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## THE BIBLE IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH: POPE PAUL VI'S PASTORAL DIRECTIVES

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In the previous issue of *Living Tradition*<sup>1</sup> we surveyed Paul VI's vision regarding biblical dimensions of the liturgical reform. We shall now see how he promoted Vatican II's pastoral directives emphasizing the role of Sacred Scripture in other areas of Catholic life.

### 1. Scripture in Personal Formation

As well as its public and communal use in the Church's liturgy, Paul VI often stressed the Bible's central role in personal study and meditation, as an indispensable element in catechetical, theological and spiritual formation for priests, religious and laity alike.

#### (a) Major interventions

We have already noted Pope Paul's affirmation in one major document, *Marialis cultus*, that "every form of worship should have a biblical imprint," and that Christians today rightly tend to "use the Bible ever increasingly as the basic prayerbook."<sup>2</sup> In the Pope's first major biblical allocution, delivered during the Council (25 September 1964), he warmly praised the Italian Biblical Association for its work in diffusing Scriptural knowledge,<sup>3</sup> and praised

the revival of interest in every aspect of biblical investigation, and its practical application to the realities of religious life, so that there can be drawn from Scripture not only the source and norm of faith, but also that nourishment of the interior life which springs precisely from rightly listening to the divine messages of the holy Book. Learning and piety are at once the motivation and the objective of this veneration of Sacred Scripture, which We wholeheartedly praise and encourage. . . . Finally, strive to diffuse the love, the study, the meditation, and the observance of the divine Word preserved and offered to us in Sacred Scripture.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Living Tradition*, no. 154, September 2011.

<sup>2</sup> ". . . ut indicia et cogitata biblica inserantur in quamvis cultus formam. . . . magis magisque Sacra Biblia usurpent tamquam primum precationis librum" (AAS 66 [1974] 141; cf. above, n. 21).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. AAS 56 [1964] 936.

<sup>4</sup> ". . . l'interesse per l'esplorazione della Bibbia in ogni suo aspetto, e il suo pratico avvicinamento agli atti della vita religiosa per trarne, oltre che fonte e norma di fede, alimento d'interiore conforto, quale appunto scaturisce dalla retta ascoltazione dei divini messaggi del Libro santo. Studio e pietà sono al tempo stesso motivo e termine di cotesto culto della Sacra Scrittura; e Noi ben volentieri lo lodiamo e lo incoraggiamo. . . . Ed infine lavorate per diffondere l'amore, lo studio, la meditazione, l'osservanza della Parola divina quale la Sacra Scrittura ci conserva e ci offre" (*ibid.*, 936, 938).

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At the next *Settimana Biblica*, soon after the Council (23 September 1966), the Pope expressed similar sentiments, and reinforced them by quoting the Constitution *Dei Verbum* in its wish that “the Church’s children attain a confident and useful familiarity with the Sacred Scriptures, so as to imbibe their spirit.”<sup>5</sup> Speaking on yet another occasion (27 September 1968) to the *Associazione Biblica Italiana*, Paul VI praised the assembled exegetes for their Scriptural apostolate, this time stressing its value for the interior life and for the formation of priests:

We rejoice for all that you have achieved through your timely initiatives, both in research and in the dissemination of biblical knowledge. This has been done for the sake of scholars, for teachers in Italy’s various seminaries, and in a special way for the clergy, so as to keep burning brightly among them the flame of love for the divine Book, to assist them in today’s prolific renewal of biblical studies, to offer opportune means of cultural advancement, and above all for the interior life.<sup>6</sup> Thus, progress in biblical science should also be authentic progress in the faith, so that the sacred Writings are manifested to the world as that which they want to be and should be, according to the intentions of their Divine Author: that is, in the words of the Apostles, a light shining in the darkness (cf. 2 Pet. 1:19), instruction in hope and consolation (cf. Rom. 15:4), a source of moral perfection for every man of God (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17), and — as the Constitution itself has rightly stressed — “the Church’s support and vigour, the strength of her faith, food for the soul, and a pure and lasting fount of spiritual life (cf. *Dei verbum*, 21).”

It seems that the Pontiff was thus aware of the danger that exegesis can at times turn into an abstract and spiritually barren academic exercise, for he then went on to remind the assembled scholars of Pius XII’s insistence that professional exegesis requires a total giving of self. Pope Paul adverts that if the spiritual fruits of biblical scholarship are to be effectively attained, the exegete must approach his task with the appropriate “ascetic attitude”:

We . . . believe and trust that you attend to your studies and your teaching duties with that ascetic attitude, with that intimate and devout veneration, with that zeal to discover — beneath the most exact philological and textual analysis — that spiritual sense, that revelatory presence, which pertain specifically to the word of God. Let it suffice to recall the recommendation of Our revered Predecessor Pius XII in his *Instruction* of 13 May 1950: “[I]t can readily be seen how essential it is for the professor of Sacred Scripture to be able to give himself completely to his task, so that after making a good beginning to his work, he daily renews his efforts with the greatest zeal and attentiveness, until the work is completed” (A.A.S. 1950, p.318).<sup>7</sup>

Two years later, at the next *Settimana Biblica* organized by the A.B.I. (25 September 1970), Pope Paul returned to the theme of Scripture in the formation of future priests, recalling the Council’s insistence that the preaching offered to the People of God should be nourished by the study and meditation of Scripture:

Without detracting in any way from the value of philological, archæological and historical interpretations of the text, which always remain necessary, it is important to underline that continuity between exegesis and preaching which the Constitution on Divine Revelation has expressed in these words: “Catholic exegetes and other workers in the field of sacred theology should zealously combine their efforts. Under the watchful eye of the sacred Magisterium, and using appropriate techniques, they should together set about examining and explaining the sacred texts in such a way that as many as possible of those who are ministers of the divine Word may be able to distribute fruitfully the nourishment of the Scriptures to the People of God” (*Dei verbum*, 23). And this applies especially to yourselves, who are forming future priests.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> “. . . i figli della Chiesa si familiarizzino con sicurezza e con utilità con le Sacre Scritture e si imbevano del loro spirito” (Ins. 1966, 415, quoting Vatican II, *Dei verbum* 25).

