

ing it faithfully in accord with a divine commission and with the help of the Holy Spirit. It draws from this one deposit of faith everything which it presents for belief as divinely revealed.

It is clear, therefore, that Sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the teaching authority of the Church, in accord with God's most wise design, are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others. All together and each in its own way, under the action of the one Holy Spirit, contribute effectively to the salvation of souls.

CHAPTER III

THE DIVINE INSPIRATION AND THE INTERPRETATION OF SACRED SCRIPTURE

11. The divinely revealed realities contained and presented in Sacred Scripture were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Holy Mother Church, relying on the belief of the Apostles, holds that the books of both the Old and New Testaments in their entirety, with all their parts, are sacred and canonical because, having been written under the Holy Spirit's inspiration (cf. *Jn.* 20, 31; *2 Tm.* 3, 16; *2 Pt.* 1, 19-21; 3, 15-16), they have God as their author, and they have been handed on as such to the Church itself.¹⁷ God chose men to compose the sacred books, and while employed by Him¹⁸ they used their powers and abilities in such a manner that, with Him acting in

¹⁷ Cf. First Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith*, Chap. 2, "On Revelation": Denzinger 1787 (3006). Biblical Commission, Decree of June 18, 1915: Denzinger 2180 (3629); *EB* 420; Holy Office, Epistle of Dec. 22, 1923; *EB* 499.

¹⁸ Cf. Pius XII, Encyc. letter *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, Sept. 30, 1943: *AAS* 35 (1943), p. 314; *EB* 556.

them and through them,¹⁹ they, as true authors, wrote all the things and only those things which He wanted written.²⁰

Therefore since everything asserted by the inspired authors or sacred writers must be regarded as asserted by the Holy Spirit, it follows that the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching solidly, faithfully and without error that truth which God wanted put into the sacred writings²¹ for the sake of our salvation. Accordingly "all Scripture is divinely inspired and has its use for teaching the truth and refuting error, for reformation of manners and discipline in right living, so that the man who belongs to God may be efficient and equipped for good work of every kind" (2 *Tm.* 3, 16-17, Greek text).

Norms for Exegesis

12. However, since in Sacred Scripture God speaks through men in human fashion,²² the interpreter of Sacred Scripture should carefully investigate what meaning the sacred writers really intended and God wanted manifested through their words, in order to see clearly what He wanted to communicate to us.

In determining the intention of the sacred writers, "literary forms" should be considered along with other things. Truth is set forth and expressed in different ways, depending on whether the texts are historical, prophetic, poetic, or in some other form. The interpreter must inquire into the meaning which the sacred writer, by virtue of his own time and culture, intended to express and actually did express in

¹⁹ *In* and *through* man: cf. *Heb.* 1, 1 and 4, 7 (*in*): 2 *Sm* 23, 2; *Mt.* 1, 22 and various places (*through*); First Vatican Council, Schema on Catholic Doctrine, note 9; Coll. Lac. VII, 522.

²⁰ Leo XIII, Encyc. letter *Providentissimus Deus*, Nov. 18, 1893: Denzinger 1952 (3293); *EB* 125.

²¹ Cf. St. Augustine, *Literal Interpretation of Genesis* 2, 9, 20: *PL* 34, 270-271; Epistle 82, 3: *PL* 33, 277; *CSEL* 34, 2, p. 354. St. Thomas, *On Truth*, q. 12, a. 2, C. Council of Trent, session IV, *On the Canonical Scriptures*: Denzinger 783 (1501). Leo XIII, Encyc. letter *Providentissimus Deus*: *EB* 121, 124, 126-127. Pius XII, Encyc. letter *Divino Afflante Spiritu*: *EB* 539.

²² St. Augustine, *City of God*, *XVII*, 6, 2; *PL* 41, 537; *CSEL* XL, 2, 228.

particular circumstances in his use of contemporary literary forms.²³ To understand correctly what the sacred author wanted to assert in writing, due attention must be paid to the customary and characteristic styles of feeling, speaking and narrating which prevailed in his time, and to the patterns men normally employed then in their everyday dealings with one another.²⁴

But, since Sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted in the same Spirit in whom it was written,²⁵ no less serious attention must be given to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture if the meaning of the sacred texts is to be correctly worked out. The living Tradition of the whole Church must be taken into account along with the analogy of faith. It is the task of exegetes to work according to these rules toward a better understanding and explanation of the meaning of Sacred Scripture, so that through preparatory study the judgment of the Church may mature. All that has been said about the way of interpreting Scripture is ultimately subject to the judgment of the Church, which has the divine commission and ministry of guarding and interpreting the word of God.²⁶

God's "Condescension" Toward Man

13. In Sacred Scripture, therefore, while the truth and holiness of God always remain intact, the marvelous "condescension" of eternal wisdom is clearly shown, "that we may learn the gentle kindness of God, which words cannot express, and how far He has gone in adapting His language with thoughtful concern for our weak human nature."²⁷ For the words of God, expressed in human language, have been made like human discourse, just as long ago the Word of the Eternal Father took to Himself the flesh of human weakness and was made like men.

²³ St. Augustine *On Christian Doctrine*, III, 18, 26; *PL* 34, 75-76.

²⁴ Pius XII, loc. cit.: *Denzinger* 2294 (3829-3830); *EB* 557-562.

²⁵ Cf. Benedict XV, *Encyc. letter Spiritus Paraclitus*, Sept. 15, 1920: *EB* 469. St. Jerome *On Galatians* 5, 19-21: *PL* 26, 417 A.

²⁶ Cf. First Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith*, Chap. 2, "On Revelation": *Denzinger* 1788 (3007).

²⁷ St. John Chrysostom, *On Genesis*, 3, 8 (Homily 17, 1): *PG* 53, 134. "Attemperatio" in Greek *synkatábasis*.