that the former candidate is at an advantage (since Luke mentions his Aramaic patronymic meaning “son of the elder” or “son of Shabbat” and his Latin nickname meaning “righteous”; see Fausti 2015, 80), and he is in a way a “favorite” of the community. Nevertheless, the decision is left to God. The community’s plea takes the form of a prayer, similar to Jesus’s prayer before the selection of the Twelve (Luke 6:12), asking the Lord, who knows the hearts of all men, to name His chosen replacement for Judas. That man will then “take the place in this ministry and apostleship” (τὸν τόπον τῆς διακονίας

²⁴ Referring to 1 Peter 1:10–12, which is considered one of the direct testimonies to biblical inspiration, one could say that David’s prophetic words were spoken under the inspiration of the Spirit, who is the “Spirit of Christ.” Previously and from up high, He had borne witness to the mystery of Christ by predicting “the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.” The same Spirit then spoke in the prophets of the Old Testament (1 Peter 1:11) and in those who preached the Gospel (1 Peter 1:12). See Hareżga 2021, 61–62.

²⁵ They may have belonged to the group of seventy-two disciples mentioned in Luke 10:1. See Klinkowski 2007, 292–293.

ταύτης καὶ ἀποστολῆς²⁶) which the traitor abandoned to “go to his own place” (εἰς τὸν τόπον τὸν ἴδιον) (Acts 1:24–25).

The words addressed to the “Lord,” that is, to the God of Israel²⁷ (as in Luke 1:16,32,68; 4:8,12; 10:27; 19:38; 20:37,44; Acts 2:39; 3:22; 5:9), convey a plea that He may not only choose the right replacement for Judas, but also allow the community to discern His decision correctly. For that purpose, as stated in Acts 1:26, “they cast lots for them” (ἔδωκαν κλήρους αὐτοῖς), which was a tried and tested way of reading God’s will in the Old Testament (Exodus 28:30; Leviticus 8:8; 16:8; Numbers 33:54; Joshua 18:10; 1 Chronicles 24:3–5).²⁸ In the end, “the lot fell on Matthias” (καὶ ἔπεσεν ὁ κλήρος ἐπὶ Μαθθίαν). Thus, God made the decision (Proverbs 16:33), and Matthias was “numbered with the eleven apostles” (καὶ συγκατεψηφίσθη μετὰ τῶν ἑνδεκα ἀποστόλων). The verb συγκατεψηφίσθη is in the *passivum divinum*, which also serves to emphasize that it was God Himself who included Matthias in the college of the apostles, making him the twelfth of the Twelve and thus replacing the traitor. In this manner, God’s will—as interpreted by Peter and the community thanks to the inspired words of Psalm 109:8—was done, and the Twelve were reconstituted. Furthermore, since it was the Holy Spirit who spoke through David’s mouth in the Psalm (Acts 1:16), and since it was His command to replace Judas, it becomes clear that Matthias, having been chosen by God and included in the group of the apostles, can be counted among those appointed by Jesus with the Holy Spirit’s guidance (Acts 1:2) (Pesch 1992, 105).²⁹

²⁶ The expression διακονία καὶ ἀποστολή is a figure of speech known as *hendiadys*, meaning “apostolic ministry.” See Fitzmyer 1998, 228.

²⁷ Conversely, Kurz (2013, 61) believes that the prayer is directed to the Risen Jesus.

²⁸ For a more detailed discussion of how God’s will was determined by casting lots in the Old Testament, in Flavius Josephus and in the Qumran texts, see Klinkowski 2007, 300–301.

²⁹ This understanding of Acts 1:2 is supported by the structure of the Greek sentence (ἄχρι ἧς ἡμέρας ἐντειλάμενος τοῖς ἀποστόλοις διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου οὓς ἐξελέξατο ἀνελήμφθη) and the central placement of the expression διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου. This expression may refer to giving commands under the influence of the Holy Spirit (ἐντειλάμενος τοῖς ἀποστόλοις διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου) or to making a choice under the influence of the Holy Spirit (διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου οὓς ἐξελέξατο). See Pesch 1992, 62 (including footnote 11). Most commentaries and translations adopt the first interpretation.

3. The Word That “Is Inspired and Breathes the Spirit”

The pericope about the reconstitution of the Twelve Apostles analyzed in this article, and in particular the two scriptural references to the Old Testament’s Book of Psalms³⁰ and the manner in which Luke proposes to read them, perfectly demonstrate the inspired and inspiring character of the word of God that is mentioned in the Pontifical Biblical Commission’s document.

As previously noted, the very fact that the combination of “inspired and inspiring” (*inspirato e ispirante*) is used three times in the document (see Pontifical Biblical Commission 2014, 21, 50, 51) indicates that the inspiring character of God’s word is an essential effect of its inspiration. In Acts 1:16, Luke makes clear his conviction about the inspired character of the Old Testament, and specifically of the Book of Psalms as the Scripture of which “the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David.” The words recorded and passed on by David are, therefore, inspired by the Holy Spirit; they are endowed with a quality that is only fitting to the biblical hagiographer and to the words of the Book (see Haręzga 2021, 62). If they are accepted as such by their recipients, they inspire (“breathe the Spirit into”) them and move them to act in a specific way. Thus, one may fully concur with G. O’Collins’s view that “its inspiring impact must be recognized as the most significant characteristic of biblical inspiration, the Spirit’s impulse that produced the Bible and continues to speak and sanctify through the sacred texts” (2018, 128). The source of Scripture’s inspiration is the Holy Spirit, and the inspiration itself is not only lasting but also dynamic (2 Timothy 3:16).³¹ As the Holy Spirit acted upon the authors in the past, so does He continue to have a life-giving effect on believing readers throughout time (see Urbanek 2018, 358).

