

## THE BIBLICAL COMMISSION'S INSTRUCTION ON THE HISTORICAL TRUTH OF THE GOSPELS

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EVER SINCE the publication of the Apostolic Letter of Leo XIII, *Vigilantiae*,<sup>1</sup> which set up the Pontifical Biblical Commission, it has been regarded as a sort of watchdog of Catholic Biblical studies. To anyone who has followed the activity of that Commission in recent years, it is apparent that it has taken on a much more positive role. Its *responsa* (the so-called "decrees") have given way to *instrucciones*, which though they are usually occasioned by errors or excessive tendencies in certain biblical matters and contain cautions or warnings, have normally been much more positive in character. Its image, in the Catholic world at least, is no longer that of the vigilance committee that it once presented. Among many outsiders, however, this image is unfortunately still rather prevalent. In any case, the recent publication of an Instruction by the Biblical Commission<sup>2</sup> offers an occasion to see how it is handling a problem that vexes modern students of the Bible both in and outside of the Roman communion.

The Instruction deals with "the historical truth of the Gospels" and treats of a subject which has been the concern of not a few Catholics in recent years. That an age-old problem had been posed in a new form was evident from the *Monitum* published by the Holy Office in June 1961 on the same subject.<sup>3</sup> That document, however, was quite nega-

<sup>1</sup> *Acta sanctae sedis* 35 (1902-3) 234-38; *Enchiridion biblicum* (hereafter *EB*) 137-48.

<sup>2</sup> "Instructio de historica Evangeliorum veritate," *Osservatore romano*, May 14, 1964, p. 3 (with an Italian translation of the same). An English translation of the Instruction appeared in Catholic newspapers in this country. Since this translation is faulty in places and unreliable in the crucial paragraphs, we append to this article an improved translation which we have prepared from the Latin text in the *Osservatore romano*. This version preserves the paragraphs of the original. Only certain paragraphs in the Latin text are numbered with Arabic numerals. In order to facilitate reference to the text, we have added Roman numerals to all the paragraphs of the Instruction.—*Postscript*: After this article and translation were prepared, the secretary of the Biblical Commission sent out an English version of the Instruction. It can be found in the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 26 (July, 1964) 305-12; *Tablet* (London) 218 (May 30, 1964) 617-19.

<sup>3</sup> *Acta apostolicae sedis* (hereafter *AAS*) 53 (1961) 507; cf. *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES* 22 (1961) 442-44.

tive in character and shed no light on the problem. The Instruction of the Biblical Commission, coming at this time, is a positive document of no little importance. Given the trend of modern Catholic Gospel studies and the reaction to them in the Church at large, there is reason to study it in some detail in order to appreciate its significance.

That it is a well-nuanced document was evident from newspaper reports announcing its publication; some of them interpreted it in almost diametrically opposed senses.<sup>4</sup> But when it is examined closely, it is seen to be a document which does not commit the Catholic student of the Gospels to any fundamentalistic literalness in the matter of their historicity. It does not contain a condemnation of any specific modern opinion about the historical value of the Gospels. Though it catalogues in some detail questionable presuppositions of many Form Critics, this is done to clear the way to a recognition of the value of the method of Form Criticism itself. The document will go down in history as the first official statement which openly countenances the method itself and frankly admits the distinction of the three stages of tradition in the Gospel material which has emerged from a Form-Critical study of the Gospels.

It is entitled *Instructio de historica Evangeliorum veritate*. A close analysis of the text reveals that the most important word in the title is not the adjective *historica*—which might have been one's initial impression—but the preposition *de*. Significantly, par. III,<sup>5</sup> which states the problem, omits the word "historical": ". . . quod multa scripta vulgantur, quibus veritas factorum et dictorum quae in Evangeliiis continentur, in discrimen vocatur."<sup>6</sup> In the light of the rest of the document the omission seems intentional and therefore significant. In fact, though *historica veritas* appears in the title of the Instruction, it is used

<sup>4</sup> *The New York Times*, May 14, 1964, p. 37: "Vatican Cautions Students of Bible: Rejects as Dangerous and Invalid Any Conclusions Not Arising from Faith: Inquiry Limits Defined: Modern Historical Methods Accepted If Scholars Are Wary of 'Prejudices'" (by Robert C. Doty).—*New York Herald Tribune*, May 14, 1964, p. 7: "Vatican Green Light to Bible Scholars" (by Sanche de Gramont).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. end of n. 1 supra.

<sup>6</sup> This sentence echoes the words of the *Monitum* of the Holy Office. But what is significant is the simpler phraseology which is now used. The *Monitum* had complained of opinions and views which were circulating, "quae in discrimen adducunt germanam veritatem historicam et obiectivam Scripturae sacrae non modo Veteris Testamenti . . . , verum et Novi, etiam quoad dicta et facta Christi Iesu."

only once in the text of the document, and that in a sentence in which is decried a certain philosophical or theological presupposition of the Form-Critical method to which no Catholic exegete would subscribe anyway.<sup>7</sup> In none of the positive directives does the phrase *historica veritas* reappear. It is evident, therefore, that the Biblical Commission is far more interested in sketching with broad lines the character of the Gospel truth than in just reasserting that the Gospels are historical.

After three introductory paragraphs the Commission addresses directives to (a) exegetes, (b) professors of Scripture in seminaries and similar institutions, (c) preachers, (d) those who publish for the faithful, and (e) directors of biblical associations. Under (d) ordinaries are reminded to be vigilant of publications on Scripture. Except for the first case—and this omission may be a typographical error—the groups addressed are clearly indicated in italics. In the directives addressed to the exegetes, italics are again used to indicate three stages of tradition discussed there. It is in this way that the document has been structured.<sup>8</sup> The conclusion consists of two paragraphs, in the last of which appears the significant approval of Pope Paul VI, dated April 21, 1964.

#### INTRODUCTION

The Church's concern for the Scriptures is recalled as a background for the labor of the Catholic exegete. He is urged to rely not only on his own resources, but also on God's help and the light of the Church. In par. II joy is expressed at the growing number of expert interpreters of the Bible in the Church today, and an explicit recognition is made of the fact that they are following papal encouragements. This clause was undoubtedly incorporated to offset the criticism heard at times in Catholic circles that "exegetes" are undermining the faith with their new interpretations. There follows a counsel to charity which is needed

<sup>7</sup> The Latin text reads: "Alii e falsa notione fidei procedunt ac si ipsa veritatem historicam non curet, immo cum eadem componi non possit" (par. V).—The immediately following sentence uses the phrase "historicam vim et indolem documentorum revelationis," an expression which has a wider connotation.