<sup>6</sup> “Ci rallegriamo per quanto avete fatto, con le opportune iniziative di carattere sia scientifico sia divulgativo, realizzate a favore degli studiosi, degli insegnanti dei vari seminari italiani, e specialmente del Clero, per tenerne alta la fiamma dell’amore verso il Libro divino, aiutarli nel proficuo aggiornamento sugli studi biblici, e offrire opportuni strumenti per la cultura e, soprattutto, per la vita interiore. Il progresso della scienza biblica sia dunque anche autentico progresso nella fede, affinché le sacre Lettere si rivelino al mondo per quello che vogliono e devono essere nelle intenzioni del loro Divino Ispiratore: cioè, secondo le parole degli Apostoli, lampada che brilla nelle tenebre (cf. 2 Petr. 1,19), ammaestramento di speranza e di consolazione (cf. Rom. 15,4), fonte di perfezione morale per ogni uomo di Dio (cf. 2 Tim. 3,16-17), e come ha ben sottolineato la Costituzione medesima: ‘Sostegno e vigore della Chiesa, saldezza della fede, cibo dell’anima, sorgente pura e perenne della vita spirituale’ (cf. *Dei verbum*, 21)” (Ins. 1968, 493-494).

<sup>7</sup> “Noi . . . crediamo ed auguriamo che voi attendiate al vostro studio ed al vostro insegnamento biblico con quella attitudine ascetica, con quella intima e pia venerazione, con quella avidità di scoprire sotto l’analisi filologica e testuale accuratissima quel senso spirituale, quella verità, quella presenza rivelatrice, che sono proprie della Parola di Dio. Basti ricordare la raccomandazione che il Nostro venerato Predecessore Pio XII faceva nella sua *Instruction* del 13 maggio 1950: ‘. . . facile patet quantopere necesse sit, ut Sacrae Scripturae magister totum se dare possit munere suo, ut opus feliciter susceptum, renovatis in diebus interibus, omni studio omnique cura exsequi pergat’ (A.A.S. 1950, 318)” (*ibid.*, 495).

<sup>8</sup> “Senza detrarre nulla al valore della interpretazione filologica, archæologica e storica del testo, che rimane sempre necessaria, si deve sottolineare la continuità tra esegesi e predicazione, che la Costituzione sulla Divina Rivelazione ha espresso con queste parole: ‘Gli esegeti

**(b) Other Interventions**

In various interventions of lesser importance, the Pope repeatedly affirmed the fundamental importance of Scripture in personal Christian formation. At an audience on 8 May 1968 for representatives of the Spanish Catholic publishing house “B.A.C.” (*Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos*), he commended them for their contribution to the diffusion of Catholic culture in the form of doctrine and biblical knowledge.<sup>9</sup> In his address to leaders of Catholic Biblical Associations on 16 April 1969, the Pope underlined the importance of daily Scripture reading — and “not only [for] priests and religious brothers and sisters.” He recalled the Council’s insistence that “‘all the faithful’ should have easy access to the Scriptures, in the liturgy, through the Scripture readings and the homily, and also in daily private life. All are called to this meeting with Christ our Lord.”<sup>10</sup>

At his Wednesday general audience of 1 July 1970, dedicated entirely to the theme “Sacred Scripture: Listening and Meditation,”<sup>11</sup> the Pope commented extensively on Chapter VI of the conciliar constitution *Dei verbum* (“*De Sacra Scriptura in vita Ecclesiae*”), reminding the assembled pilgrims of St. Jerome’s celebrated dictum that ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.<sup>12</sup> Stressing the Council’s vision of Scripture as “spiritual food” (*alimento spirituale*), Pope Paul emphasized that in its “inexhaustible spiritual fruitfulness,” the Bible is recognised by the Church as “the source of preaching and ecclesial catechesis.”<sup>13</sup>

On several occasions the theme of Scripture’s role in the formation of the young — especially clerics — was highlighted by the Pope. To a conference on the promotion of priestly vocations on 3 December 1966 he insisted that “students should have frequent contact with God’s Word contained in Scripture,”<sup>14</sup> and recalled that the Council’s Decree on the Formation of Priests affirmed, in regard to seminarians, that “they should learn to seek Christ in faithful meditation of the Word of God.”<sup>15</sup> The same conciliar text was mentioned in art. 26 of the letter *Lumen Ecclesiae* (20 November 1974) to the Master General of the Dominicans, commemorating the seventh centenary of the death of St. Thomas Aquinas: Pope Paul pointed out here that the hoped-for revival of scholastic and Thomistic studies in theology could and should go hand in hand with a more extensive and thorough-going use of Scripture.<sup>16</sup> To an Italian catechists’ congress on 8 July 1967 Pope Paul stressed the importance of using the very language of Scripture, in view of the lasting impression which it leaves on the mind:

... the teaching of religion should always have as its foundation and as its very texture the authoritative texts of Sacred Scripture, of the Church, and of the lives of the saints. The language of Scripture, when used appropriately, is that which leaves the deepest impression on the minds of young people — and, for that matter, all of the faithful.<sup>17</sup>

In his last Christmas address to the College of Cardinals (22 December 1977) Paul VI expressed his deep satisfaction at the recent completion of the revised Vulgate version of the Bible, observing that not only would the Latin liturgy now have “a text which is unified, scientifically accurate, coherent with tradition, hermeneutics and Christian linguistic usage,”<sup>18</sup> but also, “the text will be able to serve as a basis of biblical studies for our well-beloved clergy,

*cattolici e gli altri cultori di Sacra Teologia, collaborando insieme con zelo, si impegnino, sotto la vigilanza del Sacro Magistero, a studiare e spiegare con gli opportuni sussidi le divine Lettere, in modo che il più gran numero possibile di ministri della divina parola possano offrire con frutto al popolo di Dio l'alimento della Scrittura, che illumini la mente, corrobori le volontà, accenda i cuori degli uomini all'amore di Dio' (Dei verbum, 23). E questo sia detto particolarmente a voi, che formate i futuri sacerdoti” (AAS 62 [1970] 616-617). The English translation of the passage from *Dei verbum* is that of the Flannery edn.*

<sup>9</sup> “... la difusión de la cultura católica, principalmente la Palabra de Dios y de la doctrina de la Iglesia” (*Ins.* 1968, 787).

