

AMERICAN CATHOLIC BIBLICAL SCHOLARSHIP: A REVIEW

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THE SECOND Vatican Council was an important moment in the history of Catholic biblical scholarship. That moment itself, however, had a history within the American Church. American Catholic biblical scholarship has achieved international acclaim in the postconciliar years, but it is heir to past efforts. This essay will trace those efforts through three periods. First, from John Carroll to Vatican I, Catholic thinkers considered Scripture as part of the total experience of the Church, as part of tradition. Second, at the turn of the century, American biblical scholarship, just beginning, fell victim to the same forces that condemned Americanism. Finally, scholars through the first session of Vatican II had to overcome charges of Modernism and to combat what was sometimes not doctrine but a theological interpretation of doctrine.

FROM JOHN CARROLL TO VATICAN I

John Carroll, the nation's first bishop, offered his theological reflections on the role of Scripture within the life of the Church. In 1784 he had to answer attacks from Charles Wharton, a former Catholic priest who had converted to the Anglican Church. To Wharton's charge that certain Catholic doctrines were not to be found in Scripture, Carroll responded by asking how Wharton could "assume as a principle, that God communicated nothing more to his church, than is contained in his written word? He knows, that we have always asserted, that the *whole* word of God, unwritten, as well as written, is the christian's rule of faith." This rule of faith guaranteed "the authenticity, the genuineness, the incorruptibility of Scripture itself." "Tradition" or "the living doctrine of the catholic church" testified to what were "the true and genuine gospels."¹ Carroll, then, considered tradition to be both the guardian and the interpreter of Scripture, without which Scripture was a lifeless written document.

Carroll would have resonated with Vatican II's teaching that "the apostolic preaching, which is expressed in a special way in the inspired books, was to be preserved in a continuous line of succession until the

¹ Thomas O. Hanley, S.J., ed., *The John Carroll Papers* 1 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1976) 111.

end of time."² He was not, however, an original theologian, but merely reflected the theology and apologetics of his age. As his pastoral obligations increased and he was elected the first bishop of Baltimore in 1789, he did not again turn his pen to trying to explain the relationship between Scripture and tradition. Yet his theological understanding of the relationship between Scripture and tradition continued to be an American theme a generation later.

In 1833 the American bishops met in the Second Provincial Council. In their pastoral letter they addressed the question of Scripture. "We know not that it is the word of God," they wrote, "except by the testimony of that cloud of holy witnesses which the Saviour vouchsafed to establish as our guide through this desert over which we journey towards our permanent abode."³ They avoided using the term "tradition," but argued that there was need for testimony not only for what constituted the Word of God but also for its interpretation. Here they began to reflect on their own concept of the role which bishops played in tradition.

Thus the recorded testimony of those ancient and venerable witnesses, who in every nation and every age, proclaimed in the name of the Catholic Church, and with its approbation, the interpretation of the Holy Bible, whether they were assembled in their councils or dispersed over the surface of the Christian world, is an harmonious collection of pure light, which sheds upon the inspired page the mild lustre which renders it pleasing to the eye, grateful to the understanding, and consoling to the heart.⁴

John England, bishop of Charleston, wrote the pastoral, but the theology was that of Francis P. Kenrick. Irish-born, like England, Kenrick became coadjutor bishop and bishop of Philadelphia, and later archbishop of Baltimore. Widely regarded as the leading theologian among the bishops, he published the first edition of his *Theologia dogmatica* in 1839. Here he developed his concept of the relationship between Scripture and tradition. "A full and adequate rule of faith within the Christian economy," he wrote, "must necessarily be referred to the time of Christ and the Apostles, and then suit the condition of men through all ages." But the New Testament did not date to the time of Christ, and "the apostolic writings" were not collected and recognized by the churches for several more centuries.⁵

² *Dei verbum*, no. 8, in Austin Flannery, O.P., ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1975) 754.

³ Hugh J. Nolan, ed., *Pastoral Letters of the American Hierarchy, 1792-1970* (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 1970) 51.

⁴ *Ibid.* 52.

⁵ Francis Patrick Kenrick, *Theologia dogmatica* 1 (2nd ed.; Baltimore: John Murphy, 1858) 282-83.

To provide the "full and adequate rule of faith," Kenrick developed his theology of tradition. His sources were: the Fathers, Catholic and Protestant writers in England, and several 19th-century German Catholic theologians; only rarely did he cite Thomas Aquinas or other scholastics. Appealing to Johann Adam Möhler's *Symbolik*, Kenrick explained that, since "the written word . . . needs both a witness and an interpreter," the only rule of faith was "the harmonious preaching of the Apostolic ministry, public and solemn doctrine." The "rule" that the bishops followed "in the very act of teaching is *tradition*, that is the very doctrine of their predecessors, the very faith of the whole Church, derived all the way from the Apostolic age."⁶

Tradition for Kenrick was all-embracing and was "contained in the greatest part in Scripture, and celebrated back through the ages in the monuments and documents of Christian antiquity, and the custom and public worship of the Christian faithful throughout the world."⁷ It was essential for preserving "the whole structure of revelation" and "the inspiration of Scripture" itself.⁸

In regard to inspiration, Kenrick emphasized the Church's acceptance of the books as inspired rather than how inspiration operated on the writer. While not espousing any particular theory of inspiration, he did treat of its extent. Scripture, he argued, was intended to treat "what pertains to salvation." "In regard to physical matters," however, "the sacred writers used the accepted modes of speaking," "somewhat popular phrases borrowed from appearances."⁹ Kenrick came close to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council that God spoke "through men in human fashion" and that "the exegete must look for that meaning which the sacred writer, in a determined situation and given the circumstances of his time and culture, intended to express and did in fact express, through the medium of a contemporary form."¹⁰ Kenrick made no distinction between inspiration and revelation, but he did point out that the sacred writers used figurative language.

