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## **Is the Charism of Biblical Inspiration “Open”? The Answer of the Revelation of John**

### **Czy charyzmat natchnienie biblijnego jest „otwarty”? Odpowiedź Apokalipsy św. Jana**

**Abstract.** The author of this article asks whether the charism of biblical inspiration is “open” and answers this question affirmatively by analyzing the expression *egenomēn en pneumati* (“I was in the Spirit”) used in Revelation 1:10 and 4:2 as well as the narrative dynamics of Revelation in the context of the presence of the liturgical assembly as the main subject that interprets the book. Revelation looks at its content and the manner in which it has been recorded in terms of the inspiring action of the Holy Spirit (*egenomēn en pneumati*, “I was under the inspiration of the Spirit”), which leads John of Patmos to formulate new ideas on the basis of texts which are already considered inspired (as manifested by the accumulation of Old Testament allusions). Hence, it can be concluded that the book sees itself as an inspired text and perceives its inspiration as an actualizing one, a continuation of the inspiration that accompanied the creation of the Old Testament Scriptures. As he records his visionary experience, John is aware that this is being done under the influence of the same Spirit who influenced the creation of the Scriptures. By using these texts, he recreates the Word within the logic of a Christocentric dynamic. The same pattern of action of the Spirit as the agent of inspiration is repeated in the life of the community of hearers or readers (i.e., the liturgical assembly gathered for the Sunday liturgy), which, by opening itself to the operation of the Holy Spirit, becomes an inspired community that is led by the Spirit to discover, decipher and practice what He Himself intended to communicate through John, and thus to recreate the Word that has been heard in the community’s own environment, that is, in its “here and now.” What takes place in that manner is an “inspired reading” of the prophecy that has been read and heard. Revelation points to certain elements which are necessary for the charism of biblical inspiration to continue in the community of hearers or readers, including a liturgical reading in the Sunday liturgical assembly that takes into account the unity of Sacred Scripture and leads to Christ (i.e., a Christological reading).

**Streszczenie.** Autor artykułu zadaje pytanie, czy charyzmat natchnienia biblijnego jest „otwarty”? Odpowiada na to pytanie pozytywnie analizując wyrażenie z Ap 1,10; 4,2: *egenomēn en pneumati* („znalazłem się w Duchu”), jak i również dynamikę naracyjną Ap w kontekście obecności w niej zgromadzenia liturgicznego, który jest głównym podmiotem interpretującym księgę. Apokalipsa na swoją treść i jej zapis patrzy w kluczu inspirującego działania Ducha świętego (*egenomēn en pneumati*, „znalazłem się pod natchnieniem Ducha”), który prowadzi Jana z Patmos do sformułowania nowej treści w oparciu o teksty już natchnione (nagromadzenie aluzji do tekstów starotestamentalnych), stąd można wyprowadzić wniosek, że patrzy na samą siebie jako pismo natchnione a na natchnienie, jako na natchnienie aktualizujące, które jest kontynuacją tego natchnienia, towarzyszącego powstaniu Pism ST. Jan zapisując swoje doświadczenie wizyjne ma świadomość, że dokonuje się to pod wpływem tego samego Ducha, który wpływał na powstanie Pisma. Używając tych tekstów dokonuje rekreacji Słowa w kluczu dynamiki chrystocentrycznej. Ten sam schemat działania Ducha, sprawcy natchnienia, powtarza się w życiu wspólnoty słuchającej/czytającej (zgromadzenie liturgiczne zebrane na niedzielnej liturgii), która otwierając się na działanie Ducha Świętego, staje się wspólnota natchniona, w której Duch święty prowadzi ją do odkrycia, odszyfrowania i praktykowania tego, co Sam zamierzał przekazać przez Jana, prowadząc ją do rekreacji usłyszanego Słowa w ich własnym środowisku życiowym, tj. w jej „tu i teraz”. Dokonuje się w ten sposób „lektura natchniona” odczytanego i wysłuchanego prorocstwa. Apokalipsa wskazuje na pewne elementy, które są konieczne, aby charyzmat natchnienia biblijnego trwał we wspólnocie słuchającej/czytającej: lektura liturgiczna (w niedzielnym zgromadzeniu liturgicznym), która uwzględnia jedność Pisma świętego i prowadzi do Chrystusa (lektura chrystologiczna).

**Keywords:** biblical inspiration, “in the Spirit”, Holy Spirit, John of Patmos, inspired community, inspired reading of the Scriptures.

**Słowa kluczowe:** natchnienie biblijne, „w Duchu”, Duch Święty, Jan z Patmos, wspólnota natchniona, natchniona lektura Pism.

The Second Vatican Council’s constitution *Dei Verbum* states that

those divinely revealed realities which are contained and presented in Sacred Scripture have been committed to writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. For holy mother Church, relying on the belief of the Apostles (see John 20:31; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19–20, 3:15–16), holds that the books of both the Old and New Testaments in their entirety, with all their parts, are sacred and canonical because

written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author and have been handed on as such to the Church herself. In composing the sacred books, God chose men and while employed by Him they made use of their powers and abilities, so that with Him acting in them and through them, they, as true authors, consigned to writing everything and only those things which He wanted. (Second Vatican Council 1965, sec. 11)

Inspiration is understood here as a relationship of close dependence of the biblical text on God Himself. The concept of inspiration—as Pope Benedict XVI (2019) reminds us in his post-synodal exhortation *Verbum Domini*—is crucial in “understanding the sacred text as the Word of God” (sec. 19) and determines the correct hermeneutic, which should be a hermeneutic of faith based on the conviction of God’s presence and action in history rather than a secularized hermeneutic “based on the conviction that the Divine does not intervene in human history” (sec. 35). In the context of these statements, it seems that it is biblical inspiration that makes the word preserved in the sacred text not only the word of God as such, but also the ever-relevant word of God. Herein lies the research problem concerning the continuity of biblical inspiration, that is, the question of whether it is a reality that becomes closed with the completion of a given sacred text (or perhaps the closure of the canon of the Bible) or whether it remains open and continues to operate when the text is heard or read, and thus becomes shared by the hearer or reader. To answer this question, we will refer to the last book of the biblical canon: the Revelation of John (Rev.). Although the book itself does not use the term “inspiration,” it speaks in several places of a reality that may be indicative of it being inspired. This fact has been pointed out by the Pontifical Biblical Commission in the document titled *The Inspiration and Truth of Sacred Scripture*, which notes that

the book of Revelation senses and understands the elements of what we call today inspiration: there is an enduring intervention on the part of God the Father; there is an enduring intervention of Jesus Christ, particularly rich and well-structured; there is an intervention, also an enduring one, of the Spirit; there is an intervention of the angel interpreter; there is also, in the text’s contact with humanity, a specific intervention on John’s part. In the end, this text, the Word of God which has come into contact with humanity, will not only succeed in making its illuminating content known but also know how to radiate it in life. It will be inspired and inspiring [*inspirato ed ispirante*]. (Pontifical Biblical Commission 2014, 50)

