



si si no no

"But let your speech be, 'Yes, yes,' 'No, no,' and whatever is beyond these comes from the evil one. (Mt. 5:37)"

February 1995 No. 12

A New Exegesis Part 2

THE TRIUMPH OF MODERNISM OVER CATHOLIC EXEGESIS

CATHOLIC EXEGESIS IS BASED ON THREE TRUTHS OF THE FAITH

In order to counteract modernist errors on the truths of the Faith, and in order to come to the aid of some troubled Catholic researchers, the magisterium of the Roman Pontiffs has taken pains, in the course of this century, to recall to mind, and to solemnly affirm, those three truths of the Faith concerning Holy Scripture which lie at the very base of Catholic exegesis. Those three truths which I treat are:

- 1) the Divine Inspiration of the Sacred Scriptures
- 2) their absolute inerrancy
- 3) the Catholic Church is the divinely authorized interpreter, and the sole depository, of Holy Scriptures.

HOLY SCRIPTURES WERE INSPIRED BY GOD

This constitutes a truth of the Faith solemnly defined by Vatican Council I, and illustrated with the greatest possible precision by **Pope Leo XIII** in his encyclical *Providentissimus Deus*, which was described by **Pope Pius XII** as "the Magna Charta of Biblical Studies"

Leo XIII holds fast to Biblical and patristic sources, as well as to St. Thomas Aquinas as he recalls the definition given at Vatican Council I regarding Sacred Scriptures:

The Church holds them to be sacred and canonical not because they were written according to human science alone and later approved by authority of the Catholic Church; not only because they contain Truth without stain of error, but for the reason that, having been written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author. In reality, "the Holy Ghost made use of the sacred authors as writing instruments: He, Himself (i.e., the Holy Ghost), moved them to write; He Himself assisted them as they wrote, so that they conceived exactly...and expressed with an infallible truth everything, and only those things, that He ordered and directed them to write. Otherwise, He could not be the author of the totality of Sacred Scriptures.

In brief, God is indeed the main author of the Bible, while the sacred writers are its secondary, or instrumental authors.

ABSOLUTE INERRANCY OF THE SACRED TEXTS

This is a dogma of the Faith that was implicitly defined in the dogma of divine inspiration of the Bible (Council of Trent and Vatican I), since absolute inerrancy is the effect of divine inspiration. Indeed, inerrancy and inspiration are so closely linked that we cannot deny one without also denying the other.

In *Providentissimus Deus*, Pope Leo XIII begins by rejecting the heresy which is opposed to this dogma, and which, dominates "new exegesis," which is not Catholic:

It is absolutely wrong and forbidden, either to narrow inspiration to certain parts only of Holy Scripture, or to admit that the sacred writer has erred. For the system of those who, in order to rid themselves of those difficulties, do not hesitate to concede that divine inspiration regards the things of faith and morals, and nothing beyond, because (as they wrongly think) in a question of the truth or falsehood of a passage, we should consider not so much what God has said, as the reason and purpose which He had in mind in saying it - such a system cannot be tolerated. For all the books that the Church receives as sacred and canonical, are written wholly and entirely, with all their parts, at the dictation of the Holy Ghost; and so far is it from being possible that any error can coexist with inspiration, that inspiration not only is essentially incompatible with error, but excludes and rejects it....This is the ancient and unchanging faith of the Church, solemnly defined in the Councils of Florence and of Trent, and finally confirmed and more expressly formulated by the Council of the Vatican....Hence, because the Holy Ghost employed men as His instruments, we cannot therefore say that it was these inspired instruments who, perchance, have fallen into error, and not the primary author....Such has always been the belief of the Holy Fathers.

It follows that those who maintain that an error is possible in any genuine passage of the sacred writings, either pervert the Catholic notion of inspiration, or make God the author of such error. And so emphatically were all the Fathers and Doctors agreed that the divine writings, as left by the hagiographers, are free from all error, that they labored earnestly, with no less skill than reverence, to reconcile with each other those numerous passages which seem at variance - the very passages which in great measure have been taken up by "higher criticism"; for they were unanimous in laying it down, that those writings, in their entirety and in all their parts, were equally from the *afflatus* of Almighty God, and that God, speaking by the sacred writers, could not set down anything but what was true.