Kenrick accepted the theological axiom that the proper interpretation of Scripture was to be found in the consensus of the Fathers.¹¹ But that consensus still existed in the teaching authority of the Church. Under divine guidance the Church remained in continuity with the apostolic age, so that one or even many bishops could fall into error but "infalli-

⁶ Ibid. 288.

⁷ Ibid. 289.

⁸ Ibid. 300-301.

⁹ Ibid. 306.

¹⁰ *Dei verbum*, no. 12, in Flannery, *Vatican Council II* 757.

¹¹ Kenrick, *Theologia dogmatica* 1:365-70.

bility" or "the privilege of inerrancy" continued to reside "in the body of the bishops, under the presidency of the Roman Pontiff."¹² The "body of the bishops," therefore, was the continuing witness to the meaning of Scripture. Kenrick then applied "consensus" to possible conflicts between science and the Bible in one of his most ambitious undertakings: a revision of the Douay Bible.

Like many English-speaking Catholics, Kenrick falsely assumed that the Council of Trent required that vernacular translations be made only from the Vulgate.¹³ While he sought to vindicate the Vulgate from Protestant attacks, he noted in his translation where the Vulgate deviated from the original languages. He published the first volume in 1849 and the last, *The Pentateuch*, in 1860. Geology had challenged the Genesis account of the age of the world, but Kenrick felt "bound to respect the judgment of the learned, when they agree so decidedly in declaring the results of their investigations." Disagreement among the learned, however, would "detract much from the weight which they might otherwise have, and our veneration for the sacred text does not allow us hastily to abandon its letter, or absolutely to embrace what does not appear to harmonize with it."¹⁴ Consensus among scientists, then, became a norm for reconsidering the literal interpretation of Scripture.

For Kenrick, the acceptance of scientific evidence did not denigrate Church teaching. Not only was the "science of geology . . . unknown to the ancients," he noted, but "the Mosaic narrative was not understood by all the Fathers of the Church as implying the creation of the universe in six days." The "diversity of views" among the Fathers illustrated for him "that on this point the tradition of the Church was not absolute and dogmatical, so that if, with the progress of science, it became manifest, that a vast succession of ages can alone account for the structure of the earth . . . such indefinite periods may be admitted, without departing in any respect from the authoritative teachings of antiquity." All that was "divinely revealed" in Genesis, he concluded, was "the origin of all things from the creative act of God, and the creation of man, as stated by the

¹² Ibid. 227-28.

¹³ The Council of Trent had declared that the Vulgate was "authentic," i.e. that it was free of doctrinal errors, and that it was to be used in theological explanations and public readings and in preaching (DS 1506-1508). The council, however, left the matter of the vernacular to postconciliar legislation. Pius IV's rules for the Index in 1564 warned against certain vernacular translations, but left it to bishops to permit the reading of Bibles translated into the vernacular by Catholic authors. Still, the Church did not require that only the Vulgate could be translated. See Robert E. McNally, S.J., "The Council of Trent and Vernacular Bibles," *TS* 27 (1966) 226.

¹⁴ Kenrick, *The Pentateuch* (Baltimore: Kelly, Hedian & Piet, 1860) 17-18.

inspired author."¹⁵

Kenrick died in 1863, just as a new type of theology was making its way into the Church, a theology shaped to a great extent by the European Church's combat with rationalism. Vatican I signaled the change, and the older American theological orientation was all but forgotten.

CATHOLIC BIBLICAL SCHOLARSHIP AT END OF 19TH CENTURY

Vatican I declared that the Church held the books of Scripture "to be sacred and canonical," not because they were human works that were "afterwards approved by her authority . . . but because, having been written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God for their author, and have been delivered as such to the Church herself."¹⁶ This formulation seemed to move inspiration from an emphasis on the Church's acceptance of the books to the divine authorship. It showed the influence of Johann Baptist Franzelin, S.J., a theologian at the Council.

The Catholic discussion of inspiration in the last century occurred in the context of the questions raised by historical critics of Scripture. Aquinas himself had no treatise on inspiration. He had, however, written about prophecy. From his treatment of one type of sacred book, Catholic theologians attempt to construct theories of inspiration in general.¹⁷ Franzelin developed what became the dominant theory. He took the phrase "God is the author of Scripture" and attributed to God everything known about a human author. From this he derived a theory of "content inspiration." Inspiration was the charism that enlightened and stimulated the mind of the human author to write down only those truths which God wished to communicate to the Church—the "formal word" or element of Scripture. "Assistance," in contrast to inspiration, extended to the "material words" by which the human instrument conveyed the inspired truths.¹⁸ Other Catholic theorists, however, challenged Franzelin's interpretation of "God as author of Scripture."