The document does not specify what it means when it says that the text is “inspiring.” Does this expression mean that the text invites further reflection and prompts the reader to actualize the biblical message? Or perhaps that it continues to breathe the same Spirit under whose influence it was created, in which case we could speak of the continuity of biblical inspiration? The issue of the presence of biblical inspiration in Revelation was noted in 2006—many years before the publication of the Pontifical Biblical Commission’s document—by D. Kotecki in his monograph on the Holy Spirit, in which he studied the expression *en pneumati* (“in the Spirit”) as used in Revelation 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10 and suggested that the phrase “I was in the Spirit” should be interpreted as “I was under the inspiration of the Spirit” (Kotecki 2006, 332–336). However, the author did not engage in more detail with the question of whether the charism of inspiration is open. H. Witczyk also touched upon this issue in his 2020 monograph *Natchnienie. Prawda. Zbawienie [Inspiration. Truth. Salvation]*, written after the publication of the Pontifical Biblical Commission’s document, devoting much attention to the text of Revelation in his discussion of the operation of the Holy Spirit in the inspired author and inspired text (see Witczyk 2020, 69–97). Witczyk’s work is itself a commentary on the above document. Analyzing the passages that contain the expression *en pneumati*, the author speaks a great deal about the work of the Holy Spirit in John of Patmos. He refers to “a personal contact with the Holy Spirit” (Witczyk 2020, 84), “a special and new relationship” (85), “a special intervention of the Holy Spirit, who, by embracing and perforce permeating John, endows him with a new relationship with Jesus Christ and, as a result, leads the apostle to a deeper understanding of Him and, through Him, of God the Father, and to the establishment of a personal relationship with Him” (85); he also argues that “the Spirit is the One who has full control over John’s living and dynamic contact with the risen Jesus” (86). All these statements are true, but they nevertheless describe an experience that we might call prophetic inspiration. Therefore, the question about the relationship between prophetic inspiration and the inspiration of the biblical text remains open. While Witczyk (2020) also addresses the activity of the Holy Spirit in the hearer and the reader (90–97), he does not *de facto* look at this reality from the perspective of biblical inspiration and instead treats it as a closed reality that has a personal character and is related to a specific person (91). This also seems to be the position of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, as suggested by the text of its document.

In light of the above, it seems that there is still room for exploring the question we have posed. In search of an answer, we propose to proceed by addressing

a number of issues one by one in our article. Firstly, we will ask how Revelation understands itself (1). Secondly, we will see how the experience of John of Patmos is described (2) and whether it can be viewed in terms of biblical inspiration (3). Finally, we will attempt to answer the question about the relationship between the listeners or readers of the text and biblical inspiration (4). By following this path, we will be able to determine whether Revelation speaks of inspiration at all and whether the charism of biblical inspiration is open.

## 1. What Is the Revelation of John?

The question posed in the title of this section is not meant to portray the Revelation of John as a book that belongs to the genre of apocalyptic literature, nor is it our intention to deal here with the phenomenon of apocalypticism and its formal and ideological features.<sup>1</sup> Instead, we want to ask the question to the text itself.

Leaving aside the matter of the authorship of the book,<sup>2</sup> Revelation is an account of an experience that is difficult to put into words and, importantly, a visionary experience of a person to whom we will refer as John of Patmos, or simply John (Biguzzi 2005, 39). This visionary experience is recorded in writing, which is made clear to the hearer or reader of the book at the very beginning, in the prologue (Rev. 1:1–3): “Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep [put into practice] what is written in it, for the time is near” (Rev. 1:3, ESV) and at the end: “Blessed is the one who keeps [puts into practice] the words of the prophecy of this book” (Rev. 22:7; see also 22:10,18,19).<sup>3</sup> This fulfills the command that John is given by “one like a son of man” (the risen Christ) in the first vision (1:9–20), that is, “write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia

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<sup>1</sup> For a broader discussion of this subject, we suggest referring to *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature*, ed. John J. Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> On this subject, see Aune 1997, XLVII–LVI; Wojciechowski 2012, 49–52. On John himself and his time on Patmos, see Sikora 2022, 79–125.

<sup>3</sup> Translations usually render the Greek verb *têreō* as “keep,” “guard” or “observe.” However, the idea expressed by this verb is not so much that of theoretically preserving, remembering, pondering or recalling something as it is that of practicing it in one’s life, hence the suggested translation “puts into practice” (Kotecki 2021, 72).

and to Laodicea” (Rev. 1:11), which pertains not only to the epistolary part (Rev. 2–30) with which the initial vision is directly associated, but also to the entire book. The above interpretation is suggested by the text of Revelation 1:19, which repeats the command to write down what John saw and specifies the things to be written: “those that are” (the situation of the individual communities, which comprises the first part of Revelation) and “those that are to take place after this” (the course of history that is part of God’s plan, which comprises the second part of Revelation) (Vanni 2018, 80).

How does the book itself see the account of that experience? The answer to this question can be found in the prologue (Rev. 1:1–3), which is a synthetic introduction that is necessary in order to understand the content of the book, its supernatural origin and the fact that it is intended to be read and heard publicly—presumably in the liturgical assembly gathered for the Sunday celebration of the Risen One (Vanni 1982, 453–467; Kotecki 2006, 183–205). The content of the book is clearly defined by the phrase “The Revelation of Jesus Christ,” which is also the title of the entire work. The Greek word *apokalipsis*, translated as “revelation,” denotes something that has hitherto been hidden or kept secret and that, thanks to this book, will become uncovered. It is a revelation of Jesus Christ and, at the same time, a revelation about Jesus Christ (since we treat the Greek complement *Iēsou Christou* as *genetivus mixtus*). Although God remains the source (Kotecki 2013, 30) and true author of that revelation,<sup>4</sup> it is Jesus who communicates it by using instruments through which it can reach men: His servants, His angel and His servant John. In consequence, we are dealing, as it were, with two revelatory sequences: God–Jesus–servants and Jesus–angel–John (Jesus’s servant). Jesus is the main mediator of the revelation, and the servants (among whom John has been singled out) are its recipients. These servants, like John, are portrayed in Revelation primarily as prophets (22:9). Importantly, the interpretation of this text may be determined by the meaning of the expression “his servants,” that is, whether it refers to God or to Jesus Christ (both possibilities are acceptable). As elsewhere in the book (cf. Rev. 2:20; 7:3; 19:2,5; 22:3,6), this expression refers to believers, and thus, as D. Kotecki (2021) notes, “we would

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<sup>4</sup> This relationship between the Father and Jesus in the revelation (which takes place by means of words and deeds/events) is emphasized very strongly in the Gospel of John (see John 3:35; 4:34; 5:17,19; 8:28,38; 10:25,32; 12:49), which further supports the argument that the book of Revelation comes from the same religious circle (movement) known as the “Johannine school” (see Wróbel 2011, 191–203).

then have not two revelatory sequences but one, God–Jesus–believers, whereas the passage ‘he made it known by sending his angel to his servant John’ only specifies how this revelation is to reach the believers” (67).