<sup>8</sup> The italics of the original are preserved in our translation, so that the structure of the document should be evident. The principle underlying the use of Arabic numbers for certain paragraphs changes after a while, so that they are not a real guide to the structure of the Instruction.

in this area so peculiarly prone to emotional discussions. It repeats the counsels of *Divino afflante Spiritu* and *Vigilantiae*. Tucked away between the quotations is the remark that not even Jerome was always successful in handling the scriptural difficulties of his time. Par. III sets forth the problem and states the Commission's purpose in issuing the Instruction.

#### TO THE EXEGETES

Eight of the remaining fifteen paragraphs of the Instruction are addressed to the exegetes (par. IV–XI), and when they are compared with the rest, it is evident that the essential directives of the document are found here; for the directives to seminary professors, preachers, popular writers, and directors of biblical associations are hortatory and prudential. There are, of course, exhortations and cautions which are addressed to exegetes, but it is only in this part of the Instruction that one finds directives of a positive doctrinal nature.<sup>9</sup>

Par. IV contains an exhortation addressed to *exegeta catholicus*. He is counseled to derive profit from all the contributions of former interpreters, especially of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church—in this, following the example of the Church itself. But he is also to utilize the norms of “rational and Catholic hermeneutics.” What apparently is meant here by “rational” is the universally admitted norms of criticism that prevail in all branches of literature. Such would be the norms of

<sup>9</sup> As in the case of the *responsa* and other *instruções* of the Biblical Commission, this is not an infallible document. The *Motu proprio* of Pius X on the decisions of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, *Praestantia sacrae Scripturae* (ASS 40 [1907] 723–26; EB 96–98; RSS [= *Rome and the Study of Scripture*, 5th ed.; St. Meinrad, 1953] 40–42), declared that these decisions were “very useful for the proper promotion and direction of biblical studies along safe lines.” This formulates their utilitarian and practical aim or purpose. However, Pius X added: “. . . all are bound in conscience to submit to the decisions of the Biblical Commission which have been given in the past and which shall be given in the future, in the same way as to the decrees which pertain to doctrine issued by the Sacred Congregations and approved by the Sovereign Pontiff” (RSS 41). This statement of Pius X was reiterated in the Commission's *Responsum* of Feb. 27, 1934 (EB 519). Debate ensued among theologians whether the decisions of the Biblical Commission were disciplinary or doctrinal; most seem to think that they are not merely disciplinary, but indirectly doctrinal. There was also a discussion whether they were concerned with *veritas* or *securitas*. Cf. L. Pirot, “Commission biblique,” *Dictionnaire de la Bible, Supplément 2*, 111–13. For a recent quasi-official clarification of the value of the Biblical Commission's “decrees,” see E. F. Siegman, “The Decrees of the Pontifical Biblical Commission: A Recent Clarification,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 18 (1956) 23–29.

literary and historical criticism that guide any philologist or interpreter of ancient documents or literature. The addition of "Catholic" defines further norms that must guide the Catholic interpreter (e.g., that the Bible is a collection of inspired books, that revelation is contained in them, that a certain number of texts have a traditional meaning resolving the "open," indecisive sense which at times is all that can be arrived at by philological norms, etc.). What is specifically meant by the norms of rational and Catholic hermeneutics is further indicated by the recommendation of the aids offered by historical method. Next, the Commission urges the exegete once again to study the literary form used by the sacred writer and recalls the words of Pius XII that this is his duty and that it may not be neglected.<sup>10</sup> The last sentence of this par. IV, urging the study of the nature of the Gospel testimony, outlines in brief the bulk of the directives addressed to the exegetes (par. VII-X).

Par. V is a statement about the use of the Form-Critical method in the study of the Gospels. It clearly distinguishes what the Commission calls the "reasonable elements" (*sana elementa*) in the method itself from its questionable "philosophical and theological principles." Such presuppositions have often come to be mixed with it and tend to vitiate the conclusions of the method itself. This is not the place to explain in detail the method or its defective presuppositions.<sup>11</sup> One should rather note that the six specific "principles" listed in the Instruction are rejected by Catholic exegetes. The six presuppositions

<sup>10</sup> The outspoken opponent of the study of the literary forms of the Bible, E. Cardinal Ruffini, is himself a member of the Biblical Commission which now publicly reiterates Pius XII's injunction to the exegetes of the Church to pursue such study, especially with regard to the Gospels. Card. Ruffini's rejection of this type of study is found in his article, "Generi letterari e ipotesi di lavoro nei recenti studi biblici," *Osservatore romano*, August 24, 1961, p. 1. Appearing in such a prominent organ, and having been sent by the Sacred Congregation of Studies and Universities to the rectors of all Italian seminaries, it was accorded no little respect. It appeared in an English version in many American Catholic newspapers; cf. "Literary Genres and Working Hypotheses in Recent Biblical Studies," *American Ecclesiastical Review* 145 (1961) 362-65. In this article Card. Ruffini went so far in his disagreement as to quote Pius XII indirectly and to use the word "absurdity" in connection with the study of these forms. The present Instruction should put an end to the confusion that his article created.

<sup>11</sup> For a brief sketch and discussion of the problems involved, see A. Wikenhauser, *New Testament Introduction* (New York, 1958) pp. 253-77; A. H. McNeile, *An Introduction to the Study of the New Testament* (rev. C. S. C. Williams; Oxford, 1953) pp. 46-58.

listed are: (1) the denial of a supernatural order; (2) the denial of God's intervention in the world in strict revelation; (3) the denial of the possibility and existence of miracles—the first three are inheritances from rationalism; (4) the incompatibility of faith with historical truth; (5) an almost a priori denial of the historical value and nature of the documents of revelation; (6) a disdain for apostolic testimony, and undue emphasis on the creative community in the early Church.<sup>12</sup> Having made this important distinction between the "reasonable elements" and the "philosophical and theological principles" of the Form-Critical method, the Commission proceeds in par. VI to make use of another distinction, which is really the fruit of a sane use of the Form-Critical method applied to the Gospels. In fact, it merely adopts a distinction that has been used for some time now among Catholic exegetes,<sup>13</sup> which enables one to evaluate "the nature of Gospel testimony, the religious life of the early churches, and the sense and value of tradition" (par. IV).