Franzelin also influenced the Council's treatment of tradition and Scripture. The Council declared that the "doctrine of faith is like a divine deposit handed on (*tradita*) to the Spouse of Christ, to be faithfully guarded and infallibly declared."¹⁹ This formula thus shifted tradition

¹⁵ Ibid. 18–19.

¹⁶ DS 3006. On Franzelin see Gerald A. McCool, S.J., *Catholic Theology in the Nineteenth Century: The Quest for a Unitary Method* (New York: Seabury, 1977) 220–21.

¹⁷ Pierre Benoit, O.P., *Aspects of Biblical Inspiration* (Chicago: Priory, 1965) 55–56, 100–103.

¹⁸ James Tunstead Burtchaell, C.S.C., *Catholic Theories of Biblical Inspiration since 1810: A Review and Critique* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1969) 98–99. See also McCool, *Catholic Theology in the Nineteenth Century* 220–21.

¹⁹ DS 3020; see also 3011.

from the Church's living experience to a content, perhaps even an immutable one. Moreover, Yves Congar has noted that "by Spouse of Christ the council understands here above all the magisterium, especially that of the Roman Pontiff."²⁰ Pius IX himself encouraged that understanding with his unfortunate but well-attested statement: "La Tradizione son'io."²¹ Vatican I, furthermore, so abbreviated the Tridentine statement on Scripture and tradition as to imply that they were two separate sources of revelation.²² This new theology of tradition significantly altered the Church's understanding of previous magisterial pronouncements on Scripture. It was, moreover, only part of a new theological orientation that received more impetus in 1878 with Leo XIII's Thomistic revival.

The Thomistic revival occurred just as the American bishops established the Catholic University of America. The decision to establish the university was one of the distinctly American decrees of the Third Plenary Council in 1884—a council that many of the bishops did not want and that was dominated by Roman concerns. From its inception the university was controversial, and its episcopal supporters had as much enthusiasm as naiveté for the project. In January 1885, for example, the trustees "decided that the Professor of Scripture be a German."²³ Only the nationality seemed to matter, not the specialty. In fact, the first faculty member hired was a professor of Scripture, not a German but a Frenchman, Henry Hyvernât, a classmate of Marie-Joseph Lagrange, the great Dominican exegete, at the Sulpician Seminary at Issy. Bishop John J. Keane, the first rector, however, was intent on implementing Thomism in the new university. But the professors he chose, Joseph Pohle for scholastic philosophy and Joseph Schroeder for scholastic theology, both became antagonists of his administration and the orientation of the university.

The Catholic University opened its doors just as Rome began to react against historical criticism of Scripture. In 1893 Leo XIII issued *Providentissimus Deus*. It was cautious about certain aspects of higher criticism but, in regard to apparent contradictions between the natural sciences

²⁰ Yves M.-J. Congar, O.P., *Tradition and Traditions: An Historical and a Theological Essay* (New York: Macmillan, 1966) 196–98.

²¹ Roger Aubert, *Le pontificat de Pie IX (1846–1878)*, Vol. 21 of *Histoire de l'église depuis les origines jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris: Bloud & Gay, 1952) 354.

²² Trent had referred to the "gospel" of Christ as "the source of all salutary truth and moral discipline," which were "contained in Scripture and unwritten traditions" (DS 1501). In quoting Trent, Vatican I stated that "revelation" was contained in Scripture and unwritten traditions (DS 3006). See Congar, *Tradition* 198.

²³ Archives of the Catholic University of America, Minutes of Trustee Meetings, Jan. 27, 1885, p. 4.

and the Bible, Leo quoted St. Thomas that the writers "went by what sensibly appeared."²⁴ The pope then declared that "the principles here laid down will apply to cognate sciences, and especially to history."²⁵ It was but a logical conclusion for liberal exegetes to develop what they termed "historical appearances." But Leo's treatment of inspiration and inerrancy caused later controversy. He virtually adopted Franzelin's entire theory in a section for which Cardinal Camillo Mazzella, S.J., the first dean of Woodstock College in Maryland, was responsible.²⁶

At the Catholic University Hyvernat publicly ignored the biblical question and concentrated on Semitic languages. His colleague in dogmatic theology, Charles Grannan, however, openly embraced the new historical method. His teaching on Scripture contributed unwittingly to the forced resignation of Keane as rector. In 1893 he had assigned a thesis for a student's defense in a licentiate examination that stated: "While the Council of Trent does not admit any difference in point of canonicity, it does not expressly condemn the opinion held by Jerome and the Greek Fathers that there is a distinction of authority between the protocanonical and the deuterocanonical books of the Old Testament." Schroeder immediately complained to the student that the thesis had been taken from a work of Alfred Loisy, who was still, by the way, a professor at the Institut Catholique in Paris. He then protested to the faculty, where he found his only ally to be Pohle. In 1895 Archbishop Francesco Satolli, the first apostolic delegate to the American hierarchy, asked him for any theses illustrating the university teaching on Scripture. Schroeder sent Satolli an account of his protest two years before and enclosed a similar thesis to be defended that year. Satolli filed Schroeder's letter among the papers pertaining to Keane's dismissal as rector in 1896.²⁷

Despite Keane's dismissal, Grannan continued his liberal orientation. Higher criticism could be applied to Scripture, he declared, because "the same Scripture, which claims to be the Word of God, claims also to be word of man."²⁸ He drew an analogy between the human and divine natures in Christ and the human and divine elements in the Bible. The

²⁴ Leo XIII, *Providentissimus Deus*, in *Rome and the Study of Scripture* (St. Meinrad, Ind.: Abbey, 1962) 22.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 23.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 24; Francesco Turvasi, *Giovanni Genocchi e la controversia modernista* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1974) 93.