The content of the book comprises “the things that must [Greek *dei*] soon [Greek *en tachei*, “soon,” “imminent,” “rapid”] take place,” that is, the events that are part of God’s plan, which is communicated both by words and by symbols or visions—as may be indicated by the use of the verb *ezēmanen*: “make known,” “show by a sign,” “communicate,” “communicate by symbols” (see Beale 1999, 50–52). The whole book becomes not only a “revealing word” but also a “revealing event” that will need to be deciphered (Kotecki 2021, 68).

John of Patmos has no doubt that what has been communicated to him is “the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ,” which takes the form of a vision (“all that he saw”). The expression “word of God,” which occurs seven times in Revelation, including five occurrences in the singular (1:2,9; 6:9; 19:13; 20:4) and two in the plural (17:17; 19:9), refers back to texts of the Old Testament (cf. Hosea 1:1; Joel 1:1; Jeremiah 1:2,11). This is a clear indication for the hearers or readers as to the content of the book, directly dependent on God, and as to John’s very identity as a prophet. In this case, the prophet is a witness to the word of God (“who bore witness,” Rev. 1:2). This is the only place in the book of Revelation in which the phrase “the testimony of Jesus Christ” occurs; the phrases “the testimony of Jesus” (1:9; 12:17; 19:10; 20:4), “the witness” (6:9) or “testimony” (11:7; 12:11) are used elsewhere. Where the testimony of Jesus is spoken of, this means the historical testimony given by Jesus Himself, which reached its fullness in His paschal mystery. When this testimony is accepted by Christians, it becomes their hallmark to such an extent that they can be said to “bear witness” (Rev. 6:9; see also 11:7; 12:11). In the context of the prologue, however, the expression “the testimony of Jesus Christ” refers to the entire revelation contained in the book. Going further, the conjunction “and” in the phrase “the word of God and... the testimony of Jesus Christ” can be taken as an “explanatory *kai*,” in which case “the testimony of Jesus” explains the content of the word of God, becoming “a synthetic summary of the whole revelation that comes from God through Jesus Christ” (Podeszwa 2011, 87). The revealed word of God pertains to all that God has accomplished through Jesus Christ. According to Rojas (2013), “Jesus’s testimony ‘explains the meaning of the whole revelation.’ It is to Jesus Christ that the title ‘Word of God’ is attributed in Revelation (19:13). It can be said that the whole revelation is Christocentric. Revelation recounts



how the paschal mystery makes itself present and projects itself into the lives of believers and into the course of history” (160–161).<sup>5</sup>

Finally, what John sees is described as “the words of this prophecy.” In fact, Revelation is the only text in the New Testament that claims to be a prophecy in its entirety. A comparison of the prologue and epilogue of the book of Revelation shows that in the former, the text is referred to as “the revelation” (Greek *apokalipsis*) and “the words of this prophecy” (*oi logoi prophēteias*), whereas in the latter, it is only referred to as “the words of the prophecy of this book” (*oi logoi tēs prophēteias tou bibliou toutou*, Rev. 22:7,10,18) or “the words of the book of this prophecy” (*oi logoi tou bibliou tēs prophēteias tautēs*, Rev. 22:19). The book is characterized by divine perfection, and therefore nothing can be taken from it or added to it. As G. Biguzzi (2005, 378) brilliantly observes in his commentary, the rule expressed in the words “if anyone adds to [the words of the prophecy of this book], God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book” (Rev. 22:18–19) echoes the ancient rule that was in force in Egypt (*The Maxims of Ptahhotep*, 2000 B.C.), in Judaism, where it expressed the inviolability of God’s commandments (cf. Deuteronomy 4:2; 13:1; 29:19–20; Jeremiah 33:2) or Scripture (pseudo-Aristeas, Flavius Josephus, Philo of Alexandria), and in the Greek world, where it signified the inviolability of codified law (Plutarch), of the thoughts of a master (Plato), of covenant pacts between peoples (Thucydides) or of one’s own writings (Artemidorus, A.D. 130). By using this rule, John of Patmos demonstrates his conviction about the divine origin of not only the visionary experience itself but also the account of that experience. It is God who will watch over the word that has come from Him. Ultimately, therefore, the word of God transmitted by the prophet John of Patmos takes a written form, thus fulfilling the command to “write” addressed to John as many as twelve times in the book of Revelation (1:11,19; 2:1,8,12,18; 3:1,7,14; 19:9; 21:5)—a clear reference to the command to write that appears in the texts of the Old Testament (cf. Exodus

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<sup>5</sup> The author speaks of five models of interpretation: (1) the symbolic, spiritual-idealistic model (which disregards any historical references); (2) the historicizing model (which makes specific historical allusions); (3) the futuristic model (which focuses on recent events in world history); (4) the preterist model (which assumes that the events described in Revelation have already happened); and 5) the paschal model (whereby Revelation speaks of Jesus’s paschal mystery and its impact on history and the world). See Rojas 2013, 152–161.



17:14; 34:27; Deuteronomy 31:19; Isaiah 8:1; 30:8; Jeremiah 22:30; 30:2; 36:28; Ezekiel 24:2; 37:16; 43:11). John gives the community another very clear sign that what he is communicating to them is a prophecy which was heard and recorded and that he himself, as a prophet, is the mediator of and witness to God’s word. While the question arises as to what caused John of Patmos to be convinced of the divine origin of the words that he wrote, the act of writing was certainly his.

If, as Raymond F. Collins emphasizes, inspiration is spoken of in theological discourse in terms of three formulas, that is, (1) condescension (Greek *synkatabasis*), (2) dictation (Latin *dictare*) and (3) God the Author, then it must be noted that the text of Revelation clearly emphasizes its divine origin. However, does this also mean that it was God who wrote the book? According to Collins (1990), the Latin word *auctor* “has a much broader range of meaning than Eng ‘author,’ describing one who produces something, whether a building, a bridge, or a literary work. In the ecclesiastical tradition about God’s authorship of Scripture, *auctor* has the more generic meaning of producer or source, e.g., in the profession of faith for Michael Palaeologos, Lat *auctor* is rendered by Gk *archēgos*, ‘beginning, founder, originator’” (1027–1028). Therefore, God is the source of the revelation, of the prophecy, whereas John is the one who has received it, written it down and passed it on. In this way, the word of God reaches the community as a prophecy recorded in writing.