Pope **Benedict XV**, in his encyclical *Spiritus Paraclitus* (Sept. 15, 1920), confirms, and amplifies upon **Leo XIII's** brilliant doctrinal synthesis:

Although these words of our predecessor leave no doubt for dispute, it grieves us to find that not only men outside, but even children of the Catholic Church - nay, what is a particular sorrow to us, even clerics and professors of sacred learning - who in their own conceit either openly repudiate or at least attack in secret the Church's teaching on this point.

We warmly commend, of course, those who, with the assistance of critical methods, seek to discover new ways of explaining the difficulties in Holy Scripture, whether for their own guidance or to help others. But we remind them that they will only come to miserable grief if they neglect our predecessor's injunctions, and overstep the limits set by the Fathers.

Yet no one can pretend that certain recent writers really adhere to these limitations. For while conceding that inspiration extends to every phrase - and, indeed, to every single word of Scripture - yet, by endeavoring to distinguish between what they style the primary or religious, and the secondary or profane element in the Bible, they claim that the effect of inspiration - namely, absolute truth and immunity from error - are to be restricted to that primary or religious element. Their notion is that only what concerns religion is intended and taught by God in Scripture, and that all the rest-things concerning "profane knowledge," the garments in which Divine truth is presented - God merely permits, and even leaves to the individual author's greater or lesser knowledge.

Against this heresy, Pope **Benedict XV** recalled the doctrine of St. Jerome, as well as that of the other Fathers of the Church who:

...have drawn this doctrine concerning Holy Scriptures from nowhere else but at the school of our Divine Master Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, are we to understand that Our Lord had any other conception of Scripture? The formulae "It is written," and, "that the scripture may be fulfilled" are, coming from His lips, an unanswerable argument that puts an end to all controversy.

Lastly, Pope **Pius XII**, in his encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (Sept. 30, 1943), which commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of Pope **Leo XIII's** *Providentissimus Deus*, solemnly condemned the modernistic heresies which were already, at that time, being spread about in the Church:

More recently, however, in spite of this solemn definition of Catholic doctrine which insists, claims and demands for these "books in their entirety and in all their parts," a divine authority preserving them from all possible error, some Catholic writers have nevertheless seen fit to restrict or limit the truth of Holy Scriptures only to those matters of Faith and morals, considering all the rest, being of the field of physics and of history, as "something that is simply mentioned in passing" - and having, as they pretended, no connection whatsoever with the Faith. But our predecessor, **Leo XIII**, of undying memory, tore to pieces, and rightly so, these very same errors in his encyclical *Providentissimus Deus* of November 18, 1893.

Then, quoting **Leo XIII** word for word:

It is absolutely forbidden to pretend that the sacred writer himself has fallen into error, since divine inspiration not only excludes any and all possible error in itself, but even loathes and excludes it, since God, Who is sovereign truth, cannot be the author of any possible error.

Pius XII concludes:

This doctrine, which was so forcefully explained by our predecessor **Leo XIII**, We also propose with our pontifical authority, and We insist that it be held, religiously, by all.

THE CHURCH IS THE SOLE DEPOSITORY AND INTERPRETER OF SCRIPTURE

This is a truth of Faith defined by the Council of Trent, as well as by Vatican Council I. On this point also, **Leo XIII's** *Providentissimus* proposes the synthesis of the "ancient and constant belief of the Church." After having shown that the sacred books cannot be approached without a guide, **Leo XIII** concluded that men are able to realize that God "gave the Scriptures to the Church in order that, in the interpretation of its texts, the Church should be their most certain teacher and guide."

This is the doctrine, he writes, that is:

...held by St. Irenaeus and the other Fathers of the Church, and which the First Vatican Council adopted when, renewing a Decree of the Council of Trent concerning the interpretation of God's written Word, it was decided that, regarding questions of the Faith or morals, and with the intention of settling once and for all these important points of Catholic doctrine, we must hold as being the exact sense of Holy Scripture, that sense which Our Holy Mother the Church has held and holds, being ever mindful that it belongs to the Church alone to judge the sense of, as well as to interpret, the Sacred Scriptures.