²⁷ Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Rub. 43 (1903) fasc. 2, 78-80, Schroeder to Satolli, Washington, June 18, 1895. On Keane's dismissal see Patrick H. Ahern, *The Life of John J. Keane, Educator and Archbishop, 1839-1918* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1955) 178-79.

²⁸ Charles Grannan, "Two-fold Authorship of Scripture," *Catholic University Bulletin* 3 (1897) 139.

union of the two natures in Christ was "hypostatical or personal," he wrote, but the union of the two elements in the Bible was "merely verbal." The Incarnate Word of God was worshiped, therefore, but the written Word was not. Just as the Gospels contained passages, he said, in which "we see the weakness of His humanity" and others in which "we see evidence of His divinity," so the "written word of God . . . partakes of the many imperfections common to human language, 'sin alone excepted'; that is, to the exclusion of error."²⁹ Other American scholars embraced historical criticism and publicized it in the American Church, notably several Sulpicians: Joseph Bruneau, at Dunwoodie; John B. Hogan, first at the Catholic University and later at the Boston seminary; and, as will be seen, Francis Gigot.

But not all Americans were so receptive. At Woodstock College Anthony J. Maas, S.J., had entered the lists against biblical criticism in the early 1890s. Typology was his speciality, and he carried it to creative, if absurd, extremes. In "Adam's Rib—Myth or Allegory," in 1893, he argued that the story had to be historical or else the typology would be jeopardized that just as Eve was fashioned from the side of Adam, so the Church was fashioned from the side of Christ.³⁰

Maas was no less imaginative in his treatment of the Synoptic problem. In 1891 he published *The Life of Jesus Christ according to the Gospel History*. A harmony of the Gospels that ignored the specific theologies of the evangelists, it was used as a textbook at Woodstock and other institutions as late as the 1940s. In 1893 he provided a solution to the Synoptic problem. The Synoptic Gospels, he wrote, were "the records of the catechetical instructions of the Apostles," which, in turn, "were based on that of St. Peter, but were developed according to the needs of the catechumens." He premised his assertion on "the two facts of St. Peter's residence in the three principal primitive churches in Jerusalem, Antioch, and Rome, and of St. Peter's primacy in the apostolic college." "Even St. Paul," he continued, "though he had not lived so long under the influence of St. Peter as the other Apostles, follows the same method of preaching as the Prince of the Apostles." Maas's evidence was a comparison of the discourses of Peter and Paul in the Acts of the Apostles.³¹ From the retrospect of almost a century, it is still difficult to determine if Maas

²⁹ Ibid. 154-55.

³⁰ Anthony J. Maas, S.J., "Adam's Rib—Allegory or History," *American Ecclesiastical Review* 9 (1893) 88-102. On Maas's articles on the biblical question, see Bernard Noone, "A Critical Analysis of the American Catholic Response to Higher Criticism as Reflected in Selected Catholic Periodicals—1870-1908" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Drew University, 1976) 259-321.

³¹ Anthony J. Maas, S.J., "The Synoptic Problem," *ibid.* 13 (1895) 171-73.

was interested in Scripture or in preserving Petrine primacy as the base of papal primacy, then under siege with the Roman Question in Italy and the recent *Kulturkampf* in Germany.

Professor of Scripture and rector of Woodstock College, Maas was held in such high esteem that Herman Heuser, editor of the *American Ecclesiastical Review*, chose him in 1900 to be the journal's sole reporter on biblical matters—a task he fulfilled until 1912, when he became provincial. Paradoxically, Heuser had earlier published several articles by Bruneau and four by Loisy.

In the 1890s, however, the American Church was divided, not on the biblical question but over Americanism. The Americanists included the Catholic University's supporters, Archbishop John Ireland of St. Paul, Cardinal James Gibbons of Baltimore, Denis J. O'Connell, rector of the American College in Rome until 1895, and Keane. The movement was exported to Europe when the life of Father Isaac Hecker, founder of the Paulists, was translated into French. Controversy erupted not so much because of a bad translation as because of the impossibility of translating American ideas and values into another culture, shaped by an entirely different history.

Americanism and historical criticism became intertwined in August 1897 at the Fourth International Catholic Scientific Congress held in Fribourg, Switzerland. O'Connell praised Americanism and religious liberty guaranteed by the separation of church and state. Marie-Joseph Lagrange, O.P., delivered his first paper on the historical criticism of the Pentateuch. Baron Friedrich von Hügel, a friend of O'Connell's, treated the sources of the Hexateuch. The *Catholic University Bulletin* published both articles on Scripture—the only English-language publication of Lagrange's paper.³² The Americanists and biblical critics, however, had more in common than acquaintanceship. They also faced the same opponents.