## 2. John’s Visionary Experience versus Inspiration

We learn from the prologue that John’s experience is a visionary one and that it is recounted in the book; we also know that it is composed of a multitude of images. Undoubtedly, Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature is permeated with descriptions of dreams and visions (Flannery 2014, 104–120). Here, however, our main focus is the manner in which the experience of the visions is described rather than the overall account of the visions themselves. Crucial to understanding this experience is the beginning of the first vision (Rev. 1:9–20), that is, the introductory part, “I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day” (1:9–10a), which is then followed by the account of John’s experience—consisting of an audition (behind John’s back, 1:10b–11) and a vision (before John’s eyes, 1:12–20).

John is on the island of Patmos, separated by the local authorities from his community for preaching the Christian message (“on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus”). He feels a deep connection with the members of that community, and therefore calls himself their “brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus.” He is aware of the persecution (*thlipsis*, “tribulation”) from those among whom the community lives, which is a consequence of the community’s attitude of responsibility for the advent of Jesus’s rule (*basileia*, “kingdom”) on earth—an attitude that demands perseverance, that is, the ability to endure all that is contrary to the Christian faith and that is received on account of belonging to Christ (*hypomonē en Iēsou*, “endurance that is in Jesus”). All these circumstances are highlighted, perhaps to describe an ideal place that is full of seclusion, poverty and austerity and therefore conducive to the experience of what will later be expressed using the formula *egenomēn en pneumati*, or perhaps because John wishes to make his experience a community experience. In either case, the dimension of John’s relationship with his community seems to be very important. In a sense, he is building a bridge between himself and that community (Kotecki 2021, 84).

The whole experience is subordinated to the expression *egenomēn en pneumati*, which can be found in two very important or even fundamental places in the book: at the beginning of the first vision (Rev. 1:10–3:22), which opens the first part of the book, known as the “epistolary part” (2:1–3:22), and at the beginning of the second vision (Rev. 4–5), which is the prelude to the entire second part of the book (4:1–22:5).

The predicate of the phrase, *egenomēn*, comes from the verb *ginomai*, which occurs 38 times in the book. It is not synonymous with the verb “to be” but implies a certain transition or change, a *novum* in relation to what has happened before (Vanni 2018, 75). In the context of the first sentence of the opening vision, this *novum* is seen in relation to both the situation of being on the island called Patmos (*egenomēn en tē nēsō tē kaloumenē Patmō*) and the situation of being in physical community with the brothers, which was interrupted by John’s exile to the island. This change is seen in conjunction with the phrase *en pneumati* (“in the Spirit”). As G. Biguzzi (2005, 79) notes in his summary of previous research on this expression, scholars have identified at least four understandings:

- 1) anthropological—the word *pneuma* refers to the human spirit as a counterbalance to the body, and thus the expression in question may potentially denote a certain kind of meditation that touches the most profound point

of John’s existence, with everything taking place inside John, that is, “in the spirit” rather than in his body;

- 2) mystical—certain authors speak of some kind of ecstasy, trance or mystical rapture along the lines of the experience referred to as “trance” in Acts 10:10; 11:5; 22:17, or a mystical rapture as described in 2 Corinthians 12;
- 3) prophetic—some authors look at the text in light of Revelation 19:10, which speaks of the “spirit of prophecy,” or Revelation 22:6, which emphasizes the presence of the “spirits of the prophets,” pointing to an indeterminate reality that induces a spiritual understanding of life and history in the prophets, including John, and leads them to bear witness to Jesus; and
- 4) pneumatic—the word *pneuma* refers to the Holy Spirit.

In view of the above, a critical evaluation of the different proposals should be conducted (see Kotecki 2006, 290–295). The anthropology of Revelation, which is in fact consistent with the Hebrew mentality, does not make a strong distinction or juxtaposition between spirit and flesh, which would be presupposed by an anthropological understanding of the expression under study (Vanni 2018, 76). In addition, such an understanding of the expression *en pneumati* would also reduce the impact of John’s testimony by presenting it as subjective and thus non-binding (Biguzzi 2002, 510). An experience of ecstasy, trance or mystical rapture also presupposes a contrast between spirit and flesh. What is more, since the New Testament itself is familiar with the term *ekstasis* and uses it to describe Peter’s and Paul’s experiences in Acts (10:10; 11:5; 22:17), why would the word not be used in Revelation? The third proposal, advocated by Biguzzi himself (2005, 79), is rather enigmatic, because the author does not specify what is meant by the term “spirit” in the expression “the spirit of prophecy.” While he appears to interpret this term as “human spirit,” there is no reason to conclude that the word “spirit” in the expression “the spirit of prophecy” (*to pneuma tēs prophēteias*) in Revelation 19:10 cannot refer to the Spirit of God, that is, the Holy Spirit (Kotecki 2006, 429–471). As regards the last proposal, many authors accept it on account of the conviction that the word *pneuma* in Revelation usually refers to the Holy Spirit (Contreras Molina 1987, 57–65; Vanni 2018, 76; Kotecki 2006, 295–328), while opponents of the hypostatic view rule out this understanding due to the absence of an article before the word *pneuma*. It needs to be noted, however, that in Greek, the article can optionally be omitted before a noun in prepositional phrases (Aune 1997, 83). The omission of the article may also be intentional where the author wants to draw attention to the nature of the reality expressed by the noun (as is the case with the word *theos* in Jesus’s saying “Have

faith in God,” *echete pistin theou*, where the idea is to trust God with his omnipotence in the face of man’s impotence, see Zerwick 1990, sec. 165, 171; similarly, in the case in question, the idea is to emphasize the nature of the Spirit). We find no arguments to suggest that the word “spirit” in the singular cannot refer to the Holy Spirit.

Another important consideration is the preposition *en*, equivalent to the Hebrew *be*, which indicates an association with some thing or person (Zerwick 1990, secs. 116–118). The expression *en pneumati* thus speaks of some association with the Holy Spirit, or some form of contact with Him. He becomes, as it were, the environment of the experience in question (Charles 1920, vol. 1, 22).