<sup>10</sup> AAS 61 [1969] 310-311.

<sup>11</sup> “Ascolto e Meditazione della Sacra Scrittura” (*Ins.* 1970, 689-693).

<sup>12</sup> “Ignoratio ... Scripturarum ignoratio Christi est” (*ibid.*, 691).

<sup>13</sup> “... inesauribile fecondità spirituale ... la fonte della predicazione e della catechesi ecclesiale” (*ibid.*).

<sup>14</sup> “... alumni frequens cum Dei verbis commercium instituant, quae in Sacris Scripturis continentur” (AAS 59 [1967] 36).

<sup>15</sup> “Christum querere eum debent in verbi Dei fideli meditatione” (*ibid.*, 37, citing *Optatam totius*, 8).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. AAS 66 (1974) 699.

<sup>17</sup> “... sia l'insegnamento della religione basato e tessuto continuamente su testi autorevoli della Sacra Scrittura, della Chiesa, dell'agiografia. Il linguaggio della Scrittura è quella che, opportunamente usato, produce l'impressione più profonda sull'animo dei giovani, come, del resto, di tutti i fedeli” (AAS 59 [1967] 799). Similar remarks were made to other young audiences: speaking to a Bologna charitable institution for homeless youths on 4 November 1968, the Pope commended its rule, which, being based on Scripture, enabled the light of biblical teaching to be diffused throughout every aspect of the communal life and work (cf. *Ins.* 1968, 575). Both to the Redemptorist order on 22 September 1967 (cf. AAS 59 [1967] 962), and on 22 February 1971 to the young priests studying for the Vatican diplomatic corps at the *Pontificia Accademia Ecclesiastica*, he underlined the importance of the study and meditation of Scripture. (cf. *Ins.* 1971, 134).

<sup>18</sup> “... un testo unitario, scientificamente ineccepibile, coerente alla tradizione, all'ermeneutica e al linguaggio cristiano” (AAS 70 [1978] 43).

especially in situations without ready access to specialized libraries, or where it is difficult to offer adequate studies.”<sup>19</sup> The Pope seems to have had in mind here the fact that the average priest studies a good deal more Latin than Greek or Hebrew in his seminary formation, so that this more “scientifically accurate” updating of the traditional Vulgate text would make accessible to the Roman-rite clergy a very close approximation to the original inspired texts. After all, the revised Vulgate, still bearing for the most part the indelible stamp of St. Jerome, usually gives a more literal, word-for-word, rendering of the ancient originals than today’s vernacular versions, in which stylistic considerations and the need for ready comprehension by modern readers often tend to blur the line that distinguishes translation from paraphrase.

The special value of Scripture for those leading consecrated lives under the evangelical counsels was repeatedly affirmed by Paul VI. To a congress of women religious superiors shortly after the Council (16 May 1966), he stressed the role which the Bible should play in that renewal of religious life which Vatican II had called for. A key aspect of this renewal, said the Pope, would be familiarity with the inspired books, especially the New Testament: Scripture should be meditated upon daily in order to know Christ better. He urged “familiarity with the inspired books of the Old and especially the New Testaments, according to the Council’s invitation: ‘let them have the sacred scripture at hand daily, so that they might learn ‘the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus’ (Phil. 3:8).”<sup>20</sup>

In an address to Trappist monks on 29 March 1969, Pope Paul exhorted them to continue fostering their tradition of silent meditation of the Scriptures: without this, he affirmed, the monastic life would lose much of its value.<sup>21</sup> Finally, the Pope had special words of encouragement for religious sisters in three consecutive years (1972-1974) when they were gathered in Rome for a “National Biblical Week” organized for their benefit by the *Associazione Biblica Italiana*. In these brief addresses he reiterated the great importance for all those living consecrated lives of the Scriptures as sources of spiritual nourishment and growth in “the sublime knowledge of Jesus Christ.”<sup>22</sup>

## 2. Scripture in Other Aspects of Post-Conciliar Renewal

Apart from the general areas of public and private use of Scripture in the common worship and personal spiritual formation of Catholics respectively, several other more specific areas of the Church’s life and apostolate were repeatedly singled out by Pope Paul VI as requiring renewal in the light of an increased attention to Sacred Scripture, or as areas in which Scripture would be especially important. We will continue now by surveying the Pope’s teaching on these areas: ecumenical and mission activity in general, the specific aspect of ecumenical activity represented by interconfessional translations of the Bible, and finally, the application of Scripture to practical life in the Church in the spheres of moral theology and canon law.

### (a) Scripture in General Ecumenical and Mission Activity

Since no less than three of the Council’s documents were dedicated entirely to the way in which the Catholic Church should approach other religions in our day, it is not surprising that the Pontiff who brought Vatican II to its completion should have devoted much attention to implementing the Council’s teachings and directives on these vitally important areas of the Church’s contemporary life.

#### 1. Major Interventions

In the major biblical allocution of his pontificate, an address of 14 March 1974 to the Pontifical Biblical Commission — the first plenary session of the Commission since its restructuring in virtue of the 1971 *Motu Proprio Sedula Cura* — Paul VI drew attention to the contribution expected from biblical scholars in furthering Christian unity, stressing that Scripture provided the central common ground for seeking together that unity which would necessarily be based on the message and example of Christ:

<sup>19</sup> “. . . il testo potrà servire come base sicura per gli studi biblici del diletteissimo Clero, specialmente là dove la consultazione di biblioteche specializzate o la diffusione di studi adeguati è più difficile” (*ibid.*).