In 1898 Charles Maignen first published a series of articles against Americanism. He republished them as a book, *Le Père Hecker: Est-il un saint?*, with the imprimatur of Alberto Lepidi, O.P., Master of the Sacred Palace. Then A.-J. Delattre, S.J., professor of Hebrew at the Jesuit scholasticate at Louvain, contributed his *Un catholicisme américain*, accusing the Americanists of individualism and Gallicanism.³³ Maignen and Delattre both became antagonists of biblical criticism.

During the summer of 1898 Leo XIII appointed committees to inves-

³² Friedrich von Hügel, "The Historical Method and the Documents of the Hexateuch," *Catholic University Bulletin* 4 (1898) 198–226; M.-J. Lagrange, O.P., "Miscellaneous: On the Pentateuch," *ibid.* (1898) 115–222.

³³ Alphonse J. Delattre, S.J., *Un catholicisme américain* (Namur: A. Godenne, 1898).

tigate Americanism, Lagrange's *Revue biblique*, which the Franciscan Latin-rite patriarch of Jerusalem had delated to Rome, and evolution. As O'Connell reported to Ireland, Louis Duchesne, the famous church historian, "says he always observed that the H. Office is worse during the months of June & July."³⁴ Giovanni Genocchi, an Italian exegete and friend of O'Connell's, wrote Umberto Fracassini, a Scripture scholar and superior of the seminary of Perugia, that some people in Rome were beginning to consider "critico-biblical studies as an apparent part of dangerous Americanism."³⁵ From the Catholic University, Charles Grannan lamented to O'Connell the lack of protest from the American bishops against the investigation of Americanism. He added: "I hope our Bulletin will not come in for any share of the censure passed on the 'Revue Biblique.' It will soon be impossible to write anything at all on S. Scripture."³⁶

On January 22, 1899, Leo XIII issued his apostolic letter *Testem benevolentiae*. A closer reading of the letter indicates that Genocchi may have accurately discerned a connection between Americanism and biblical criticism. The pope reproved those who watered down doctrine or sought to introduce liberty into the Church, "so that, limiting the exercise and vigilance of its powers, each one of the faithful may act more freely in pursuance of his own natural bent and capacity."³⁷ Turning to Hecker's theory of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within the individual Christian, Leo rebuked those who implied that previous ages had "received a lesser outpouring of the Holy Spirit." Then he explicitly cited the Second Council of Orange condemning anyone who "affirms that he can consent to the saving preaching of the Gospel without the illumination of the Holy Ghost."³⁸

Mention of the Second Council of Orange served notice to the Americanists that they might be Semi-Pelagians in disguise. In case they missed his point, Leo went on to say that those who spoke of a more abundant outpouring of the Spirit in the present age seemed also to "extol beyond measure the natural virtues as more in accordance with the ways and requirements of the present day . . . because they make a man more ready and more strenuous in action." This implied to the pope that "nature . . ., with grace added to it," was "weaker than when left to

³⁴ Archives of the Archdiocese of St. Paul, O'Connell to Ireland, Rome, July 12, 1898.

³⁵ Genocchi to Fracassini, July 4, 1898, in Turvasi, *Giovanni Genocchi* 98.

³⁶ Archives of the Diocese of Richmond, Grannan to O'Connell, Vincentius-Haus, July 17, 1898.

³⁷ Leo XIII, *Testem benevolentiae*, in John Tracy Ellis, ed., *Documents of American Catholic History* 2 (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1967) 539-41.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 541-42.

its own strength." "If we do not wish to lose sight of the eternal blessedness to which God in His goodness has destined us," Leo concluded, "of what use are the natural virtues unless the gift and strength of divine grace be added?"³⁹ Grace and the external guidance of the Church, therefore, were necessary for human nature to attain its end.

As the Church battled rationalism, her theologians made grace rare, and she reminded her members of the weakness of human nature. She may also have been reminding biblical scholars that they could not apply mere natural criticism to Scripture, for it had God as its author and could not be compared with other ancient Near Eastern literature. Inspiration supernaturally elevated the mind of a single human author, whose name was known from internal evidence of the book or by tradition. To argue that the books of Scripture went through a series of redactions or that several sources were put together to form a given book could mean that inspiration, like grace for the Americanists, would not be rare.

Whatever may have been the theological connection between Americanism and biblical criticism, there was a chronological connection in the reactions against each. In November 1898 Leo addressed the Franciscans about the dangers of modern criticism of Scripture—the letter was intended for Lagrange and the Dominicans in response to the patriarch's delation of the *Revue biblique*. On January 28, 1899, less than a week after *Testem*, the master general of the Dominicans notified Lagrange of the letter to the Franciscans and required that all articles in the *Revue* be submitted to Rome for prior censorship.⁴⁰

Back in the United States, church leaders initially did not see the possible relationship between Americanism and biblical criticism. In New York Archbishop Michael A. Corrigan, the leading opponent of the Americanists, gave no sign of disapproval of Bruneau on his seminary faculty. A few years later he even gave his imprimatur to two controversial works by Gigot. In Washington the erstwhile Americanists sought to strengthen their control of the university by having O'Connell named rector. Anxious to cleanse himself of any taint of heresy, however, he soon managed to alienate the very faculty members who had most campaigned for his appointment, especially Charles Grannan. O'Connell's tension with his faculty shaded the introduction to the university of one of the most promising young European Catholic exegetes.