In early Christian literature, the expression *en pneumati* was known to mean “under the control of the Holy Spirit,” indicating a temporary experience of the Spirit’s power in prophetic speech or revelation (Bauckham 1993a, 150–151). E. Corsini (2002) rightly observes that “in the language of early Christianity, ‘to be, to find oneself in the Spirit’ meant a manifestation—occasional and extraordinary in manner and form (glossolalia, prophecy, etc.)—of the Holy Spirit whom the members of the community normally possessed” (81). The extraordinary action of the Spirit of God is also described in Old Testament texts, for example in the story of Samson (see Judges 14:4,19; 15:14–15). In the prophetic context, one may speak of the Spirit of God “rushing upon” or “coming upon” a person (1 Samuel 10:6,10; 19:23). It should be underlined, however, that the prophetic texts put greater emphasis on the presence of the word of God, which empowers a man to fulfill the prophetic mission, than on the supernatural gift of the Spirit (see Amos 7:14–15; Jeremiah 1:4–10). In his analysis of the use of *en pneumati* in the book of Revelation, R. L. Jeske (1985) points to the text of Micah 3:8, where the expression “spirit of YHWH” is translated in the LXX as *en pneumati kyriou* (“in the spirit of the Lord”). The whole text is set in the context of a polemic against ecstatic prophets, and if John was familiar with it, his experience of *en pneumati* certainly does not refer to some prophetic ecstasy but rather to prophetic inspiration (Jeske 1985, 454–455; Kotecki 2006, 299). Similarly, in the *Didache*, the prophets are presented as those who speak *en pneumati* (11:7–12). By using the expression *egenomēn en pneumati*, John of Patmos makes his community aware of his identity as a prophet and of the prophetic nature of his experience, giving his hearers or readers a clear signal that what is to be communicated to them is true prophecy received by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Corsini, 2002, 81). One can certainly say with regard to the expression *en pneumati* that it indicates prophetic inspiration (Wojciechowski 2012, 114). U.

Vanni, who strongly rejects the ecstatic interpretation of the expression, emphasizes that “the Spirit enters the author, becomes in him, transforms him, makes him capable of receiving the transcendent riches that belong to Jesus Christ (cf. 1:12–20) and of being received by others” (2012, 71). John is aware of being a prophet, although nowhere in the text of Revelation is he referred to as such (he is only called a “brother of the prophets” in Rev. 22:9). It is also in him that the prophetic investiture and prophetic mission (Rev. 10–11) similar to those experienced by Ezekiel (Ezekiel 2:8–3:3) are made present.

The expression *en pneumati* can also be found in Revelation 17:3 and 21:10, where it is used in the introductions to two very important visions: the vision of the Whore of Babylon and her judgement by God (Rev. 17:3–18:24) and the vision of the Heavenly Jerusalem—the Bride of the Lamb (Rev. 21:10–22:5). However, there is a difference between Revelation 17:3 and 21:10 on the one part and Revelation 1:9 and 4:2 on the other. In the former case, the expression *en pneumati* occurs in the phrases “he carried me in the Spirit [*en pneumati*] into a wilderness” (17:3) and “he carried me away in the Spirit [*en pneumati*] to a great, high mountain” (21:10). The subject in the act of carrying away is one of the seven angels. Some scholars look at the formula “I was in the Spirit [*en pneumati*]” in light of these two texts. R. Bauckham (1993a) accepts the formula as a technical term for the visionary’s “rapture by the Spirit” (150–159). Similarly, G. K. Beale (1999, 203) sees it as a clear reference to prophetic language, especially to Ezekiel, who speaks of rapture by the Spirit: Ezekiel 2:2; 3:12, 14, 24; 11:1; 43:5. In this manner, John wants to identify his prophecy with the prophecies of the Old Testament. However, it should be stressed that the rapture in Revelation 17:3 and 21:10 is not the work of the Spirit but of one of the seven angels, and *en pneumati* seems to be used to provide a context or background for the whole vision. It is also possible to treat the expression *en pneumati* in these texts as being used “in and of itself” and interpret it in the same sense as in Revelation 1:9 and 4:2.

The placement of the expression “I was in the Spirit” may lead us to further conclusions. As we have already noted, this expression opens the first and second parts of the book, thus becoming the description of an experience that provides a framework, context or background for the entire apocalyptic vision, its most important parts being obviously Revelation 1:9–20 and 4–5. As a result, it becomes clear that John perceives what he has seen as the work of the Holy Spirit. This makes the situation similar to that described in the letters to the seven churches, where we are dealing with two subjects of the predicate “speak”: one being the risen Jesus, and the other being the Holy Spirit. In the

letters, there is a clear transition from Jesus's self-proclamation in the phrase "the words of," or "these things says" (Rev. 2:1,8,12,18; 3:1,7) to "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev. 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22). Jesus Himself speaks within the letters, but each letter as a whole is the voice of the Holy Spirit. Likewise, in the other visions of Revelation (including the one that directly follows in Rev. 1:10–20), we are dealing with different agents, but everything is subordinated to the action of the Holy Spirit expressed in the phrase "I was in the Spirit." Therefore, it becomes clear that for John of Patmos, all that he sees is the work of the Holy Spirit and that it is through Him that John can attest that it is "the Word of God" (Rev. 1:2). As D. Kotecki emphasizes, "John's experience is that of a living and transforming encounter with the Holy Spirit, the result of which is the message written in the book, which is a true prophecy received through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit" (Kotecki 2013, 137).

### 3. Prophetic Inspiration and Inspiration of the Text

In the initial vision, John receives the following command spoken by the voice of the Risen One, which is considered to be the voice of God Himself (Kotecki, 2013, 144): "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches" (Rev. 1:11). This passage is a clear reference to those texts of the Old Testament in which the prophets were charged by God to write what had been conveyed to them: Exodus 17:14; Isaiah 30:8; Jeremiah 37:2; 39:44; Tobit 12:20 (Beale and McDonough 2007, 1091). The command to write is to do with remembrance: the message has to be set down in writing so that it can be remembered. In that manner, the written record becomes a testimony, and in the past, testimonies of that kind were often used against Israel itself. If the expression *en pneumati* is an overarching description of John's prophetic experience, then it is clear from the context that it also applies to the writing down of all that John saw. The text does not specify when this took place, and the aorist form of the verb (*egenomēn*) only points to a singular, unique visionary experience in the past. If we look at this aorist form as a description of the context or framework of John's visionary experience on Patmos and the writing down of the vision, it does not seem necessary to see it as an ingressive aorist and translate it in the sense of the *imperfectum* as "I found myself on the island of Patmos" or "I found myself in the Spirit" (Witczyk 2020, 82).