The "three stages of tradition" (*tria tempora traditionis*) have often been called by other names, and this may be a bit confusing at first. However, the different terminology merely brings out other aspects of the problem, and in some cases it is due to the historical development of the Form-Critical debate itself. Some writers speak of the three

<sup>12</sup> It is the sixth item which seems to be directed against the original German Protestant Form Critics, whose ideas of *Gemeinde-theologie* are apparently rejected. Cf. V. T. O'Keefe, "Towards Understanding the Gospels," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 21 (1959) 171-89.—There is, of course, a sense in which it is legitimate to say that the early community "created" a story about Jesus. Let us take, for instance, the question of divorce. The *Sitz im Leben* may well have been either debate or the solving of some specific case of conscience ("Do we Christians permit divorce or not?"). Words of Jesus on the subject were recalled, and the story was "created" at that time. Such a story was likely to be repeated until it became a norm for deciding similar cases. In such form it may well have passed through the early Church (or churches) for a generation. Finally it became part of the Gospel tradition proper. The difficulty, however, with the expression "created" is that it often connotes fabrication from the whole cloth. For this reason it is perhaps wiser to speak of the "formation" of the story in the early Church, rather than its "creation."

<sup>13</sup> It would be impossible—and really idle—to try to cite all the Catholic exegetes who have used this distinction in recent times. As an example of some who have antedated the Biblical Commission, cf. J. Dupont, *Les béatitudes* (2nd ed.; Bruges, 1958); B. M. Ahern, "The Gospels in the Light of Modern Research," *Chicago Studies* 1 (1962) 5-16; D. M. Stanley, "Balaam's Ass, or a Problem in New Testament Hermeneutics," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 20 (1958) 50-56; J. A. Fitzmyer, "The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius and Recent Gospel Study," *Woodstock Letters* 91 (1962) 246-74; etc.

levels of comprehension according to which the Gospel text is to be understood; others speak of the three contexts of Gospel material. In the latter case the expression is a development of the original idea of the *Sitz im Leben* of the German Form Critics. The pioneers who made use of this method in Germany after the First World War tried to assign to the various Gospel stories a *Sitz im Leben*, a vital context in the early Church which would explain the creation of the story. For these pioneers, *Sitz im Leben* meant *Sitz im Leben der Kirche*, "a setting in the life of the Church." In time, as the debate developed, the question arose as to the *Sitz im Leben Jesu*, the vital context in the ministry of Jesus in which the saying or event might have had its origin in some form or other. Obviously, to recapture this with any certainty is a very delicate and difficult operation. Finally, there was modeled on these two *Sitze im Leben* a third, which is only analogous. Granted that questions about the vital context in the early Church or in Jesus' ministry might be legitimate and instructive, nevertheless in the long run the important thing is the *Sitz im Evangelium*, the Gospel context of the saying or event related. How did the Evangelist make use of the traditional material that he had received? Despite the names that one might prefer for these three stages and the nuances that such differences in terminology might suggest, they are all in the long run saying the same thing: to understand what the inspired, canonical Gospels tell us about the life and teaching of Jesus, one has to make an important threefold distinction. Par. VI states this in a topic sentence.

Par. VII begins with the italicized words *Christus Dominus* . . . , using titles that are more properly characteristic of the second stage. It would have been better to speak here of *Iesus Nazarenus*. At any rate, it deals with the *Sitz im Leben Jesu*, with the things that Jesus actually did and said, with the things that the chosen disciples saw and heard. Two things are emphasized: what the disciples saw and heard fitted them to give testimony about Jesus' life and teaching; and the accommodations which Jesus made in His teaching were intended so that it would be understood and retained. The first few statements of the paragraph are documented with references to the *NT*. The rest of it is a speculative reconstruction, slightly idyllic, but undoubtedly expressing what is essentially to be recalled about this first stage of the tradition.

It is the stage of the *ipsissima verba Iesu*, and for Christians it has always seemed to be the stage of the greatest importance. What Christ Himself really said would seem to be more important than what the early Church passed on as His teaching or what the Evangelists report as His sayings. And yet, it is noteworthy that the Biblical Commission does not insist in any way that what we have in the Gospels is a record of this first stage of the tradition.

The second stage of the tradition is dealt with in par. VIII. The emphasis is once again on the testimony of the apostles and the accommodations which they made in their message to the needs of those to whom they preached. Even when the Commission says that the apostles after the Resurrection "faithfully explained His life and words," it appeals significantly to none of the Gospels, but to one of the speeches of Peter in Acts (10:36-41). This passage gives a summary of the life of Christ and has been regarded by C. H. Dodd<sup>14</sup> and others as an example of the early Church's kerygmatic preaching. It has often been thought that Mark, the earliest of our Gospels, is an expansion of just such a summary outline. But it is noteworthy that there are no "words" of Jesus quoted in Peter's speech; and yet such a speech is regarded as a faithful explanation of Jesus' "life and words." This is an important nuance that should not be missed.

The Commission is rightly at pains in this section to counteract the idea that the new faith of the apostles after the Resurrection and the pentecostal experience should be thought of as having destroyed any recollections of Jesus' life which the apostles had or as having deformed their impression of Him, volatilizing Him into some sort of a "mythical" person.

And yet, even though this is rejected, the Commission insists that the apostles passed on what Jesus had actually said and done "with that fuller understanding which they enjoyed" as a result of the experience they went through at the first Easter and the illumination of the Spirit of Truth at Pentecost. Obvious examples of this fuller understanding from the Johannine Gospel are cited (2:22; 12:16; 11:51-52). These instances are explicitly so identified in the sacred text itself; but the Commission gives no indication that this fuller understanding is limited

<sup>14</sup> *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* (London, 1936; reprinted, New York, 1962).



to these three passages only. For the accommodation to the needs of the audiences, on which stress is put, must have often made the apostles rephrase sayings and recast their stories. Certainly, *some* of the differences in the Synoptic tradition are due to this sort of accommodation, which affected the oral tradition in the preliterate stage—no matter how much leeway we may want to allow the Evangelists themselves in the third stage.

This paragraph ends with the mention of the “various modes of speaking” which the apostles used in their ministry and preaching. Because they had to speak to “Greeks and barbarians, the wise and the foolish,” such contact and influence naturally caused an adaptation of the message they were proclaiming. It is made clear that the “literary forms” employed in such adaptation must be distinguished and properly assessed (*distinguendi et perpendendi*). This leaves no doubt that the Commission has in mind the use of the Form-Critical method. However, the forms which are mentioned specifically (“catecheses, stories,<sup>15</sup> testimonia, hymns, doxologies, prayers”) are indeed found in the New Testament, but it is another question whether they are all used in the Gospels, at least in any abundance. However, the point is made that various literary forms did develop in this stage of the Christian tradition, and that the student of the Gospels must distinguish them and assess them. But still more important is the admission by the Commission that there are other forms not specifically mentioned (*aliaeque id genus formae litterariae*), such as were used by men of that time. As far as the Gospels are concerned, one thinks readily of genealogies, parables, miracle stories, midrash, etc.