Father Henry Poels from Holland had studied at Louvain under A. van Hoonacker and was a consultor to the recently established Biblical Commission. From the moment of his arrival in Washington in 1904,

³⁹ Ibid. 543.

⁴⁰ *Père Lagrange: Personal Reflections and Memoirs* (New York: Paulist, 1985) 70–75.

however, he found himself a pawn in the feud between O'Connell and the faculty. Nevertheless, in 1905 he wrote the first of three articles in the *Catholic University Bulletin* on historical criticism. Reflecting Lagrange's theory of "verbal inspiration," he argued that "The whole Bible is inspired, in all its parts, in all its sentences, and even in its *obiter dicta*," but biblical statements "must needs be true only in that sense in which God and the inspired author wished it to be understood." Scripture presented truth only when the inspired author made a "judgment" or "affirmation," and it was the task of the exegete to determine when this occurred.⁴¹ For the exegete, it was essential to "consider the *context*; not only the immediate context, but at the same time—what theologians frequently seem to forget—the more *remote* context, that is to say, the *literary character* of the whole book."⁴²

Poels found precedent for the new historical method in the Fathers, particularly Jerome. He argued that Jerome did "not admit the strictly historical sense of some biblical texts, and that *for this reason* he recurs, either to 'the true law of history,' or to a spiritual sense."⁴³ Jerome's "law of history" distinguished between the "author" and "man of his generation." Applying this, Poels concluded that it was not necessary to say that the inspired writers generally "knew more than the contemporaries about profane things, which God did not reveal to them."⁴⁴

Poels expanded his treatment of the Fathers in subsequent articles, but he had already drawn attacks. In 1904 Alphonse Delattre, S.J., had published his *Autour de la question biblique*. His primary target was Lagrange, but Poels was a secondary one. Poels then rebutted Delattre, who was then professor of Scripture at the Gregorian University. Jesuit opponents of the historical method received yet further encouragement in November 1904, when their general, Louis Martin, condemned it. Then, in 1905, the Biblical Commission rejected the argument that there were "implicit citations" and historical appearances in Scripture. For Maas, this was an antidote to "the poison that certain readers might gather out of Dr. H. A. Poels' two articles." But he patronizingly concluded that "if Dr. Poels does not quarrel with the Biblical Commission, we will not quarrel with him."⁴⁵

What caused Poels's difficulties, however, were not the attacks from Delattre and Maas but the politics of the university. In 1906 the Biblical

⁴¹ Henry Poels, "History and Inspiration," *Catholic University Bulletin* 11 (1905) 27–28.

⁴² *Ibid.* 28.

⁴³ *Ibid.* 52–53.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 56.

⁴⁵ Anthony J. Maas, S.J. "Ecclesiastical Library Table: Recent Biblical Study," *American Ecclesiastical Review* 32 (1905) 654

Commission had issued its response in favor of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. Poels had difficulties about the decision and in the summer of 1907 explained them personally to Pius X through an interpreter, Giovanni Genocchi, a consultor to the commission. At first the pope suggested that he teach dogmatic theology or another branch of theology. When Genocchi pointed out that university professors were specialists, the pope agreed that Poels could continue to teach, provided he did not speak against the commission's response. Unfortunately, this was not the account of the interview that the pope later wrote down, though he later admitted his mistake.

Poels's interview with the pope unleashed a set of events, too complex to be narrated here, that led to his dismissal. On the American side, all the officials of the university, Gibbons, the chancellor, O'Connell and his successor as rector, Thomas Shahan, and most of the trustees wanted to prove the university's orthodoxy, even at the cost of besmirching the reputation of a good priest. The upshot was that Cardinal Merry del Val, the Secretary of State, devised an oath, according to which Poels was to swear that he believed "in conscience" that Moses wrote the Pentateuch. Poels tried in vain to appeal his case to Rome. Among his few supporters in Rome was, surprisingly, Leopold Fonck, S.J., first rector of the Pontifical Biblical Institute and outright opponent of the new exegesis. Fonck intervened with the pope on the grounds that Poels was innocent of the charges against him. In 1910 Poels was dismissed from the university faculty. He remained, however, a consultor of the Biblical Commission until his death in 1946.⁴⁶

Poels was the only professor dismissed from any American institution over Modernism, and his was a tragic case in which none of the principals, from the pope on down, acquitted themselves well. Of the bishops on the board of trustees, only two showed any sympathy for Poels: Camillus Maes of Covington and Matthew Harkins of Providence. Curiously, Maes had earlier demanded that one of his priests, Thomas McGrady, retract statements he had made in praise of Ernest Renan and other radical thinkers. Rather than retract, McGrady had left the priesthood.⁴⁷ Harkins' support was more interesting. He had been named in first place on the terna for coadjutor archbishop of Boston in 1904. A letter-writing campaign, which led to the appointment of William Henry O'Connell, accused Harkins of espousing "the Americanist spirit" and of allowing

⁴⁶ This entire painful episode is detailed in Henry A. Poels, "A Vindication of My Honor," edited with an introduction by Frans Neirynck in *Annua nuntia Lovaniensia* 225 (1982).