Here, we touch upon the issue of the relationship between prophetic inspiration and the inspiration of what has been written. As M. Baraniak (2020) rightly observes, “the Old Testament does not explicitly state that the books which contain the words of the prophets are inspired, but it emphasizes that the Spirit was actively present in the prophets’ activity and preaching (2 Sam. 23:2; Hos. 1:1; Joel [2:28]). This indirectly attests to the authority and inspiration of the entire tradition of Scripture” (8). The people of Israel did not advance the rationale of their belief in the sacredness of the biblical texts. According to Artola (1994), “a genuine merit of Christianity was that it extended the Old Testament doctrine of the Spirit inspiring the charismatics of the word and applied it to the authors of the written texts” (128). The Church of the late first and early second centuries was convinced that the Old Testament was inspired Scripture, as evidenced by two classic texts speaking of the existence of inspiration, namely, 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:20–21. The first of these letters was probably written in the Ephesian community towards the end of the first century or at the beginning of the second century (Fabris 1993, 69), whereas the second one was probably drafted in the late first century or in the early second century—possibly in Egypt, although Asia Minor cannot be ruled out, either (see Wojciechowska and Rosik 2022, 89–90). If this is the case, we can speak of both geographical and chronological proximity to the origin of the book of Revelation. The two classic texts relate inspiration primarily to the writings of the Old Testament.<sup>6</sup> The first text points to the word of God in its written dimension (Scripture) and emphasizes the relationship between that dimension and inspiration expressed using the participle *theopneustos* (“God-breathed”), which only occurs here in the New Testament. This word has been interpreted both actively, in the sense that Scripture is filled with God’s breath or Spirit and can continue to breathe God, and passively, as a predicative that refers to the text rather than the author, with

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<sup>6</sup> It is not entirely clear what is meant by the term *pasa graphē* (“all Scripture”) in 2 Timothy 3:16. Commentators have not offered any new explanations since J. Stępień (1979) formulated the following conclusion in agreement with many other scholars: “Naturally, the question arises whether the Author includes only the books of the OT in the term ‘all Scripture’ or whether he also allows for the possibility that this collection may be supplemented with other writings, also ‘inspired by God’ [...] Thus, the question of whether the verse being discussed refers directly to the books of the OT and NT must be answered in the negative, but the question of whether the phrase ‘all Scripture’ may include the NT Scriptures in addition to the OT has to be answered in the affirmative” (441).



most commentators adopting the latter understanding (Harężga 2008, 172–173). In either case, however, it is certain that the statement in 2 Timothy 3:16 could not be clearer in expressing the belief shared by the author's Christian contemporaries as to the fundamental quality of Scripture and the foundation of its origin (since the text emphasizes not only the divine character of Scripture, but also its divine origin). The same text also answers the question of what the secret of the efficacy of Scripture is: it is the word of God that is given as having been set in writing under God's guidance (Artola 1994, 129). The second letter expressly states that the biblical author was writing under the influence of the Holy Spirit. As K. Wojciechowska and M. Rosik (2022) have noted, this view carries in itself "the conviction that the prophet does not speak from himself or on his own initiative. This conviction is rooted in the Old Testament, where it is one of the main criteria for distinguishing between false prophets guided by their own will (Jer. 14:13; 23:16–18, 21–22, 26; Ezek. 13:3) and true prophets who follow God's command, even against their own will (Amos 3:8; Jer. 20:9). However, in the OT, and this is also assumed by the narrator of 2 Pet., the transmission of God's word does not necessarily involve ecstasy, trance and prophetic passivity; on the contrary, the prophet does not relinquish his own competencies and considerations, and is perfectly aware of the importance of the words that he is speaking" (322). The two texts referred to above are "a testimony to the belief of the Church of the late first century and the early second century that Scripture comes from the Holy Spirit, who, acting through the Church, continues to guard the truths of the faith against being tainted by errors" (Kotecki 2005, 334).

Without doubt, John is communicating to his community that what they are hearing is a true prophecy, revealed in the form of a vision and set down in writing, and that he himself is a true prophet. The vision itself cannot be separated from its description, but what is the record of that experience?<sup>7</sup> It is clear to all scholars that the text of Revelation is "a mosaic of Old Testament allusions," although it does not contain direct quotations. It is not our intention here to settle the matter of the use of Old Testament texts in Revelation or examine the sources of those texts (MT or LXX).<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the very list of the

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<sup>7</sup> We are not attempting here to resolve the issue of whether the account of John's experience is a mere literary composition, a visionary story, or both (on this subject, see Beale 1984, 7–9). In our view, it is important to make the distinction between the experience itself and its description, and therefore between the story and the discourse.

<sup>8</sup> For more on this subject, see Beale and McDonough 2007, 1081–1088.

passages invoked in the first vision (in Rev. 1:10: Exodus 19:16,19–20; Isaiah 30:8; Jeremiah 37:2; 39:44; Tobit 12:2; in Rev. 1:12: Exodus 25:37; Numbers 8; Zechariah 4:2,10; Exodus 20:18; Ezekiel 3:12–13; 43:5–6; Daniel 7:11; in Rev. 1:13–16: Daniel 7:10; Ezekiel 43:2; in Rev. 1:17: Daniel 10:8–20; Ezekiel 1:28 f.; Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; 48:12) and the fact that the whole vision is modelled on the visions described in the Old Testament (cf. Daniel 10:1–21; Vanni 1988, 115) and in Jewish apocalyptic literature (Beale 1999, 205) not only point to the literary character of the description, but also give us clarity as to Revelation’s view of the reality of inspiration.

The entire account of Revelation 1:9–20, which portrays the risen Christ, is not a mere compilation of the Old Testament allusions mentioned above. The mosaic of references creates a new and original image in comparison with the source texts, revealing their Christological interpretation (Kotecki 2008, 509–524). The person who described that vision was certainly aware of the fact that the texts being quoted had come from the Holy Spirit. In this context, it is not at all important whether one visionary description or another came directly from John or whether it was written by a different person for whom John’s experience was only an initial impulse (source), or even whether it was produced as a result of later editorial work (since it is clear that there are various editorial layers throughout Revelation). The text describes John’s experience by using the inspired texts of the Old Testament and looks at that experience as “being in the Spirit.” In this way, it emphasizes that the same Spirit who inspired the prophets not only to speak but also to write down their prophecies continues to breathe, and that what is now being conveyed in written form is His work. This view is consistent with the perspective of the Church of the late first and early second centuries, which is convinced that the inspiration whose existence it takes for granted with regard to the Old Testament also applies to the books of the New Testament (cf. 2 Peter 3:15–16).<sup>9</sup>

The voice heard by John commands him to write down all that he saw. As we have already noted, the whole book of Revelation is simply pervaded by references to one action of John’s, that is, “I saw” (Greek *eidon*), which, as U. Vanni (2018)

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<sup>9</sup> It is also possible that the author of 2 Timothy 3:16 “does not have in mind a strictly defined and definitive canon of books, in which case the phrase *pasa grafē* would also include, in addition to the writings of the Old Testament, the existing writings of the New Testament in the perspective of the fullness of revelation (v. 15b) and normative apostolic practice (vv. 10a, 14a)” (Harežga 2008, 172).

notes, points throughout the book to a “complex, long and arduous experience that consists of personal and communal reflection and deepening, private and shared prayer, contact with the Holy Spirit—perhaps also on a mystical level, exciting meditation of the Scriptures, and attention to the facts of history that the author condenses and proposes in the form of a literary vision” (80). It seems to us that in the above passage, Vanni puts too little emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit and mentions the contact with Him merely as one of the many elements in the description of John’s experience. In contrast, our analysis of the expression *egenomēn en pneumati* suggests that for John of Patmos, being in contact with the Holy Spirit is the *principium* of the whole experience in terms of both chronology and source of inspiration. What John sees and what he will later write down ensues from the action of the Holy Spirit and is in fact His work.