The longest discussion is devoted to the third stage of the tradition in par. IX. What strikes one here is the emphasis which is laid on the Evangelists’ “method suited to the peculiar purpose which each one set for himself.” The Commission reckons with a process of selection,

<sup>15</sup> The Latin word is *narrationes*, which some may prefer to translate as “narratives.” In par. IX it occurs in the singular in the sense of “account,” because of its allusion to Lk 1:1. But neither “narrative” nor “account” sufficiently conveys the idea of a literary form, whereas “story” does. It may be objected that this word is “loaded,” connoting “fable, fairy tale,” etc. True, it often has this connotation, but not always, nor even necessarily. In the long run, the word “story” does not necessarily connote fiction any more than “narrative” connotes what is factual. We use the word “story” without implying any pejorative connotation or value judgment.

synthesis, and explication at this stage of the tradition. Adaptation to the needs of the readers also influenced this process. Because the Evangelist often transposed episodes from one context to another, it is necessary for the exegete to seek out the meaning intended by the Evangelist in narrating a saying or deed in a certain way or putting it in a different context. In saying this, the Commission implicitly countenances a form of *Redaktionsgeschichte*. This is the phase of modern Gospel study which has superseded *Formgeschichte* (Form Criticism). Whereas the latter is interested in the history of the literary form and its genesis, *Redaktionsgeschichte* studies rather the "redactional history" of an episode: how the Evangelist-compiler has made use of the material in his composition.

It is after such an exhortation to the exegete to seek out *the Evangelist's meaning* that the Commission makes a statement about the "truth" involved in such a process of redaction. "For the truth of the story (or narrative, if one insists) is not at all affected by the fact that the Evangelists relate the words and deeds of the Lord in a different order, and express His sayings not literally but differently, while preserving their sense." The Commission speaks of "truth" only, and does not specify it as "historical truth." One might wonder what it would mean if the word "historical" were to be understood here, after such an admission of the redactional work of the Evangelists. But if one were to ask, "Well, then, if it is not a question of historical truth, of what kind is it?" the answer would have to be, "of the Gospel truth." Par. X will, we think, bear us out. The quotation from St. Augustine at the end of the paragraph, even though it comes from a writer who holds a less sophisticated view of the Gospels than the Commission's Instruction is advocating, is nevertheless nuanced enough to be pertinent.

At the end of this discussion of the threefold distinction of the stages of tradition, the Commission notes that the exegete will not be fulfilling his task unless he pays careful attention to all these facets of the Gospel tradition. It implies that this distinction is the result of the "laudable achievements of recent research." Then comes this significant statement: "From the results of the new investigations it is apparent that the doctrine and the life of Jesus were not simply reported for the sole purpose of being remembered, but were 'preached' so as to offer

the Church a basis of faith and of morals. . . ."<sup>16</sup> The Commission implies, then, that the Gospel truth is not something which is tied up with any fundamentalistic literalness.

The last paragraph addressed to the exegetes (par. IX) begins with an admission that there are still many serious problems on which the exegete "can and must freely exercise his skill and genius." This admission is a repetition of the statement of Pius XII about the liberty of the Catholic exegete. The statement, however, is paraphrased, and a significant addition to it spells out the relationship of the work of exegetes in the Church to that of the magisterium. We juxtapose the two texts.

*Divino afflante Spiritu*

There remain therefore many things, and of the greatest importance, in the discussion and exposition of which the skill and genius of Catholic commentators may and ought to be freely exercised, so that each may contribute his part to the advantage of all, to the continued progress of the sacred doctrine

and to the defense and honor of the Church.<sup>17</sup>

*Instructio*

There are still many things, and of the greatest importance, in the discussion and explanation of which the Catholic exegete can and must freely exercise his skill and genius, so that each may contribute his part to the advantage of all, to the continued progress of sacred doctrine, to the preparation and further support of the judgment to be exercised by the ecclesiastical magisterium, and to the defense and honor of the Church.

The exegete is urged to be ready to submit to the directives of the magisterium, never to forget that the apostles preached the good news, and that the Evangelists were inspired, and so were preserved "from all error." This is supported by a quotation from St. Irenaeus. So end the directives to the exegetes.

TO PROFESSORS OF SCRIPTURE IN SEMINARIES AND SIMILAR INSTITUTIONS

The directives addressed to Scripture professors in seminaries and similar institutions (par. XII) consist of an exhortation to teach Scrip-

<sup>16</sup> The Latin text of this sentence reads: "Cum ex eis quae novae inquisitiones conulerunt appareat doctrinam et vitam Iesu non simpliciter relatas fuisse, eo solo fine ut memoria tenerentur, sed 'praedicatas' fuisse ita ut Ecclesiae fundamentum fidei et morum praebarent, interpres testimonium Evangelistarum indefesse perscrutans, vim theologiam perennem Evangeliorum altius illustrare et quantae sit Ecclesiae interpretatio necessitatis quantaque momenti in plena luce collocare valebit" (par. X).

<sup>17</sup> The translation is from *RSS* 102.

ture in a way that the dignity of the subject and the needs of the times require. Coming immediately after the directives to the exegetes, who are once again enjoined to study the literary forms and now encouraged to pursue the Form-Critical method in the interpretation of the Gospels, this exhortation implies the seminary professor's duty to cope with this method. In this day and age he cannot ignore it. The Commission, however, insists that the use of this method of literary criticism is not an end in itself. It is to be used to bring out the sense of the passage intended by God through the sacred writer. The professor is above all to emphasize the theological teaching of the Gospels, and literary criticism serves only as a means to bring out the theology of the Evangelists. Those whom he is training are future priests, for whose lives and work the Scriptures must be a source of perennial vitality. This exhortation is predominantly positive in tone; the only negative element in it is the warning against the pursuit of literary criticism as if it were an end in itself.