⁴⁷ Aaron I. Abell, *American Catholicism and Social Action: A Search for Social Justice* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1963) 144-45.

his diocesan newspaper to laud "Higher criticism."⁴⁸

In regard to the Mosaic authorship and other issues, the Church seemed to have adopted the Protestant principle of the literal interpretation of Scripture. But there was a different explanation: a literal interpretation of the magisterium. In this case the issue was Trent's decree on the canon of Scripture, referring to the "five [books] of Moses."⁴⁹ In his Fribourg address Lagrange had stated that Trent was not treating the Mosaic authorship but was merely issuing a decree on the canon. Other theologians, however, disagreed. Among these was Fulcran Vigouroux, S.S., who had taught Bruneau and Francis Gigot. He was also the first secretary of the Biblical Commission.

In 1890 Vigouroux had written that "the Council of Trent has been a faithful echo of the belief of the Church in naming Moses as the author of the first five books of the Bible, in the canon of the Scriptures." Trent could not have done otherwise, for "the Church itself has received this belief from the synagogue" and Christ himself attributed the Pentateuch to Moses in six passages.⁵⁰ To deny the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, therefore, would be to impugn not only the tradition of the Church, expressed by Trent, but also the words of Christ himself.

Francis Gigot, S.S., also found himself at odds with Vigouroux. In 1900, when he was teaching at St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore, he published his *General Introduction to the Study of the Holy Scriptures*. He argued that Catholics had less to fear from modern criticism than Protestants, for "Catholics built their faith primarily on the teaching of a living Church, whereas Protestants rest their whole belief on the written word of God."⁵¹ Gigot had only to substitute "tradition" for "Church" to come up with the earlier dynamic notion of tradition so familiar to Carroll and Kenrick. In 1901 Gigot published his *Special Introduction to the Study of the Old Testament: Part I. The Historical Books*. He accepted the composition of the Pentateuch from four sources and pointedly denied that Trent had made a dogmatic declaration in favor of the Mosaic authorship.⁵²

Early in 1902 Gigot's superiors in Paris requested that he send copies of his two books to Paris to be reviewed, and to submit the manuscript

⁴⁸ Archivio Segreto Vaticano, DAUS, Liste Episcopali 73, Patrick Supple to Gotti, Cambridge, Mass., April 17, 1904.

⁴⁹ DS 1502.

⁵⁰ F. Vigouroux, *Les livres saints et la critique rationaliste: Histoire et réfutation des objections des incrédules contre les saintes écritures* 1 (Paris: A. Roger & F. Chernoviz, 1890) 9-10.

⁵¹ Francis E. Gigot, S.S., *General Introduction to the Study of the Holy Scriptures* (New York: Benziger, 1900) 517.

⁵² Gigot, *Special Introduction* 1:32.

of the second part of his *Special Introduction* to French censors. Gigot was fully aware that Vigouroux was one of the French censors. In the meantime he had moved to St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie, New York. Though he had the support of his American superiors, his case became intertwined with the controversy over the founding of the *New York Review*, the most progressive Catholic theological journal in the United States up to that time. Unwilling to submit his work to censors in Paris, however, Gigot with four other Sulpicians withdrew from the Society early in 1906, and they remained at Dunwoodie as diocesan priests.⁵³ Gigot then published the second part of his *Special Introduction*. It suggested that Isaiah was composed by at least two authors. It even received a good review in the *American Ecclesiastical Review*, probably from Maas. But the reviewer drew attention to Gigot's first part. Now that the Biblical Commission had spoken against the multiple authorship of the Pentateuch, he said, it "would seem to require the revision of the chapters in Father Gigot's first volume referring to this topic, in such a manner that the student may not be biassed against the evidence for the Mosaic authorship."⁵⁴

With *Pascendi dominici gregis* in 1907 and the demise of the *New York Review* a year later, Gigot published no more exegetical works. He remained at Dunwoodie, and his works continued to be used in some seminaries, but not everyone was pleased. Lawrence Shehan, the future archbishop of Baltimore and cardinal, recalled that at St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore Gigot's *Special Introduction* was still the textbook. Shehan criticized his Scripture professor because "he adhered too closely to Gigot's text and accepted everything he said without question."⁵⁵ The battle against Modernism had taken its toll even on one of the Second Vatican Council's principal participants. In one of the first acts of his pontificate in 1914, Benedict XV had condemned the extremes of the anti-Modernist witch hunt, but then, in 1920, he issued *Spiritus Paraclitus*, repudiating those who appealed to "historical appearances" in Scripture.

From the condemnation of Modernism in 1907 to the late 1940s, there was virtually no Scripture scholarship in the American Church. Replacing the openness of Poels and Gigot was almost slavish adherence to Roman manuals. The anti-Modernist crusade arguably had more of an impact

⁵³ Christopher J. Kauffman, *Tradition and Transformation in Catholic Culture: The Priests of Saint Sulpice in the United States from 1791 to the Present* (New York: Macmillan, 1988) 199-224.

⁵⁴ Unsigned, "Criticism and Notes," *American Ecclesiastical Review* 35 (1906) 435-36.

⁵⁵ *A Blessing of Years: The Memoirs of Lawrence Cardinal Shehan* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1982) 45-46.

in the United States than in Europe, for American scholarship was only in its infancy and, even then, depended on European scholars imported for the purpose. At Woodstock College Walter Drum, Maas's successor as professor and reporter for the *American Ecclesiastical Review*, continued to make sure the American clergy remained either ignorant of biblical developments or on guard against the slightest taint of Modernism. He even tried to have several articles by C. C. Martindale, S.J., placed on the Index—an effort that led Heuser to sever the *Review's* relationship with Drum in 1920. Whatever vestiges of the former scholarship remained went underground. The particular school of theology that had arisen in response to European rationalism became synonymous with the doctrine it was meant to preserve. The Church in general and the American Church in particular were ill prepared for any change.