In view of the above, Revelation bears witness to the fact that the Church of the late first century viewed inspiration as an open reality. The picture that emerges from the texts under study is that the Holy Spirit guides John of Patmos so that he can experience his vision and present it in literary form, using texts which were already considered inspired in the first century, and so that he can thus formulate new content along Christological lines. In other words, we can speak of a Christological dynamic of inspiration. It is also important to bear in mind that the ultimate reason for which the Church has accepted specific books as the standard of her faith and life was the fact that she discerned in them the presence and authority of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Artola 1994, 119). Revelation sees the Spirit as one who belongs to God the Father and to the Lamb, that is, to the risen Jesus (Rev. 5:6). Therefore, hidden behind the human author is the action of the Holy Spirit, who is at the same time the Spirit of Christ, sent to earth and thus to the community of believers to reveal Himself as the agent of the inspiration that is directed towards the author’s bearing witness to Jesus. The same combination of the Spirit as the agent of inspiration and the bearing of witness to Christ can also be observed in 1 Corinthians 12:3. The message to the community of hearers is clear: John has received from the Spirit an extraordinary illumination, an inspiration of a prophetic nature that makes him capable of gaining a deeper understanding of the mystery of God Himself (that is, an understanding of the Old Testament in light of the whole mystery of Jesus Christ) under the influence of the Spirit so that he can communicate it to others (Corsini 2002, 81). Consequently, when it comes to putting this experience down in writing, the visionary cannot do so except by using the expression *egenomēn en pneumati*, investing his message with the status of divine prophecy inspired by the

Holy Spirit Himself. By using this expression, “John places his work in the same category as the canonical prophets—or gives it in a certain sense even a higher status, as the final prophetic revelation in which the whole tradition of biblical prophecy culminates (cf. 10:7)” (Bauckham 1993b, 117). The Holy Spirit who inspired the prophets now inspires John to understand the Scriptures properly and, what is more, prompts him to communicate this Christological view of the Old Testament texts as prophecy. It is clear that Revelation emphasizes the Christocentric aspect of inspiration, and even if some of the texts that it contains do not speak explicitly of Christ, they nevertheless refer to Him implicitly, because the main aim of the book is to portray God as the Lord of history and show that the fullness of His revelation is Jesus Christ, “the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” (22:13).<sup>10</sup>

The vision itself cannot be separated from its written account, which, in John’s view, is also subordinated to the action of the Holy Spirit. The act of speaking cannot be separated from the transmission of the written word. Even if we were to follow G. K. Beale and S. M. McDonough (2007) and distinguish between (1) an intentional activity by God in revealing the Old Testament in relation to the vision of John of Patmos and (2) John’s intentional activity in using the Old Testament to describe his vision (1085), there is no doubt that John looks at this activity as an intentional activity of the Holy Spirit. In consequence, our analysis leans towards an active understanding of the participle *theopneustos* in 2 Timothy 3:16. The texts of the Old Testament “breathe God,” and if John of Patmos invokes them in the account of his visions, he is certainly aware that they came from the Holy Spirit. As he recounts his experience in writing, he performs a recreation of the Word, which is—first and foremost—an actualization of that Word. Therefore, the whole action should be looked upon as the work of the Holy Spirit. In light of our analysis, it is legitimate to speak of an inspiration to speak (whereby John of Patmos, like the prophets of the Old Testament, is consecra-

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<sup>10</sup> The truth that Jesus is the fullness of God’s revelation in the book of Revelation can be discovered by examining the titles attributed to God and Jesus. In Revelation 1:8, God is said to be “the Alpha and the Omega [...] who is and who was and who is to come”; in Revelation 1:17, Jesus is referred to as “the first and the last” (cf. 2:8); in Revelation 21:6, it is emphasized that God is “the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end”; and finally, in Revelation 22:13, Jesus is said to be “the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” All of God’s titles are brought together in Jesus, which is a compelling reason to look at the Christology of Revelation as a theocentric Christology (for a discussion of the theocentric Christology in Revelation, see Kotecki 2013).

ted to speak for God and is fully aware that what he says is indeed the word of God) and of an inspiration to write (whereby the written word continues to be the actual word of God). The two inspirations are manifestations of the same charism of inspiration that affects John of Patmos, and the effect or outcome of John's inspiration is that what was written becomes elevated to the status of being the word of God.

#### 4. Inspiration and the Hearers/Readers

Does the openness of inspiration extend further and continue to last, or did it cease once the book had been written? Does it also apply to those who are the intended audience of Revelation? Or, in other words, is it an open reality that still exists when the book is being read?

For John of Patmos, the intended primary audience and interpreting subject of Revelation is the liturgical assembly (Vanni 1976, 453–467; Kotecki 2005, 183–205). As has already been emphasized in several places, John makes it very clear to the members of that assembly that what will be conveyed to them in written form to be read (by the lector) and to be heard (by the liturgical assembly) is a prophecy received by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

The first blessing of Revelation, “Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep [put into practice] what is written in it, for the time is near” (1:3), is not only a proof that the liturgical assembly is the interpreting subject, but also an invitation to receive and decipher the prophecy correctly so that it can then be put into practice in the “here and now” of each of the community's members. The penultimate blessing only notes the presence of one member of the community of hearers and only speaks of putting the words of the prophecy into practice: “Blessed is the one who keeps [puts into practice] the words of the prophecy of this book” (Rev. 22:7). The formula “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” occurs seven times in Revelation (2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22), and the Spirit also speaks to the Church (14:13) and with the Church (22:17). What the Spirit says to the individual churches is a record of John's experience of being *en pneumati*. In the letters to the seven churches, as we have already noted, the risen Jesus speaks constantly (which is why the self-proclamations refer mostly to the vision in Rev. 1:9–20), addressing the community and interacting with it like the God of Israel from the prophetic oracles (“these things says,” *tade legei*).

When these words are conveyed by John of Patmos to the community, they legitimize him before it as a prophet. At the end of each of the seven letters, the same formula is repeated: “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” This means that the whole message is the work of the Holy Spirit, who speaks to the churches continually and in syntony with Jesus (as signified by the use of the same predicate in the present tense, *legei*). Thus, we could speak of the fulfillment, in a sense, of the promise that Jesus would send the Spirit, or Paraclete, which was made in the Gospel of John (14:26; 15:26; 16:13–15). The formula “He who has an ear” itself can serve different purposes, as has in fact been emphasized by many scholars (Kotecki 2006, 367–376): it can be (1) a prophetic proclamation the purpose of which is to invite people to hear the word of God or sapiential teaching or (2) a “hearing formula” (German *Weckformel*) or “call to hear” (German *Weckruf*).