<sup>20</sup> “. . . la familiarità con i libri ispirati dell’Antico e, specialmente, del Nuovo Testamento secondo l’invito del Concilio: ‘Abbiano quotidianamente fra le mani la Sacra Scrittura, affinché dalla lettura e dalla meditazione dei Libri Sacri imparino’ la sovreminente scienza di Gesù Cristo” (Phil. 3, 8)” (AAS 58 [1966] 491). The quotation is from Vatican II, *Perfectae Caritatis*, 6.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. AAS 61 (1969) 263-264.

<sup>22</sup> “. . . la sublima scienza di Gesù Cristo” (Wednesday audience of 6 September 1972, *Ins.* 1972, 862-863). Cf. also Wednesday audiences of 12 September 1973 (*Ins.* 1973, 837) and 11 September 1974 (*Ins.* 1974, 818).

The biblical scholar is called to contribute . . . to the ecumenical and missionary task of the Church. Not only is the Bible the privileged place of encounter with the Churches and ecclesial communities in imperfect communion with the Catholic Church; but all Christians, by going back to the message and example of Christ, should learn to purify and reconcile themselves in a way that prepares for and fosters the realization of that unity for which we hope.<sup>23</sup>

The Pope went on to recall the Council's teaching (*Ad gentes 22*) on the role of Scripture studies in seeking, to the extent possible, a sympathetic understanding of the cultural context of other world religions, with a view to incarnating Christianity more effectively in those cultures:

And We wish to recall once again that the Council, in the Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church, has insisted that we re-examine (*novæ investigationi subiciantur*) "the facts and words of Revelation contained in Sacred Scripture" in the context of the cultures and religions of the world, in order to understand them, to the extent possible, in a Christian light, and to "harmonize them with the way of life which is endorsed by Christian revelation."<sup>24</sup>

In his address of 25 September 1970 to the biennial *Settimana Biblica* for Italian Scripture scholars, the Pope added an ecumenical note to his comments on hermeneutics by praising the contribution of Protestant exegetes whom he described as "worthy of all respect" — something one would not have expected in a pontifical allocution before the Council. He noted with interest "the process which in these decades, through the contribution of scholars worthy of all respect, has oriented the exegesis of our separated Protestant brethren toward a complete understanding of the biblical text."<sup>25</sup>

In his concluding remarks on that occasion, Pope Paul once again mentioned "the ecumenical importance"<sup>26</sup> of the studies carried out by contemporary exegetes; and indeed, one year earlier, he had alluded to this dimension of the Church's use of Scripture in one of the most important documents of his pontificate, the Apostolic Constitution *Missale Romanum* (3 April 1969) which promulgated the revised eucharistic liturgy for the Roman rite. Speaking in this document of the more extensive use of Scripture in the new Lectionary, the Pope expressed the hope that this would be an instrument of the Holy Spirit in the quest for Christian unity. He referred to that hunger for the word of God "which, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we now see urging the people of the New Covenant towards the goal of perfect unity within the Church."<sup>27</sup>

On 19 April 1968, in another major allocution on biblical studies, the Pope extended this ecumenical dimension to include common initiatives with Jewish scholars. This was on the occasion of an international congress of Old Testament exegetes sponsored by the Pontifical Biblical Institute, and the Pontiff went so far as to affirm that the ecumenical value of this congress was its most interesting feature: "And the great interest which attaches to your congress, it seems to Us, is precisely your choice of a field of research wherein not only Christian theologians — both Catholic and Protestant — can meet and collaborate, but also scholars of the Jewish religion."<sup>28</sup>

The Pope went on to note that since the Old Testament books are honoured equally by Jews, Protestants and Catholics, they provide an opportunity not only for common study, but even for common prayer, especially in regard to the Psalms. This, he noted, could be a truly authentic and fruitful ecumenical endeavour:

The Old Testament is our common patrimony. The three families — Jewish, Protestant and Catholic — hold it in equal honour. Thus, they can join together in studying and venerating these holy Books. We would go further, and say that they can pray over these same texts. What prayer is there more profoundly religious, more universal in its object, more moving in its

<sup>23</sup> "Le bibliste est appelé à rendre un service analogue à la tâche oecuménique et missionnaire de l'Eglise. Non seulement la Bible est le terrain privilégié dans la rencontre avec les Eglises et les communautés ecclésiales en communion imparfaite avec l'Eglise catholique, mais tous les chrétiens doivent apprendre, par un ressourcement opéré dans le message et dans l'exemple du Christ, à se purifier et à se réconcilier d'une manière qui prépare et favorise la réalisation de l'unité espérée" (AAS 66 [1974] 239-240).

<sup>24</sup> "Et Nous voulons encore rappeler que le Concile, dans le Décret sur l'activité missionnaire de l'Eglise, a demandé instamment d'examiner de nouveau (*novæ investigationi subiciantur*) 'les faits et les paroles de la Revelation contenus dans la Sainte Ecriture' dans le contexte des cultures et des religions du monde, afin de comprendre ces dernières, dans toutes la mesure du possible, de façon chrétienne, et de 'les harmoniser avec le style de vie préconisé par la Révélation chrétienne'" (*ibid.*, 240).

<sup>25</sup> ". . . il processo che in questi decenni ha portato l'esegesi dei nostri fratelli separati del protestantesimo, attraverso l'apporto di studiosi degni di ogni rispetto, a puntare verso una comprensione totale del significato del testo biblico" (AAS 62 [1970] 616).

<sup>26</sup> ". . . l'importanza ecumenica" (*ibid.*, 619).

<sup>27</sup> ". . . qua, Spiritu Sancto duce, novi Foederis populus ad perfectam Ecclesiae unitatem veluti urgeri videatur" (AAS 61 [1969] 220).