#### TO PREACHERS

In the case of preachers the Biblical Commission first insists on their preaching of "doctrine," appealing to 1 Tim 4:16 (par. XIII). The first really strong negative directive of the Instruction appears here: "They are to refrain entirely from proposing vain and insufficiently established novelties." This prohibition must, however, be properly understood; for immediately afterwards the Commission allows for the cautious explanation of "new opinions already solidly established." The problem is obvious. There cannot be a double standard of truth, one for exegetes and Scripture professors, and another for the faithful. If we are correct in our estimate of this Instruction, then the recognition which the Biblical Commission gives to literary forms, and especially to the sane use of the Form-Critical method in Gospel interpretation, would put interpretations solidly established by this method among those "new opinions" which can be so explained to the faithful. The directives to preachers end with another caution: they are not to embellish biblical events with imaginative details not consonant with the truth.

#### TO THOSE WHO PUBLISH FOR THE FAITHFUL

The same prudence demanded of preachers is now required of all those who write on biblical subjects at a popular level (par. XIV). They

are to concentrate on the riches of God's word and are to consider it a sacred duty never to depart from the common teaching and tradition of the Church. But they may exploit the findings of modern biblical research, avoiding, however, "the rash comments of innovators." A "pernicious itch for newness" is not to lead them to disseminate rashly what are only trial solutions to classic difficulties.

The Commission recalls that books and articles in magazines and newspapers on biblical subjects are to be carefully scrutinized by ordinaries (par. XV).

#### TO BIBLICAL ASSOCIATIONS

The directors of biblical associations are to follow the norms for such gatherings laid down by the Biblical Commission.

#### CONCLUSION

The Biblical Commission notes in conclusion that if all these directives are followed, then the study of Sacred Scripture can only contribute to the benefit of the faithful. It ends with a quotation from 2 Tim 3:15-17.

#### FINAL REMARKS

The significance of this Instruction of the Biblical Commission at the present time is best realized when one considers the events which have been taking place within Roman Catholic circles. We are not referring directly to the strife between the Lateran University and the Pontifical Biblical Institute, which was unfortunate because it obscured the issue of the Church's attitude toward this important biblical problem.<sup>18</sup> We have in mind the mixed reactions which have been reported all over the world to the new trends in modern Catholic biblical studies, and how attempts were made in conservative ecclesiastical circles (at Rome and elsewhere) to commit the Catholic interpretation of the Gospel narratives to a fundamentalistic view of things.<sup>19</sup> In this con-

<sup>18</sup> Cf. our article, "A Recent Roman Scriptural Controversy," *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES* 22 (1961) 426-44.

<sup>19</sup> It is no secret that the first draft of the schema *De fontibus revelationis* contained two paragraphs which incorporated the terminology of the *Monitum* of June, 1961, and leveled anathemas against those who would call in question the genuine historical and objective truth of the words and deeds of Jesus *prouti narrantur*. This was rejected along with the rest of the schema, and it is reported that the revision of the schema (*De divina revelatione*)

text the well-nuanced position which the Biblical Commission takes in this Instruction is of great importance. In effect, it is giving its official sanction to many of the new trends in biblical matters.<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, the silence of the Commission about certain matters raises several questions. First of all, practically nothing is said in the Instruction about the Synoptic problem. It is true that in dealing with the redactional work of the Evangelists it admits that they used a "method suited to the peculiar purpose which each set for himself," and selected, synthesized, transposed, etc. It seems rather obvious that the Commission did not want to take sides in the debate about the solution to this problem (whether one should adopt the classical Two-Source theory, a modified form of it, the Vaganay theory, or the Léon-Dufour proposal—or even the less likely theories of Oral Tradition, and the Chapman-Butler priority of Matthew). This has been a knotty question, and one that will probably never be solved to the complete satisfaction of everyone. The Instruction leaves the debate on this issue open. But the silence of the Commission on this question makes some of its statements sound like an oversimplification of the situation. To non-Catholic students of the Gospels this reaction will be the first to come to mind. How can one discuss the problem of the historical value of the Gospel tradition without assuming some position in this matter? We can only speculate about the reasons for the silence of the Commission in this area. We have suggested one reason: the Commission apparently thought that it could give directives in a generic enough way which would not tend to close the debate on the solutions to the Synoptic problem.

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has adopted a much more scholarly approach. Now that the Biblical Commission has issued this Instruction, approved by Pope Paul VI, the issue will be raised on the Council floor in a different form.

<sup>20</sup> Though the main directives of the Instruction have been addressed to exegetes, it is evident that dogmatic theologians and others will also have to reckon with the import of this document. We are told that "there exists a numerous and fairly articulate group convinced that the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles are genuine and objectively accurate historical documents, which can be used as such legitimately in the science of apologetics. These individuals insist that they have reason to hold and to teach that these events set forth in these books took place in the very way in which they are described in these works. They hold that the words and the deeds attributed to Our Lord were actually uttered and performed by Him . . ." (J. C. Fenton, "Father Moran's Prediction," *American Ecclesiastical Review* 146 [1962] 194-95). Such a position will have to be nuanced in the light of this Instruction.

Secondly, there is the question of the reinterpretation of the words of Jesus by the Evangelists in their redactional work. It has often been suggested in recent times that the Evangelists have put on the lips of Christ a fuller form of His sayings than the *ipsissima verba*, or that certain verses are even to be regarded as the redactional addition of the Evangelists. To cite a few examples, the Matthean additions to the Beatitudes,<sup>21</sup> to the Our Father, the "exceptive" clauses in the divorce texts, and even the very knotty problem of Mt 16:16b-19.<sup>22</sup> It is significant that the Commission has not come out against such a view in Catholic biblical studies in an otherwise comprehensive statement on the "historical truth of the Gospels." The Commission certainly admits the redactional activity of the Evangelist (par. IX). It may even be hinting at the *kind* of redactional activity that this question of the reinterpretation of the words of Jesus calls for, when it says: "Quaedam e multis traditis selegentes, quaedam in synthesim redigentes, *quaedam ad statum ecclesiarum attendendo explanantes . . .*" (par. IX; our italics). Such an unfolding, explanation, or explication of traditional matter for the situation of the various local churches has to be reckoned with. Several writers have appealed to this type of "explanation" for the peculiar addition of the "exceptive" clauses in the divorce texts of Mt 5:32 and 19:9.<sup>23</sup> The Evangelist would have added these words because of a problem in the early Jewish-Christian Church, echoes of which are found in Acts 15:20, 29 and 21:25. The Commission's statements, however, are not really explicit enough to say that it expressly countenances the assertion of such redactional activity on the part of the Evangelists; on the other hand, it is not excluded either. Its silence,