What is certain, given the orality of the ancient writings and the very fact that the liturgical assembly is the main interpreting subject of the message of Revelation, is that this formula is intended to prompt the hearers to hear the word that is being spoken to them and see in that word the action of the Holy Spirit. For this to happen, however, each member of the community of hearers must “have an ear” (that is, a permanent capacity to listen, as indicated by the present tense participle *echō*). This is not a matter of mere listening; rather, it is a matter of a permanent spiritual disposition to be open to what one hears, a disposition which only the Holy Spirit can grant to the hearer, hence we can speak of a certain “pneumatic intelligence” (Kotecki 2006, 373). To “have an ear” is nothing other than to be open to the action of the Holy Spirit, and such openness comes from the concurrence of the gift of wisdom or intelligence with the human effort to engage in a deep and insightful reflection. The phrase is an invitation to interpret not only the letters to the seven churches but also the whole message of Revelation. It is no coincidence that the last letter, addressed to the church in Laodicea, ends with the call to hear the Holy Spirit, which may suggest that His voice is present not only in the letters themselves, but also, following the perspective of Revelation, in the second part of the book (4:1–22:5), which uses symbolic images that need to be deciphered and applied to one’s own reality. This is the message of the Holy Spirit (Vanni 1988, 65). The same Spirit, the author of inspired Scripture, dwells within the devout reader, allowing him to partake of the efficacy that comes from Scripture. The book of Revelation shows that its message should be read in the Holy Spirit, which involves being granted “spiritual intelligence,” that is, the ability to understand the text in the

manner demanded by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is seen not only as the one who has communicated the prophecy to John and is responsible for the text, but also as the one who makes the prophecy present in the community and assists the community in correctly deciphering that prophecy so that it can be enacted (put into practice). This enactment of the Word can also be looked upon as a recreation of the Word that takes place under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

As U. Vanni rightly notes, “in order to fully understand the meaning, force and spirit of Revelation, however, we must remember that it is not a book that is done [in the sense of “completed”—my note], but one that is to be done [in the sense of “to be completed”—my note]; the reader/hearer is indeed called upon to take an active part in the interpretation of the text and in its application to his or her specific historical situation. The reading provides for dialogues, silences, pauses, including those created by grammatical inaccuracies, which are intended to stimulate attention and prompt reflection. Like all Scripture, the book of Revelation is alive and remains open to the call of the times” (Vanni 2018, 80–81, 95). In the vision of Revelation, the Holy Spirit is involved not only in the act of communicating the vision to John and having it set down in writing, but also in the reading that takes place within the liturgical assembly and in the practical application of the Word.

The constitution *Dei Verbum* states that “Holy Scripture must be read and interpreted in the sacred spirit in which it was written” (Second Vatican Council 1965, sec. 12), but it does not elaborate on this subject. Revelation is a testimony to the conviction that just as the charism of biblical inspiration was open to John of Patmos, so it continues to be open to and act upon the community—which can be called an “inspired community”—in which the “inspired reading” of the text takes place. The creation of the text by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (consisting of the inspiration to speak and the inspiration to write) is made complete by the presence of the same Spirit, the agent of inspiration, during the reading or hearing of the text, but this does not happen automatically. The community must open itself to the same experience of the Spirit to which John opened himself, that is, it must be *en pneumati*. This experience has a specific context: the Sunday liturgy of the Church, which, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, will read the text and identify with it (taking it as its own), and thus will be able to make it present in the lives of its individual members. Another condition, in light of the whole book of Revelation, is to take into account the unity of Scripture and its Christological character.



Our analysis of the text of Revelation leads us to the conclusion that the reality of biblical inspiration is by no means personal only; on the contrary, it concerns a community which, by opening itself to the Holy Spirit (“having an ear,” i.e., possessing “spiritual intelligence”), becomes an inspired community. Discussing biblical inspiration in literary terms, R. F. Collins (1990) emphasizes the following:

Although a text enjoys a certain semantic autonomy, two essential human activities are related to a text: *writing* (and rewriting) and *reading* (almost a form of mental rewriting). The doctrine of inspiration affirms that the Holy Spirit is responsible for the biblical text as text, i.e., with regard to both these human dimensions. As for writing, the Spirit is active in the long process whereby a biblical text has been produced within a faith community (i.e., including formulation of traditions, partial texts, early drafts, and rewriting). As for reading, inspiration is predicated of the biblical text precisely because there is a faith community who, under the influence of the Spirit, will read and identify with this biblical text. To this extent, a literary theory of inspiration echoes the active meaning of the *theopneustos* of 2 Tim 3:16 and accentuates dimensions of inspiration highlighted by Calvin and Barth. (1032)

G. O’Collins draws a distinction between inspiration as a cause, that is, the activity of the Holy Spirit, and inspiration as an effect of that activity, which translates into the reception history of the text. This inspirational effect of the Holy Spirit follows inspiration and encompasses the whole life of the Church, including the formation of the Christian doctrine and theological development (O’Collins 2018, 77–80). Thus, G. O’Collins also seems to understand the word *theopneustos* used in 2 Timothy 3:16 in the active sense. In light of the above analysis of selected passages from the book of Revelation, our understanding of inspiration is similar.

In conclusion, the question posed at the beginning of this article—as to whether the charism of biblical inspiration is open—should be answered affirmatively. Revelation looks at its content and the manner in which it has been recorded in terms of the inspiring action of the Holy Spirit (*egenomēn en pneumati*, “I was under the inspiration of the Spirit”), which leads John of Patmos to formulate new ideas on the basis of texts which are already considered inspired. Hence, it can be concluded that the book sees itself as an inspired text and perceives its inspiration as an actualizing one, a continuation of the inspiration that accompanied the creation of the Old Testament Scriptures. As he records his

visionary experience, John is aware that this is being done under the influence of the same Spirit who influenced the creation of the Scriptures. By using these texts, he recreates the Word within the logic of a Christocentric dynamic. The same pattern of action of the Spirit as the agent of inspiration is repeated in the life of the community of hearers or readers (i.e., the liturgical assembly gathered for the Sunday liturgy), which, by opening itself to the operation of the Holy Spirit, becomes an inspired community that is led by the Spirit to discover, decipher and practice what He Himself intended to communicate through John, and thus to recreate the Word that has been heard in the community's own environment, that is, in its "here and now." What takes place in that manner is an "inspired reading" of the prophecy that has been read and heard. Revelation points to certain elements which are necessary for the charism of biblical inspiration to continue in the community of hearers or readers, the most important one being a liturgical reading in the Sunday liturgical assembly that takes into account the unity of Sacred Scripture and leads to Christ (i.e., a Christological reading).

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