Since the Holy Spirit communicates and reveals God’s will through the inspired words, these words are capable of “illuminating and encouraging the understanding [...] of believers” (Pontifical Biblical Commission 2014, 21), which means that they can lead to a deeper and fuller understanding of reality. It is in light of the inspired passage from Psalm 69:25 that the community of Jerusalem

³⁰ For a discussion of the inspired and inspiring character of the Book of Psalms, see O’Collins 2018, 27–32.

³¹ The text contains the adjective θεόπνευστος, which—contrary to what authors of dictionaries and commentaries commonly claim—is not limited in meaning to the passive sense of being “inspired by God” (Haręzga 2018, 478) and may also be read in the active sense as “God-breathing” (see Cantalamessa 2009, 274).

can recognize that Judas's tragic fate was part of God's plan of salvation; this happens because the inspired words of the Psalm of David are a prophecy that becomes fulfilled (see Steyn 1995, 54). The reference to the inspired Scripture not only provides a correct perspective on the past and makes obvious the unpleasant consequences of any betrayal of God's cause, such as Judas's death, but also points the way to the fulfillment of God's plan in the present life of the community, which finds in it an express command from the Holy Spirit to reconstitute the Twelve (Psalm 109:8). In that manner, the word of God itself guides humanity to the understanding of its illuminating content: it can "radiate" that content in life (Pontifical Biblical Commission 2014, 50) and has the capacity to shape and change life (see Pontifical Biblical Commission 2014, 49; Witzczyk 2020, 93–94).

The inspiring character of the inspired word takes the form of an obligation, or even an imperative, that effectively stimulates active commitment. This means a certain form of "passion" (*passione*) of the faithful, that is, a zeal, avocation, ardor, or even craving that will motivate a person and arouse his or her burning desire to follow God's will. The above effect of the inspired text on believers stems from the "inspiring" influence that the Holy Spirit has on the recipients of Sacred Scripture. The Pontifical Biblical Commission rightly notes that for the inspired words to be so fruitfully "inspirational," they need to be "duly received" (Pontifical Biblical Commission 2014, 117), that is, accepted as a binding message from God, who uses words inspired by the Spirit to communicate His salvific will to men and command them to fulfill it. The recipients must always remain "open to the Spirit's presence and power" (O'Collins 2018, 22) when He "speaks to the Church and through the Church" (Zatwardnicki 2021, 127–131) using words which are "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

The author of the Acts of the Apostles clearly indicates that in order for the inspired word of God to "breathe the Spirit" successfully, two conditions must be met: there must exist a community that listens to God's word, and there must be an interpretation that shows it as being true, that is, as corresponding appropriately to the intention of God who spoke it to humanity, containing dynamic content that is fully coherent with God's demands and humankind's aspirations, and bearing the whole newness of Christ and being capable of communicating it to believers (see Pontifical Biblical Commission 2014, 116–117). The words thus received "become inspirational in the one who welcomes them and implant the ever new and renewing Christ, of whom they are bearers" (Pontifical

Biblical Commission 2014, 117). This happens, first and foremost, because the Old Testament, especially when it is referenced in the New Testament, “becomes inspired and inspiring [*inspirato e ispirante*] when read in Christological terms” (Pontifical Biblical Commission 2014, 51). Such an interpretation (re-reading) of the texts introduces the recipient (listener or reader) of the Bible to God’s plan, consistently carried out in salvation history, which culminated and became definitive in the revelation in Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1–2). The inspired and inspiring word of God “implants” Christ in those who accept it with faith and openness and “makes them the flock that abides by the will of the Almighty God” (Witczyk 2020, 97).

The inspired word is also inspiring in the sense that it introduces believers to Christ’s plan, that is, it enables them to constantly return to the original “design” intended by Jesus. This is evident in the pericope on the reconstitution of the Twelve Apostles, in which the community of Jerusalem is moved by the inspiring words of Psalm 109:8 to restore the number of the Twelve in accordance with Jesus’s will and resolution. This also seems necessary so that the Church can retain her identity as the eschatological Israel (see Pao 2002, 123–129; Kucicki 2018, 262–263), the true Remnant of Israel (see Keener 2000, 238), and so that in the wake of the descent of the Holy Spirit, the renewed body of the apostles can commence its mission to bear witness to the Risen Christ as has been foretold.³² In this sense, the Old Testament prophecy is interpreted not only in Christological terms but also in ecclesiological terms. The Holy Spirit acts in the community of Christ’s Church. He cares for the Church and guides the believers: as He had spoken through the mouth of the prophet David (Acts 1:16), so does He now speak the word of God interpreted by Peter (1:15). God chooses the apostle who will take Judas’s place, but it is the believers—inspired by the prophetic words—who discern God’s decision and humbly accept it. Renewed in accordance with Christ’s plan, the community may then await the fulfillment of “the promise of the Father” (Acts 1:4), and when it receives the Holy Spirit’s “power from on high” (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8) on the day of Pentecost, it will become witness to the Risen Christ “in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

³² For a discussion of other possible motives for the reconstitution of the Twelve, see Styra 1997, 92–93.

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