<sup>21</sup> Compare Luke's "Blessed are you poor" with Matthew's "Blessed are the poor in spirit," Luke's "Blessed are you that hunger now" with Matthew's "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for uprightness," etc. Cf. the admirable treatment of this question by J. Dupont, *Les béatitudes* (Bruges, 1958); see also M. M. Bourke, "The Historicity of the Gospels," *Thought* 39 (1964) 37-56.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. A. Vögtle, "Messiasbekenntnis und Petrusverheissung: Zur Komposition Mt 16, 13-23 Par.," *Biblische Zeitschrift*, N. F. 1 (1957) 252-72; 2 (1958) 85-102; T. de Kruijff, *Der Sohn des lebendigen Gottes* (*Analecta biblica* 16; Rome, 1962) p. 82; E. F. Sutcliffe, "St. Peter's Double Confession in Mt. 16:16-19," *Heythrop Journal* 3 (1962) 31-41.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. P. Benoit, *L'Évangile selon saint Matthieu* (*Bible de Jérusalem*; 3rd ed.; Paris, 1961) p. 121; H. J. Richards, "Christ on Divorce," *Scripture* 11 (1959) 22-32.

therefore, on this issue—which is really crucial today—is in itself significant.

The most significant thing in the whole document, when all is said and done, is that the Biblical Commission calmly and frankly admits that what is contained in the Gospels as we have them today is not the words and deeds of Jesus in the first stage of tradition, nor even the form in which they were preached in the second stage, but only in the form compiled and edited by the Evangelists. This form, however, reflects the two previous stages, and the second more than the first. It is good to recall that this redacted form of the sayings and deeds of Jesus which the Evangelists give us is the inspired form. The Evangelists were inspired by the Holy Spirit to compile and write down the accounts as they did. This inspiration guarantees their Gospel truth, which is free from error. But it is also good to recall that neither the Church in her official pronouncements on the nature of inspiration, nor the theologians in their speculative treatments of it, have taught that the necessary formal effect of inspiration is historicity. The consequence of inspiration is inerrancy, i.e., immunity from formal error in what is affirmed. The opposite of inerrancy is not simply historicity but truth. But there is poetical truth as well as historical truth, rhetorical truth as well as legal truth, mythical truth as well as the Gospel truth. If a passage in the Gospels contains historical truth, it does not simply contain it because it is inspired. The reasons for its historicity will be quite other than the inspired character of the text. The inspiration may guarantee such historical truth as is there, but it will not guarantee it any more than it would guarantee the poetic truth of the hymn to Christ in Phil 2. Its guarantee is not quantitative but qualitative and analogous. The inspired Gospel truth was intended by God to give us not simply a "remembered" account of the doctrine and life of Jesus, but a "preached" form of it, "so as to offer the Church a basis of faith and of morals" (par. X).

The Instruction of the Biblical Commission has by no means put an end to all the problems regarding the historicity of the Gospels. Discussions of them will certainly continue, and now with more freedom. This Instruction will undoubtedly occasion a number of commentaries on it;



we hope that our analysis of some of its aspects will be a guide to a further understanding of it and of the issues involved.

#### INSTRUCTION CONCERNING THE HISTORICAL TRUTH OF THE GOSPELS<sup>24</sup>

I. Holy Mother the Church, "the pillar and bulwark of truth,"<sup>21</sup> has always used Sacred Scripture in her task of imparting heavenly salvation to men. She has always defended it, too, from every sort of false interpretation. Since there will never be an end to (biblical) problems, the Catholic exegete should never lose heart in explaining the divine word and in solving the difficulties proposed to him. Rather, let him strive earnestly to open up still more the real meaning of the Scriptures. Let him rely firmly not only on his own resources, but above all on the help of God and the light of the Church.

II. It is a source of great joy that there are found today, to meet the needs of our times, faithful sons of the Church in great numbers who are experts in biblical matters. They are following the exhortations of the Supreme Pontiffs and are dedicating themselves wholeheartedly and untiringly to this serious and arduous task. "Let all the other sons of the Church bear in mind that the efforts of these resolute laborers in the vineyard of the Lord are to be judged not only with equity and justice, but also with the greatest charity,"<sup>22</sup> since even illustrious interpreters, such as Jerome himself, tried at times to explain the more difficult questions with no great success.<sup>23</sup> Care should be had "that the keen strife of debate should never exceed the bounds of mutual charity. Nor should the impression be given in an argument that truths of revelation and divine traditions are being called in question. For unless agreement among minds be safeguarded and principles be carefully respected, great progress in this discipline will never be expected from the diverse pursuits of so many persons."<sup>24</sup>

III. Today more than ever the work of exegetes is needed, because many writings are being spread abroad in which the truth of the deeds and words which are contained in the Gospels is questioned. For this reason the Pon-

<sup>24</sup> The numbering of the footnotes of the Latin is generally preserved; occasionally it has been necessary to reverse two of them because of the English wording. Words added in parentheses do not appear in the Latin text; they are supplied for the sake of the English. Cf. notes 2 and 8 supra.—For some strange reason the references to the Encyclical *Divino afflante Spiritu* are given in the Latin text of the Instruction to the Italian translation of the Encyclical in *Acta apostolicae sedis*; we have changed them to the corresponding pages of the official Latin text.

<sup>21</sup> 1 Tim 3:15.

<sup>22</sup> *Divino afflante Spiritu* (hereafter *DaS*) 46 (*EB* 564; *AAS* 35 [1943] 319; *RSS* 101).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *Spiritus Paraclitus* 2, 3 (*EB* 451; *RSS* 50).

<sup>24</sup> Apostolic Letter *Vigilantiae* (*EB* 143; *RSS* 33).

tifical Biblical Commission, in pursuit of the task given to it by the Supreme Pontiffs, has considered it proper to set forth and insist upon the following points.

IV. 1. Let the Catholic exegete, following the guidance of the Church, derive profit from all that earlier interpreters, especially the holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church, have contributed to the understanding of the sacred text. And let him carry on their labors still further. In order to put the abiding truth and authority of the Gospels in their full light, he will accurately adhere to the norms of rational and Catholic hermeneutics. He will diligently employ the new exegetical aids, above all those which the historical method, taken in its widest sense, offers to him—a method which carefully investigates sources and defines their nature and value, and makes use of such helps as textual criticism, literary criticism, and the study of languages. The interpreter will heed the advice of Pius XII of happy memory, who enjoined him “prudently . . . to examine what contribution the manner of expression or the literary form used by the sacred writer makes to a true and genuine interpretation. And let him be convinced that this part of his task cannot be neglected without serious detriment to Catholic exegesis.”<sup>5</sup> By this piece of advice Pius XII of happy memory enunciated a general rule of hermeneutics by which the books of the Old Testament as well as the New must be explained. For in composing them the sacred writers employed the way of thinking and writing which was in vogue among their contemporaries. Finally, the exegete will use all the means available to probe more deeply into the nature of Gospel testimony, into the religious life of the early churches, and into the sense and the value of apostolic tradition.