<sup>28</sup> "Et le grand intérêt qui s'attache à vos Congrès, c'est précisément, Nous semble-t-il, le choix d'un domaine d'investigation où puissent se rencontrer et collaborer aussi bien des théologiens chrétiens — catholiques et protestants — que des savants de religion hébraïque" (AAS 60 [1968] 262).

tones, than that of the Psalms? It is in truth gratifying that the initiative has been taken to carry out this common study. Your previous congresses showed sufficiently how opportune such an initiative had now become. This is a truly authentic and fruitful form of ecumenical endeavor!<sup>29</sup>

Our final observation regarding Pope Paul's major acts concerning Sacred Scripture in relation to ecumenism is that he made a point of formalizing this aspect of the Church's biblical program at the juridical level. In the *Motu Proprio Sedula cura* (27 June 1971), by which the Pope reorganized the Pontifical Biblical Commission, he gave the Commission an explicit mandate to foster ecumenical relationships between different academic institutions. Regulation §12 of the *Motu Proprio* states: "It will be the responsibility of the Biblical Commission to promote close relations with the various Institutes of biblical studies, both Catholic and non-Catholic."<sup>30</sup>

## 2. Other Interventions

Turning to the less formal occasions on which Paul VI spoke of biblical matters, we find the same ecumenical and mission awareness recurring quite frequently. Within weeks of the promulgation of the Council's Constitution *Dei verbum*, the Pope told a Wednesday audience on 26 January 1966 that biblical studies should now be a means of "coming closer to our separated brethren";<sup>31</sup> and during his trip to ancient Christian sites in Turkey the following year, he emphasized to a gathering of Orthodox and Anglican leaders at Ephesus (26 July 1967) the ecumenical heritage of St. Paul's letters to the Asian churches, and quoted the Council's Decree on Ecumenism regarding the role of Scripture in promoting the reunion of Christians: "His epistles form part of Holy Scripture which, 'in the dialogue itself, is a precious instrument in the mighty hand of God for attaining that unity which the Saviour holds out to all men' (*Unitatis redintegratio*, 21)."<sup>32</sup>

To a plenary session of the Secretariat for Christian Unity on 13 November 1968 Pope Paul mentioned as one of the paths toward Christian unity "the study of Holy Scripture and authentic Tradition,"<sup>33</sup> and in his final address to the biennial *Settimana Biblica* (22 September 1976), devoted to the theme of evangelizing the poor (*evangelizare pauperibus*) as a sequel to the recently published Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, he told the assembled exegetes, "your task in this field is more important than ever."<sup>34</sup>

Paul VI's interest in the 'missionary' potential of Scripture was not confined to its use in directly spreading the Gospel among adherents of other religions. In accord with his predilection for extending the Church's dialogue to the world of secular culture — that Christian humanism which found its best-known magisterial expressions in the conciliar Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* and his own Encyclical *Ecclesiam suam* — Pope Paul took advantage of the United Nations' 'International Year of the Book' (1972) in order to patronize and promote an exhibition of rare biblical manuscripts and other memorabilia from the Vatican Library.

This was the kind of approach which was especially dear to the heart of Paul VI (and which had already found classic expression in his historic discourse to the United Nations General Assembly in New York on 4 October 1965). By thus creating increased consciousness of the Christian Scriptures even at the merely 'natural' level of their place in Western and Near Eastern culture, history, and art, he hoped to effectuate another 'opening to the world' which would sow seeds of grace, as it were, for future flowers and fruit. The skill and tact by which Pope Paul made such overtures was evident in his address inaugurating this biblical exhibition on 25 March 1972, in the presence of the UNESCO Director General and a distinguished scholarly audience. He began by mentioning what might have seemed to some the

<sup>29</sup> "L'Ancien Testament est notre bien commun. Les trois familles, juive, protestante et catholique, le tiennent également en honneur. Elles peuvent donc étudier et vénérer ensemble ces saints Livres. Nous dirons plus: elles peuvent prier sur les mêmes textes. Quelle prière plus profondément religieuse, plus universelle par son objet, plus émouvante par ses accents, que celle des Psaumes? Il est heureux, en vérité, que l'initiative ait été prise de cette étude en commun: vos précédents congrès ont assez montré combien elle s'était révélée opportune. Voilà une forme vraiment authentique et féconde de travail oecumenique!" (*ibid.*).

<sup>30</sup> "Commissionis Biblicae cura erit necessitudines fovere cum variis biblicorum studiorum Institutis sive catholicis sive non catholicis" (AAS 63 [1971] 668). It is interesting to note that an important first step in interconfessional Scripture studies had been made as early as 1935 by Pope Pius XI. In that year he gave a special permission to Fr. Augustin Bea, then Rector of the Pontifical Biblical Institute and already a consultant to the Biblical Commission, to take part with several other Biblicum professors at the first international conference on Old Testament exegesis held at Göttingen. Cf. S. Schmidt, S.J., "L'impegno ecumenico biblico del Cardinale Bea" (*Biblica* 63 [1982] 2).

<sup>31</sup> "... avvicinemento ai Fratelli separati" (*Ins.* 1966, 711).

<sup>32</sup> "Ses épîtres font partie des Saintes Ecritures qui, 'dans le dialogue lui-même sont des instruments insignes entre les mains puissantes de Dieu pour obtenir cette unité que le Sauveur offre à tous les hommes' (*Unitatis redintegratio*, 21)" (AAS 59 [1967] 852). Similar remarks were made some years later to leaders of the Lutheran World Federation in an address of 25 October 1976 (cf. AAS 68 [1976] 667-668).

<sup>33</sup> "... l'étude de la Sainte Ecriture et de l'authentique Tradition" (AAS 60 [1968] 796).

<sup>34</sup> "... il vostro compito in questo campo è quanto mai importante" (*Ins.* 1976, 729).

incongruity of the Church's promotion of her sacred Book in a seemingly non-sacred context:

A profane initiative — but only superficially! For everything which affects the human soul, the progress of knowledge, and the extension of culture, necessarily has a moral aspect which in one respect or another is a point of contact between man and God. By virtue of this fact it penetrates the religious domain and always receives the attentive solicitude of the Church.<sup>35</sup>

After referring to the Church's interest — based on these grounds — in promoting literacy and books in general, Pope Paul went on to recall that for believers the Bible is God's word as well as man's, highlighting its privileged place within that Church/World dialogue sought by Vatican Council II:

And certainly, it is most suggestive to reflect on God's choice of a book as a means of communicating with men, so as "to invite and admit them to enter into communion with himself" (*Dei verbum* 2), to make known to them, or recall to them over the course of centuries, his plan of love for his chosen people and for mankind. The Bible achieves perfectly, we could say, the most noble goal that a book has ever been able to set for itself: to bring man into contact with his Creator. And it does this, century after century, with a freshness that never grows old, and with a variety that enchants minds and hearts. . . .

