

Introduction

Pope Pius XII said in *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (Promotion of Biblical Studies, 1943) “For as the substantial Word of God became like to men in all things, ‘except sin,’ so the words of God, expressed in human language, are made like to human speech in every respect, except error” (no. 37).

No. 103 We venerate the Word of God as we venerate the Eucharist.

No. 104 In the Scriptures our heavenly Father comes lovingly to meet his children and talk to them.

Inspiration: CCC 105-108

The Catholic Church teaches that divine revelation comes to us through three channels: the Bible, Tradition, and the Magisterium. These three channels “are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others” (*Dei Verbum* 10 Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Pope Paul VI, 1965).

The term “inspired” comes from the Greek word, *theopneustos*, which means ‘God breathed’ (*Theos*, “God,” *pneo*, “to breathe”).

An important term to learn in relation to this subject of “inspiration” is “divine accommodation” or “condescension.” Succinctly put, divine accommodation is the “adaptation and adjustment of the transcendent to the mundane” (Stephen D. Benin: *The Footprints of God*, State University of New York Press. 1993 p. xvii).

What Inspiration Is Not

1. First, inspiration is not God merely assisting man in the writing process. God does not merely assist man; He causes man to write what He wills.
2. Secondly, God does not approve the work of the writers after they are finished. In other words, God does not review what man has written, decide it coincides with His will and subsequently approve the work, putting as it were, His *imprimatur* (stamp of approval) on it.
3. Thirdly, the individuals that God employed in the writing of Scripture, such as Moses, Matthew, Peter and Paul were not passive recipients, merely typing out what God had recorded on his Divine dictation machine.

No, God “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” (DV 11).

Pope Leo XIII teaches in his encyclical *Providentissimus Deus: On The Study of Sacred Scripture* (1893) “It would be utterly impious to limit inspiration to some portions only of Sacred Scripture or to admit that the sacred author himself has erred.”

Three Main Points Related to DV 11-12

- a. Everything asserted by the human authors is asserted by the Holy Spirit as well.
The Holy Spirit is the principal author and men are the instrumental authors.
- b. The bible is understood to be inerrant, without error, in everything that it asserts to be true. Incapable of teaching error in faith and morals but history as well.
 - i. Not history in the secular sense but salvation history, which can be different.
 - ii. We don’t agree with fundamentalists who would assert that the bible is without error in matters of science. Pope Benedict XV said that the bible is not inerrant in science because science has to do with appearances and history with facts.
- c. The reason that God has spoken is for the sake of our salvation.
 - i. This clause explains the purpose of God speaking through scripture. It is not a restriction on inerrancy.
 - ii. This means that our interpretation should always keep salvation in mind.

Holy Spirit, Interpreter of Scripture: No. 109-111

1. Because there are two authors we must give time to discover what the intention of both were. We always begin with the literal.

2. We must also keep in mind that the central focus of the Scriptures is the incarnation of Christ and his saving work. The purpose of revelation is for all people to share in the divine nature. Ultimately the blessing, the beatific vision. This will take a “sacramental imagination.”

This is what makes the bible so unique, the “words signify things, but the things that are signified also signify other things.” (Hahn & CCC 117)

St. Thomas quotes a formulation from Gregory the Great: “[Sacred Scripture] by the manner of its speech transcends every science, because in one and the same sentence, while it describes a fact, it reveals a mystery” (*Summa Theologica* I,1,10).

As an old saying put it, the New Testament lies hidden in the Old and the Old Testament is unveiled in the New. (CCC 129)

Three Criteria For Interpreting Scripture: No. 111-114

No. 112 Be especially attentive “to the content and unity of the whole Scripture”.

No. 113 Read the Scripture within “the living Tradition of the whole Church”.

No. 114 Be attentive to the analogy of faith.

The Two Senses of Scripture: No. 115-118

The Catechism makes clear that accurate interpretation rests on two principles:

1. CCC 134 “All Sacred Scripture is but one book, and that one book is Christ, ‘because all divine Scripture speaks of Christ, and all divine Scripture is fulfilled by Christ’ (Hugh of St. Victor).
2. CCC 128 we read: The Church, as early as apostolic times, and then constantly in her Tradition, has illumined the unity of the divine plan in the two Testaments through typology, which discerns in God’s work of the Old Covenant prefigurations of what he accomplished in the fullness of time in the person of the incarnate Son.”

Literal

1. Literal (historical) –human author’s intention.
 - a. We need to do three things according to article 12 of DV to discover the literal.
 - i. Determine literary form
 - ii. Grammatical Analysis
 - iii. Literary Criticism
3. We need to determine the historical aspect.

“Catholic exegesis is concerned with history because of the historical character of biblical revelation. Although the Bible is not a history book in the modern sense and although it includes literary genres that are poetic, symbolic and imaginative, Scripture bears witness to a historical reality, i.e., the saving actions of God in the past which have implications for the present.” (Dr. Peter Williamson)

“Although Catholic exegesis employs a historical method it is not historicist or positivist, confining its view of truth to what can be demonstrated by supposedly objective historical analysis.” (Williamson)

Three Aspects of the Spiritual Sense

Then there are three spiritual senses (CCC 117): (again, due to unity of God's plan)

- A. Allegorical – the text's significance in Christ (past)
- B. Moral – the text's significance to our lives of faith (present)
- C. Anagogical – the text's eternal significance (future)

Unity of the Old & New Testaments: No. 128-130

St. Augustine said, "the N.T. Lies hidden in the Old and the Old Testament is unveiled in the New."

Types

This kind of reading the text is not new. Read CCC 128-130.

- Paul describes Adam as a "type" of Jesus Christ in Romans 5:14.
- Paul tells the story of Abraham's sons and then says, "this is an allegory" (Gal. 4:24-26). Paul isn't saying that they didn't happen but that they point to something greater.
- Peter writes about how Noah and the Ark prefigured baptism which saves you now (1 Peter 3:20-21).
- Jesus himself read the bible this way. He referred to Jonah (Matt 12:39), Solomon (Matt 12:42), the Temple (John 2:19) and the brazen serpent (John 3:14) as "signs" pointing to himself.
- In Luke 24 on the road to Emmaus, Jesus used Moses and the prophets and interpreted all of them in a way that pointed to himself.
- The Church Fathers continued to read the text this way. Saint Justin Martyr being one of the best. Ephrem, Athanasius, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, Gregory the Great all used spiritual exegesis to draw forth doctrine and mystical riches.
- The CCC endorses spiritual or theological exegesis (CCC 115). "According to an ancient tradition, one can distinguish between two senses of Scripture: the literal and the spiritual, the latter being subdivided into the allegorical, moral and anagogical senses. The profound concordance of the four senses guarantees all its richness to the living reading of Scripture in the Church."

Man's Response To God, Faith: No. 142-175

No. 142-143 Our response is faith. This involves both the intellect and will in what the church calls "the obedience of faith."