V. As occasion warrants, the interpreter may examine what reasonable elements are contained in the “Form-Critical method” that can be used for a fuller understanding of the Gospels. But let him be wary, because scarcely admissible philosophical and theological principles have often come to be mixed with this method, which not uncommonly have vitiated the method itself as well as the conclusions in the literary area. For some proponents of this method have been led astray by the prejudiced views of rationalism. They refuse to admit the existence of a supernatural order and the intervention of a personal God in the world through strict revelation, and the possibility and existence of miracles and prophecies. Others begin with a false idea of faith, as if it had nothing to do with historical truth—or rather were incompatible with it. Others deny the historical value and nature of the documents of revelation almost a priori. Finally, others make light of the authority of the apostles as witnesses to Christ, and of their task and

<sup>5</sup> *DaS* 38 (*EB* 560; *AAS* 35 [1943] 316; *RSS* 98).

influence in the primitive community, extolling rather the creative power of that community. All such views are not only opposed to Catholic doctrine, but are also devoid of scientific basis and alien to the correct principles of historical method.

VI. 2. To judge properly concerning the reliability of what is transmitted in the Gospels, the interpreter should pay diligent attention to the three stages of tradition by which the doctrine and the life of Jesus have come down to us.

VII. *Christ our Lord* joined to Himself chosen disciples,<sup>6</sup> who followed Him from the beginning,<sup>7</sup> saw His deeds, heard His words, and in this way were equipped to be witnesses of His life and doctrine.<sup>8</sup> When the Lord was orally explaining His doctrine, He followed the modes of reasoning and of exposition which were in vogue at the time. He accommodated Himself to the mentality of His listeners and saw to it that what He taught was firmly impressed on the mind and easily remembered by the disciples. These men understood the miracles and other events of the life of Jesus correctly, as deeds performed or designed that men might believe in Christ through them, and embrace with faith the doctrine of salvation.

VIII. *The apostles* proclaimed above all the death and resurrection of the Lord, as they bore witness to Jesus.<sup>9</sup> They faithfully explained His life and words,<sup>10</sup> while taking into account in their method of preaching the circumstances in which their listeners found themselves.<sup>11</sup> After Jesus rose from the dead and His divinity was clearly perceived,<sup>12</sup> faith, far from destroying the memory of what had transpired, rather confirmed it, because their faith rested on the things which Jesus did and taught.<sup>13</sup> Nor was He changed into a "mythical" person and His teaching deformed in consequence of the worship which the disciples from that time on paid Jesus as the Lord and the Son of God. On the other hand, there is no reason to deny that the apostles passed on to their listeners what was really said and done by the Lord with that fuller understanding which they enjoyed,<sup>14</sup> having been instructed by the glorious events of the Christ and taught by the light of the Spirit of Truth.<sup>15</sup> So, just as Jesus Himself after His resurrection "interpreted to them"<sup>16</sup> the words of the Old Testament as well as His own,<sup>17</sup> they too interpreted His words and deeds according to the needs of their listeners.

<sup>6</sup> Mk 3:14; Lk 6:13.      <sup>7</sup> Lk 1:2; Acts 1:21-22.

<sup>8</sup> Lk 24:48; Jn 15:27; Acts 1:8; 10:39; 13:31.

<sup>9</sup> Lk 24:44-48; Acts 2:32; 3:15; 5:30-32.      <sup>10</sup> Acts 10:36-41.

<sup>11</sup> Compare Acts 13:16-41 with Acts 17:22-31.      <sup>12</sup> Acts 2:36; Jn 20:28.

<sup>13</sup> Acts 2:22; 10:37-39.      <sup>14</sup> Jn 2:22; 12:16; 11:51-52; cf. 14:26; 16:12-13; 7:39.

<sup>15</sup> Jn 14:26; 16:13.      <sup>16</sup> Lk 24:27.      <sup>17</sup> Lk 24:44-45; Acts 1:3.

“Devoting themselves to the ministry of the word,”<sup>18</sup> they preached and made use of various modes of speaking which were suited to their own purpose and the mentality of their listeners. For they were debtors<sup>19</sup> “to Greeks and barbarians, to the wise and the foolish.”<sup>20</sup> But these modes of speaking with which the preachers proclaimed Christ must be distinguished and (properly) assessed: catecheses, stories, testimonia, hymns, doxologies, prayers—and other literary forms of this sort which were in Sacred Scripture and were accustomed to be used by men of that time.

IX. This primitive instruction, which was at first passed on by word of mouth and then in writing—for it soon happened that many tried “to compile a narrative of the things”<sup>21</sup> which concerned the Lord Jesus—was committed to writing by the *sacred authors* in four Gospels for the benefit of the churches, with a method suited to the peculiar purpose which each (author) set for himself. From the many things handed down they selected some things, reduced others to a synthesis, (still) others they explicated as they kept in mind the situation of the churches. With every (possible) means they sought that their readers might become aware of the reliability<sup>22</sup> of those words by which they had been instructed. Indeed, from what they had received the sacred writers above all selected the things which were suited to the various situations of the faithful and to the purpose which they had in mind, and adapted their narration of them to the same situations and purpose. Since the meaning of a statement also depends on the sequence, the Evangelists, in passing on the words and deeds of our Saviour, explained these now in one context, now in another, depending on (their) usefulness to the readers. Consequently, let the exegete seek out the meaning intended by the Evangelist in narrating a saying or a deed in a certain way or in placing it in a certain context. For the truth of the story is not at all affected by the fact that the Evangelists relate the words and deeds of the Lord in a different order,<sup>23</sup> and express his sayings not literally but differently, while preserving (their) sense.<sup>24</sup> For, as St. Augustine says, “It is quite probable that each Evangelist believed it to have been his duty to recount what he had to in that order in which it pleased God to suggest it to his memory—in those things at least in which the order, whether it be this or that, detracts in nothing from the truth and authority of the Gospel. But why the Holy Spirit, who apportions individually to each one as He wills,<sup>25</sup> and who there-

<sup>18</sup> Acts 6:4.

<sup>19</sup> 1 Cor 9:19–23.

<sup>20</sup> Rom 1:14.

<sup>21</sup> Lk 1:1.

<sup>22</sup> Lk 1:4.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Matth.* 1, 3 (PG 57, 16–17).