It is all of this spiritual wealth that the Holy See wishes to call to the attention of men of good will. Needless to say, she does so without any ulterior motives of self-interested propaganda; rather, she wants to offer, with the most cordial simplicity, a new opportunity of approaching this unique book, which has played such a great role in the history of culture and of civilization. And to believers she addresses an invitation to deepen their knowledge of pages which are already familiar to them, and to find there, in accordance with the recent Council's injunction, a more intense nourishment for their spiritual life.<sup>36</sup>

This address can in fact be seen as a little model of the kind of dialogue which Pope Paul proposed in *Ecclesiam suam* as the Church's way forward for spreading the Gospel in the late twentieth century: never disguising or reducing the claims of revealed truth, yet presenting them with courtesy and serenity, and in such a way as to respect the truth already possessed by her varied interlocutors: in short, helping them to see that Catholicism, rather than negating that truth, elevates it and brings it to fruition.

### (b) Interconfessional Translations of Scripture

One particular aspect of ecumenical cooperation in the biblical field received special attention from Paul VI: the value of interconfessional translations of the Scriptures. While such projects were not touched upon explicitly in any of the Pope's major interventions, he repeatedly encouraged them on less formal occasions. One example was an allocution of 27 November 1976 to representatives of Catholic and non-Catholic groups engaging in this work. The Pope said he rejoiced in the fact that "Catholics and other Christians are reaching agreement on translations" in so many languages, "because, among other things, such agreement bears a strong and lively witness to the non-Christian world that Sacred Scripture is a common — or commonly shared — source of our Christian faith."<sup>37</sup> During two of the Pontiff's overseas journeys — in Uganda on 2 August 1969<sup>38</sup> and in the Philippines the following year — he again stressed the importance

<sup>35</sup> "Initiative profane: en apparence seulement! Car tout ce qui touche à l'âme humaine, au progrès de l'intelligence, à l'extension de la culture, a nécessairement un aspect moral qui rencontre par quelque côté le rapport de l'homme avec Dieu, pénètre de ce fait dans le domaine religieux et retient la sollicitude attentive de l'Eglise" (AAS 64 [1972] 304).

<sup>36</sup> "Et certes, il est singulièrement suggestif de penser à ce choix que Dieu a fait du livre pour se communiquer aux hommes, pour 'les inviter et les admettre à entrer en communion avec lui' (cf. *Dei Verbum*, 11), pour les faire connaître ou leur rappeler au cours des siècles, ses desseins d'amour sur son peuple et sur l'humanité. La Bible réalise en perfection, peut-on dire, le but le plus élevé qu'un livre ait jamais pu se proposer: faire entrer l'homme en contact avec son Créateur. Et elle le fait avec une fraîcheur qui traverse les siècles sans jamais vieillir, et avec une variété qui enchante l'esprit et le cœur. . . .

"C'est sur toute cette richesse spirituelle — et sans aucune arrière-pensée de propagande intéressée, inutile de le dire — que le Saint-Siège se propose d'attirer l'attention des hommes de bonne volonté. Il entend leur offrir, en toute simplicité et cordialité, une occasion nouvelle de s'approcher de ce livre unique, qui a joué un si grand rôle dans l'histoire de la culture et de la civilisation. Et aux croyants, il adresse une invitation à approfondir leur connaissance de ces pages qui leur sont familières, et à y nourrir plus intensément leur vie spirituelle, comme les y engage le récent Concile" (*ibid.*, 305-306).

<sup>37</sup> "Altra fonte di gioia è dunque per noi il fatto che cattolici ed altri cristiani raggiungano un accordo sulla traduzione di tutte queste lingue perché, tra l'altro, questo accordo testimonia davanti al mondo non cristiano e con vivida forza che la Sacra Scrittura è una fonte comune, o comunemente condivisa, della nostra fede cristiana" (*Ins.* 1976, 983).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. AAS 61 (1969) 591.

of these joint initiatives. On the latter occasion (29 November 1970) he drew attention to his own sponsorship of this ecumenical project, expressing his satisfaction that there were now “interconfessional translations of the Bible in five of the languages of this country, made in accordance with the guidelines approved by Us and by the authorities of the United Bible Societies.”<sup>39</sup>

The background to this sponsorship was made clear by Pope Paul in an address of the previous year (16 April 1969), given in Rome to an international congress of Catholic Biblical Associations. This discourse is of particular interest, not only for what it shows about the Pope’s desire for ecumenical progress through common scriptural initiatives, but also insofar as it reveals once again the very high esteem and confidence which he placed in Cardinal Augustin Bea as an adviser in both biblical and ecumenical matters:

On April 24 of last year We were pleased to receive the late Cardinal Bea and some of you, who are also present today, at the end of the first conference held in Rome to study how Catholic Biblical Associations and others engaged in the biblical apostolate could implement the very important goals set forth in Chapter Six of the Second Vatican Council’s Constitution on Divine Revelation. It is a great consolation to Us that so many others have joined you in this vital work, and that the study has resulted in practical proposals and programs.