No one is therefore permitted to interpret Scripture in any manner that would contradict the Church's interpretation, or in a manner that would contradict the unanimous consent of the Fathers.

Pope Pius XII, in *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, wholeheartedly reaffirmed in its entirety the teaching contained in **Leo XIII's** encyclical *Providentissimus*: "God Himself has confided the keeping and interpretation [of the Holy Scriptures] to the Catholic Church."

SOURCE OF CORRUPTION

The new exegesis, in its vain attempt to attach itself in a certain way or other to the traditional magisterium, stubbornly pretends to see in **Pius XII's** *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (Sept. 30, 1943), a change of direction with respect to **Leo XIII's** *Providentissimus Deus*. It is as if Pope Pius XII, had, in this encyclical, exhorted the exegetes to reject the three dogmas that constitute the very foundation of Catholic exegesis.

This evidently absurd thesis is refuted first of all by an honest reading of *Divino Afflante Spiritu* and of *Humani Generis*. Here is how **Pius XII**, in the clearest of terms, condemned the "new exegesis" promoted by the "new theology," revealing it to be the corrupted source of modernistic theology:

The dissent and errors of men in religious and moral matters...have always been, for all honest people, and above all, for those who are true sons of the Church, the cause of great sadness, and particularly so today, when we see the very principles of Christian culture being attacked from all sides. It is also true that theologians should ceaselessly return to the sources of divine revelation. It is their role to point out how the doctrine of the living magisterium is to be found either explicitly or implicitly in the Scriptures or in Tradition.

But for this reason, even positive theology cannot be on a par with merely historical science. For, together with the sources of positive theology, God has given to His Church a living Teaching Authority to elucidate and explain that which is contained in the deposit of faith only obscurely and implicitly. This deposit of Faith has been given to us by our Divine Redeemer...only to the Teaching Authority of the Church to interpret. But if the Church does exercise this function of teaching, as She often has through the centuries, either in the ordinary or extraordinary way, it is clear how false is a procedure which would attempt to explain what is clear by means of what is obscure. Indeed, the very opposite procedure must be used.

Hence, Our Predecessor of immortal memory, **Pius IX**, teaching that the most noble office of theology is to show how a doctrine defined by the Church is contained in the sources of revelation, added these words, and with very good reason: "in that sense in which it has been defined by the Church."

To return, however, to the new opinions mentioned above, a number of things are proposed or suggested by some, even against the divine authorship of Sacred Scripture. For some go so far as to pervert the sense of the Vatican Council's definition that God is the author of Holy Scripture; and they again put forward the opinion, already often condemned, which asserts that immunity from error extends only to those parts of the Bible that treat of God or of moral and religious matters. They even wrongly speak of a human sense of the Scriptures, beneath which a divine sense, which they say is the only infallible meaning, lies hidden. When interpreting Scripture, they take no account of the analogy of faith and the Tradition of the Church. Thus, they judge the doctrine of the Fathers and of the Teaching Church by the norm of Holy Scripture, interpreted by the purely human reason of exegetes, instead of explaining Holy Scripture according to the mind of the Church which Christ Our Lord has appointed guardian and interpreter of the whole deposit of divinely revealed truth.

Further, according to their fictitious opinions, the literal sense of Holy Scripture and its explanation, carefully worked out under the Church's vigilance by so many exegetes, should now yield to a new exegesis, which they are pleased to call symbolic, or spiritual. By means of this new exegesis, the Old Testament, which today in the Church is a sealed book, would finally be thrown open to all the faithful. By this method, they say, all difficulties vanish, difficulties which hinder only those who adhere to the literal meaning of the Scriptures.

Everyone sees how foreign all this is to the principles and norms of interpretation rightly fixed by our predecessors of happy memory, **Leo XIII** in his encyclical *Providentissimus*, and **Benedict XV** in the encyclical *Spiritus Paraclitus*, as also by Ourselves in the encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu*.

It is not surprising that novelties of this kind have already borne their deadly fruit in almost all branches of theology...(Pope Pius XII, *Humani Generis*).