<sup>24</sup> Augustine, *De consensu Evangelistarum* 2, 12, 28 (PL 34, 1090–91; CSEL 43, 127–29).

<sup>25</sup> 1 Cor 12:11.

fore undoubtedly also governed and ruled the minds of the holy (writers) in recalling what they were to write because of the pre-eminent authority which the books were to enjoy, permitted one to compile his narrative in this way, and another in that, anyone with pious diligence may seek the reason and with divine aid will be able to find it."<sup>26</sup>

X. Unless the exegete pays attention to all these things which pertain to the origin and composition of the Gospels and makes proper use of all the laudable achievements of recent research, he will not fulfil his task of probing into what the sacred writers intended and what they really said. From the results of the new investigations it is apparent that the doctrine and the life of Jesus were not simply reported for the sole purpose of being remembered, but were "preached" so as to offer the Church a basis of faith and of morals. The interpreter (then), by tirelessly scrutinizing the testimony of the Evangelists, will be able to illustrate more profoundly the perennial theological value of the Gospels and bring out clearly how necessary and important the Church's interpretation is.

XI. There are still many things, and of the greatest importance, in the discussion and explanation of which the Catholic exegete can and must freely exercise his skill and genius so that each may contribute his part to the advantage of all, to the continued progress of sacred doctrine, to the preparation and further support of the judgment to be exercised by the ecclesiastical magisterium, and to the defense and honor of the Church.<sup>27</sup> But let him always be disposed to obey the magisterium of the Church, and not forget that the apostles, filled with the Holy Spirit, preached the good news, and that the Gospels were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who preserved their authors from all error. "Now we have not learned of the plan of our salvation from any others than those through whom the gospel has come to us. Indeed, what they once preached they later passed on to us in the Scriptures by the will of God, as the ground and pillar of our faith. It is not right to say that they preached before they had acquired perfect knowledge, as some would venture to say who boast of being correctors of the apostles. In fact, after our Lord rose from the dead and they were invested with power from on high, as the Holy Spirit came upon them, they were filled with all (His gifts) and had perfect knowledge. They went forth to the ends of the earth, one and all with God's gospel, announcing the news of God's bounty to us and proclaiming heavenly peace to men."<sup>28</sup>

XII. 3. Those whose *task it is to teach in seminaries and similar institu-*

<sup>26</sup> *De consensu Evangelistarum* 2, 21, 51-52 (PL 34, 1102; CSEL 43, 153).

<sup>27</sup> *DaS* 47 (EB 565; AAS 35 [1943] 319; RSS 102).

<sup>28</sup> Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 3, 1, 1 (Harvey 2, 2; PG 7, 844).

tions should have it as their "prime concern that . . . Holy Scripture be so taught as both the dignity of the discipline and the needs of the times require."<sup>29</sup> Let the teachers above all explain its theological teaching, so that the Sacred Scriptures "may become for the future priests of the Church both a pure and never-failing source for their own spiritual life, as well as food and strength for the sacred task of preaching which they are about to undertake."<sup>30</sup> When they practice the art of criticism, especially so-called literary criticism, let them not pursue it as an end in itself, but that through it they might more plainly perceive the sense intended by God through the sacred writer. Let them not stop, therefore, halfway, content only with their literary discoveries, but show in addition how these things really contribute to a clearer understanding of revealed doctrine, or, if it be the case, to the refutation of errors. Instructors who follow these norms will enable their students to find in Sacred Scripture that which can "raise the mind to God, nourish the soul, and further the interior life."<sup>31</sup>

XIII. 4. Those *who instruct the Christian people in sacred sermons* have need of great prudence. Let them above all pass on doctrine, mindful of St. Paul's warning: "Look to yourself and your teaching; hold on to that. For by so doing you will save both yourself and those who listen to you."<sup>32</sup> They are to refrain entirely from proposing vain or insufficiently established novelties. As for new opinions already solidly established, they may explain them, if need be, but with caution and due care for their listeners. When they narrate biblical events, let them not add imaginative details which are not consonant with the truth.

XIV. This virtue of prudence should be cherished especially *by those who publish for the faithful*. Let them carefully bring forth the heavenly riches of the divine word "that the faithful . . . may be moved and inflamed rightly to conform their lives (to them)."<sup>33</sup> They should consider it a sacred duty never to depart in the slightest degree from the common doctrine and tradition of the Church. They should indeed exploit all the real advances of biblical science which the diligence of recent (students) has produced. But they are to avoid entirely the rash remarks of innovators.<sup>34</sup> They are strictly forbidden to disseminate, led on by some pernicious itch for newness, any trial solutions for difficulties without a prudent selection and serious discrimination, for thus they perturb the faith of many.

<sup>29</sup> Apostolic Letter *Quoniam in re biblica* (EB 162; RSS 36).

<sup>30</sup> DaS 55 (EB 567; AAS 35 [1943] 322; RSS 104).

<sup>31</sup> DaS 25 (EB 552; AAS 35 [1943] 311; RSS 93).

<sup>32</sup> 1 Tim 4:16.

<sup>33</sup> DaS 50 (EB 566; AAS 35 [1943] 320; RSS 103).

<sup>34</sup> Apostolic Letter *Quoniam in re biblica* 13 (EB 175; RSS 38).

XV. This Pontifical Biblical Commission has already considered it proper to recall that books and articles in magazines and newspapers on biblical subjects are subject to the authority and jurisdiction of ordinaries, since they treat of religious matters and pertain to the religious instruction of the faithful.<sup>85</sup> Ordinaries are therefore requested to keep watch with great care over popular writings of this sort.

XVI. 5. Those who are in charge of biblical associations are to comply faithfully with the norms laid down by the Pontifical Biblical Commission.<sup>86</sup>

XVII. If all these things are observed, the study of the Sacred Scriptures will contribute to the benefit of the faithful. Even in our time everyone realizes the wisdom of what St. Paul wrote: The Sacred Writings "can instruct (us) for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is divinely inspired and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in uprightness, so that the man of God may be perfect, equipped for every good work."<sup>87</sup>

XVIII. The Holy Father, Pope Paul VI, at the audience graciously granted to the undersigned secretary on April 21, 1964, approved this Instruction and ordered the publication of it.

*Rome, April 21, 1964*

BENJAMIN N. WAMBACQ, O.PRAEM.

*Secretary of the Commission*

<sup>85</sup> Instruction *De consociationibus biblicis* . . . (EB 626).

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.* (EB 622-33).      <sup>87</sup> 2 Tim 3:15-17.