We felt it was a providential thing when Cardinal Bea came to Us not long after the close of the Ecumenical Council and asked if the Secretariat which he headed<sup>40</sup> might begin studying the implementation of the final chapter in the conciliar document on the Bible. As a Scripture scholar, Cardinal Bea was esteemed by Christians everywhere; as President of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, he had won the confidence and even affection of leaders and members of Christian Churches and Communities throughout the world.<sup>41</sup>

The Pope concluded by specifying the various concrete programs which were now under way to implement Cardinal Bea’s vision, to which he had given his wholehearted blessing:

We were pleased to approve the Cardinal’s request, and We are very grateful that the work for easy access to the Scriptures that he then began has produced such fruitful results: the “Guiding Principles for Interconfessional Cooperation in Translating the Bible,” published on Pentecost Sunday last year; various programs of cooperation with the United Bible Societies which have been approved by Episcopal Conferences in many countries and which make the Scriptures available to people who would not otherwise have them; and finally the proposal for an international Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate, which is intended to serve the Bishops in their pastoral responsibilities concerning wider use and knowledge of the Bible.<sup>42</sup>

### (c) Scripture in Moral Theology and Canon Law

Finally, Pope Paul devoted particular attention to the role Scripture should play after Vatican Council II in two closely-related areas of the Church’s life: her study and presentation of ethics and ecclesiastical law. While he repeatedly stressed the Church’s traditional teaching, repeated by Vatican II,<sup>43</sup> that “the study of Sacred Scripture should be the soul of theology,”<sup>44</sup> the Pope applied this teaching about theology in general to moral theology in particular, and stressed that our understanding of ethics must be rooted in biblical principles.

<sup>39</sup> *Ins.* 1970, 1272.

<sup>40</sup> That is, the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. For an appreciation of Cardinal Bea’s labours over many years in promoting dialogue and collaboration with non-Catholic Christians in the field of Scripture studies, cf. S. Schmidt, *op. cit.* (cited in n. 62 above), 1-21. Schmidt was for many years Bea’s personal secretary.

<sup>41</sup> AAS 61 (1969) 309-310.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, 310.

<sup>43</sup> cf. *Dei Verbum* 24, *Optatam totius* 16. Contrary to what has often been said since the Council, this was not an original contribution or development of Vatican II. As note 3 to DV 24 makes clear, the Council was simply quoting the encyclicals *Providentissimus Deus* (1893) and *Spiritus Paraclitus* (1920) in recommending Scripture study as “the soul of theology” (cf. AAS 58 [1966] 829).

<sup>44</sup> Cf. allocation of 10 September 1969 (*Ins.* 1969, 1056); address at *Settimana Biblica*, 29 September 1972 (AAS 64 [1972] 635); address to P.B.C., 14 March 1974 (AAS 66 [1974] 239).



## 1. Major Interventions

This facet of Pope Paul's love for the Scriptures was evident in several of his major discourses touching theology and exegesis. Indeed, every one of his statements about the importance of Scripture for moral theologians was in the context of an allocution which, according to the criteria we have adopted in this thesis, was a "major" intervention. At the *Biblicum's* 1968 congress on Old Testament studies, he told the assembled Catholic, Protestant and Jewish scholars that in an increasingly "desacralized" world marked by a turbulent confusion of ideas and interpretations, "your specialization leads you to be in a certain way witnesses and heralds of traditional values."<sup>45</sup>

In the most extensive biblical allocution of his pontificate, his address of 14 March 1974 to the reorganized Pontifical Biblical Commission, the Pope recalled that Vatican II had specified that moral theology must be nourished more fully by biblical doctrine, since the Scriptures are our sources of "religious and moral principles." The Council, he noted,

has invited [those forming future priests] to devote "special care . . . to the perfecting of moral theology" in such a way that "its scientific presentation should draw more fully on the teaching of Holy Scripture" (*Optatam totius*: 16), that is to say, on that "divine Word [from which the Church] draws religious and moral principles," as the Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* puts it (no. 33).<sup>46</sup>

The Pope continued by elaborating on these conciliar statements, observing that without this scriptural focus, moral theology runs the risk of becoming excessively dry, philosophical, and remote from concrete human reality. The biblical vision of man, he noted, keeps us conscious of being sinners, yet redeemed by Christ, and called to live in justice and piety in the light of Christian freedom and hope:

Without a clear biblical foundation, moral theology risks falling into the aridity of philosophical schematizations, and of becoming alienated from man in his concrete historical reality as a creature of God: a creature wounded by sin but saved in the Christ who has imparted to him His spirit of love and of liberty, "so as to live in this world with moderation, justice and piety, awaiting the hoped-for blessedness" (Tit. 2:12).<sup>47</sup>

Such remarks seem to be directed at a certain type of treatment given in some manuals of moral theology commonly in use before the Council. In another important allocution later on in the same year (16 December 1974), given to the newly-formed International Theological Commission, the Pope returned to this theme, recalling once again the appeal of *Optatam totius*, cited above, and further specifying that moral teaching should be formulated in more clearly scriptural terms: "You will be concerned for the progress of theological studies relating to the use of Scripture, so as to formulate correct definitions of moral norms, according to the legitimate rules of faith, exegesis and hermeneutics."<sup>48</sup>

The Pope continued by enumerating some key scriptural themes which needed to be integrated more adequately into Catholic expositions of the moral life: baptism and its corresponding responsibilities; life in the Spirit; justice and the Kingdom of God, and the Johannine understanding of Christian communion with God:

Moreover, you will bring to light the supreme principles of biblical morality, namely: participation in the paschal mystery through the sacrament of baptism, together with the duties and responsibilities deriving from it (Rom. 8); life in the Spirit (Gal. 5); zeal for the coming justice of the Kingdom of God (Mat. 5-7); and the Christian's communion with God, which is life, love, and light (I Jn.). Finally, you will bring to light those norms found in Sacred Scripture regarding the bonds which should unite man with God and his brothers, and regarding charity, justice, and temperance.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>45</sup> "... votre spécialisation vous amène à être en quelque sorte les témoins et les hérauts des valeurs traditionnelles" (AAS 60 [1968] 263).

<sup>46</sup> "... a invité à apporter 'un soin particulier à l'enseignement de la théologie morale', de sorte que 'l'exposé scientifique de cette matière soit davantage nourri de la doctrine de la Saint Ecriture' (*Optatam totius*: 16), c'est-à-dire des 'paroles de Dieu, où — comme dit la Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* — on puise les principes de l'ordre religieux et moral' (no. 33)" (AAS 66 [1974] 239).

<sup>47</sup> "Sans un fondement biblique clair, la théologie morale risque de se dessécher en des schématisations philosophiques et de devenir étrangère à l'homme dans sa réalité historique concrète de créature de Dieu, blessée par le péché mais sauvée dans le Christ qui lui a conféré son esprit d'amour et de liberté, 'pour vivre en ce siècle présent avec modération, justice et piété, dans l'attente de la bienheureuse espérance' (Tit. 2,12)" (*ibid.*).