REVIVAL OF MODERNISM

As a matter of fact, modernism emerged anew in the field of Biblical studies, thanks chiefly to the "new exegesis." We need only read the following modernist theses which **were solemnly condemned** by Pope St. Pius X in his decree *Lamentabili*:

- II: The Church's interpretation of the Sacred Books is by no means to be rejected; nevertheless, it is subject to the more accurate judgment and correction of the exegetes.
- IX: They display excessive simplicity or ignorance who believe that God is really the author of Sacred Scriptures.
- XI: Divine inspiration does not extend to all of Sacred Scriptures....

THE REALM OF HERESY

At this juncture, we are clearly dealing with heresy, since the three *de fide* truths which constitute the very basis of Catholic exegesis are also three defined dogmas.

This is made unmistakably clear from the texts coming from the dogmatic Councils of Trent and Vatican I, which, along with the numerous official documents of the Holy Office and the doctrinal decisions of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, have been recalled over and over again by the Popes.

Referring to these same decisions, Pope St. **Pius X** declared, in *Praestantia*, his *motu proprio* of November 18, 1907, that:

...everyone, without exception, is bound in conscience to obey them...in the same way as they are bound to obey those decrees of the Sacred Congregations that have been approved by the Sovereign Pontiff.

Thus, we see the Holy Office condemning the *Biblical Handbook* of the Sulpician priest, Brassac:

Referring in particular to the absolute inerrancy of Holy Scripture, we need only to recall **Leo XIII's** doctrine expressed in his encyclical *Providentissimus*....The Holy Office defended that same doctrine against the modernists, and condemned proposition II in its decree *Lamentabili*.

Finally, in its decree dated June 18, 1915, the Pontifical Biblical Commission declares that, based on the Catholic dogma of the divine inspiration and inerrancy of the Sacred Scriptures, it follows that everything that the sacred writers affirm, state, or imply, must be considered to be affirmed, stated, and implied by the Holy Ghost.

Concerning the third *de fide* truth: that the Church is the sole guardian, and the official interpreter of the Sacred Scriptures, the Holy Office writes in the same decree:

The author (Brassac) puts forth many interpretations that are totally opposed to the judgment and position of the Church. This is all the more deplorable in view of the fact that the infallible Council of Trent has decreed: "Let no one, relying on his own personal judgment in matters pertaining to Faith and morals,...dare to put forth interpretations that contradict the judgments which the Church has rendered in the past, and continues to uphold today. It belongs to the Church alone to judge the true sense, and the true interpretation of the Holy Scriptures."

The Fathers of Vatican Council I also confirmed this prescription:

We declare...in matters of faith and morals relative to the building-up of Christian doctrine, that the sense that Holy Mother Church has held, and which holds, of the Scriptures, must be held as true....It is therefore in no way permitted for anyone to interpret the Holy Scriptures contrary to this sense, nor against the unanimous consent or agreement of the Fathers.

The Pontifical Biblical Commission expressed itself:

Taking advantage of this occasion, the Pontifical Commission reminds Catholic exegetes of their duty of submitting themselves with all due respect to the dogmatic constitution of Vatican Council I, which renewed the solemn decree of the Council of Trent, in which it had been solemnly established that, in those questions touching upon Faith and morals..., the true sense of Holy Scriptures that Holy Mother Church holds and has always held must be held as true....It is therefore not permitted for anyone to interpret these same Holy Scriptures contrary to the sense in which the Church approves of them, or even against the unanimous consent or agreement of the Fathers.

CONCLUSIONS

The abundance of official documents given above constitutes the written proof that lead to the following conclusions:

- 1) No baptized person, and much less a religious, or a member of the clergy, may deny or even knowingly entertain any doubt whatsoever concerning the divine inspiration and absolute inerrancy of Holy Scripture. All Christians, if they do not want to fall into heresy, are duty-bound in those Biblical questions relating to faith and morals, to uphold that sense and meaning which the Church has always held, and continues to hold, of these sacred texts;
- 2) Any interpretation of Holy Scripture which does not take into account these three basic truths, cannot be considered to be a part of Catholic exegesis, but rather, as a part of an heretical exegesis. Such is the case of the "new exegesis."

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Courrier de Rome, May 1994

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