<sup>48</sup> "*Operam impenditis, ut theologica studia de Sacrae Scripturae usu progrediantur ad recte definiendas morales normas secundum legitima fidei vel disciplinae exegeticae et hermeneutice praecepta*" (AAS 67 [1975] 42).

<sup>49</sup> "*Summa praeterea moralis biblicae praescripta in lucem proferetis, quae sunt: participatio mysterii paschalis per baptismi sacramentum, atque ex eo derivantia officia et munera (Rom. 8); vita in Spiritu ducta (Gal. 5); studium iustitiae Regni Dei comparandae (Matth. 5-7); hominis christiani cum*

Above all, the Pope stressed, the moral theologian must work under the guidance of the Church's Magisterium: "Therefore in all investigation of the sources of our knowledge of the Christian moral law, it is above all else necessary to return to the most firm principles of biblical revelation which, with the assistance of the Church's Magisterium, are clarified in that authentic sense which in every age reaches man's innermost recesses."<sup>50</sup> It seems clear from these guidelines that Pope Paul was especially conscious of the need to present moral theology not merely in terms of a list of forbidden or permitted classes of activity, but also as a vision of a life lived in intimate communion with Jesus Christ, in which the dynamic presence of the Spirit is what motivates his followers to observe concrete and specific moral norms. In another important allocution, given on 29 September 1972 to the *Associazione Biblica Italiana* during its annual symposium, the Pope commended the assembled scholars for having chosen as their theme the biblical foundations of moral theology, and for having invited specialists in that discipline to participate in the proceedings. This, he said, was "a happy example of that interdisciplinary collaboration which, at a time of ever more intense specialization among the various branches of knowledge, is increasingly seen as opportune and necessary."<sup>51</sup>

## 2. Other Interventions

To conclude, it is appropriate to mention in this context of Christian 'praxis' Paul VI's concern that in the revision of the Church's code of law in the light of Vatican II's orientations, more attention should be given to Scripture. In an allocution to an international Canon Law congress on 19 January 1970, the Pope was very frank about the far-reaching nature of the changes this implied. The Council, he asserted,

has deepened the Church's doctrine, emphasizing the mystical aspect which is proper to it, and has therefore obliged canonists to search out more deeply in Sacred Scripture and theology the rationale for their own teaching. This has shaken canonists out of their habitual attitude, which was often that of basing their teaching on centuries of unquestioned tradition.<sup>52</sup>

The Pope evidently felt that this observation was important enough to bear repetition: he cited it verbatim in addressing the participants in another Canon Law congress three years later (17 September 1973).<sup>53</sup>

The papal interventions we have surveyed in this article call to mind the concluding section of Vatican II's Constitution on Divine Revelation. After devoting most of its attention to doctrinal and hermeneutical matters, *Dei Verbum* concludes with a pastoral exhortation (Chapter VI) entitled "Sacred Scripture in the Life of the Church". Here the Council lays down basic pastoral guidelines for promoting and integrating the study and use of the Scriptures in all aspects of the Church's activity. We have now seen that Paul VI, in many speeches, writings, and practical decisions, took very seriously his responsibility of leadership in implementing these expressed wishes of the Council Fathers. Indeed, he amplified their program by promoting an ecumenical, interconfessional, and cultural use of the Bible that is not expressly mentioned in these final practical directives of *Dei Verbum*.

*Deo communio, qui est vita, et amor, et lux (I Io.). Quae denique in Sacris Scripturis expressa inveniuntur praecipua de hominis cum Deo et fratribus vinculis iungendis, de caritate, de iustitia, de temperantia in lucem proferetis"* (*ibid.*, 42-43).

<sup>50</sup> "In omni ergo pervestigazione fontium Christianae legis moralis oportet ante omnia et necessario recurrere ad firmissima revelationis Biblicae principia quae, auxiliante ipso Ecclesiae Magisterio, illustrantur secundum illam suam significationem quae in omni aetate attingit intimum hominem" (*ibid.*, 43).

<sup>51</sup> "... un felice esempio di quella collaborazione interdisciplinare che, nel ramificarsi sempre più fitto delle specializzazioni, viene ormai invocata da più parti come opportuna e necessaria" (AAS 64 [1972] 634). We shall return to this papal address further on in this study, when dealing in more detail with Pope Paul's comments on hermeneutics. Cf. below, Chapter 4, section 3.

<sup>52</sup> "Esso ha approfondito la dottrina della Chiesa, ha messo in rilievo l'aspetto mistico che le è proprio, ed ha perciò obbligato il Canonista a ricercare più profondamente nella Sacra Scrittura e nella teologia le ragioni della propria dottrina. Questo fatto lo ha scosso nella sua abitudine, solita per lo più a fondare in una secolare e indiscussa tradizione il suo insegnamento" (*Ins.* 1970, 54-55).

<sup>53</sup> "... ha obbligato il Canonista a ricercare più profondamente nella Sacra Scrittura e nella teologia le ragioni della propria dottrina" (*Ins.* 1973, 846). In promulgating the new Code ten years later, Pope John Paul II also emphasized that this scriptural aspect of canon law — which had been revised mainly under his predecessor's guidance — was of fundamental importance. He observed: "Another question arises: Just what is the Code of Canon Law? To answer this question correctly, it is necessary to recall the long heritage of law contained in the books of the Old and New Testaments. It is there that the whole juridical and legislative tradition of the Church finds its source. (*Altera oritur quaestio, quidnam sit Codex Iuris Canonici. Cui interrogationi ut rite respondeatur, mente repetenda est longinqua illa hereditas iuris, quae in libris Veteri et Novi Testamenti continetur, ex qua tota traditio iuridica et legifera Ecclesiae, tamquam a suo fonte, originem ducit*)" Apostolic Constitution *Sacrae disciplinae leges*, 25 January 1983, (AAS 75 [1983] Pars II, x).