AMERICAN CATHOLIC BIBLICAL SCHOLARSHIP DURING VATICAN II

The revival of Catholic biblical scholarship began in 1936 with the decision to revise the Douay Bible. The first such attempt since Kenrick, it was the pet project of Bishop Edwin Vincent O'Hara, chairman of the episcopal committee for the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD). The priest-seminary professors who first gathered to begin the translation decided in 1937 to found the Catholic Biblical Association (CBA) and to publish a journal, the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* (CBQ). It was the first time priests of different dioceses and religious orders met, since *Pascendi dominici gregis* had specifically forbidden such meetings, which had been "among the means used by the modernists to propagate their opinions."⁵⁶

In the early years the CBA gave little sign of breaking from the entrenched theology and engaging in real scholarship. In 1943 the CBA's journal, the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, for example, published three articles to commemorate the 50th anniversary of *Providentissimus Deus*. Neither gave any indication that any change was in the offing.⁵⁷

Pius XII's own commemoration of *Providentissimus Deus* struck a totally different chord. *Divino afflante Spiritu* was the *magna charta* for biblical scholarship. The pope called upon biblical scholars to use all the tools of criticism: archeology, ethnology, history, and ancient Near Eastern languages. Fully to understand the meaning intended by the author,

⁵⁶ Pius X, *Pascendi dominici gregis*, in Claudia Carlen, I.H.M., *The Papal Encyclicals* 3 (Raleigh: Consortium, 1981) 75.

⁵⁷ Anthony J. Cotter, S.J., "The Antecedents of the Encyclical *Providentissimus Deus*," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 5 (1943) 117-24; Stephen J. Hartdegen, O.F.M., "The Influence of the Encyclical *Providentissimus Deus* on Subsequent Scripture Study," *ibid.* 145-58; Richard T. Murphy, O.P., "The Teachings of the Encyclical *Providentissimus Deus*," *ibid.* 125-40.

the interpreter was to "go back wholly in spirit to those remote centuries of the East," to determine the particular "modes of writing" an author of a given age was likely to use.⁵⁸ Here the pope drew the analogy with the Incarnation frequently used by the progressives of the last century. "For as the substantial Word of God became like to men in all things, except sin," he stated, "so the words of God, expressed in human language, are made like to human speech in every respect, except error."⁵⁹ Pius XII had thus reversed a trend in Catholic biblical scholarship which had begun toward the end of Leo XIII's pontificate, developed under Pius X, and was re-enforced under Benedict XV, at least in regard to historical criticism. The new encyclical had, in fact, cited *Spiritus Paraclitus* only three times, and one of those seemed to take Benedict's condemnation of "historical appearances" and reverse it.⁶⁰

It would be almost a decade, however, before American scholarship fully implemented the new encyclical. The transition began with a change in editorship of the *CBQ*. Michael J. Gruenthaner, S.J., who had become editor in 1942, reflected the ambivalence of the early CBA itself about whether it was to be a scholarly or popular organization. In an early editorial he called for articles that were more popular and avoided technical language not familiar to the average priest.⁶¹ In 1949 he had locked horns with his fellow Jesuit John L. McKenzie, who argued that Catholic exegetes could espouse polygenism. He had the last word, however, by rejecting McKenzie's paper for publication in the *CBQ*.⁶² The next year Pius XII also questioned whether polygenism could be reconciled with Catholic doctrine. Upon close reading, *Humani generis* was a balanced document, but it ushered in a decade of increased warnings to biblical scholars.

At first the CBA took no notice of the encyclical. In fact, ten days after its publication the CBA officers took action that moved the *CBQ* into the vanguard of biblical scholarship. With no forewarning, they demanded Gruenthaner's resignation.⁶³ They replaced him with Edward F. Siegman, C.P.P.S., of St. Charles Seminary, Carthagen, Ohio. In

⁵⁸ Pius XII, *Divino afflante Spiritu*, no. 21, in *Rome and the Study of Scripture*, no. 35, p. 97.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 37, p. 98.

⁶⁰ Compare *ibid.*, no. 3, p. 82, which quotes *Spiritus Paraclitus* but reverses Benedict XV's condemnation of "sensible appearances" applied to history (*Spiritus Paraclitus*, no. 2, *ibid.* 53).

⁶¹ *CBQ* 5 (1943) 3.

⁶² "General Meeting," *CBQ* 12 (1950) 1; interview with John L. McKenzie, Aug. 3, 1983.

⁶³ Robert North, S.J., "A Frontier Jerome: Gruenthaner," reprinted from the *American Ecclesiastical Review* 148 (1963) 289-302, 398-411; 149 (1963) 41-50; interview with John L. McKenzie, Aug. 3, 1983.

January 1951 Siegman moved to the Catholic University to assume his duties as editor. Eventually he joined the university faculty. From the beginning, however, he encountered the bitter antagonism to biblical studies of Msgr. Joseph C. Fenton, professor of dogmatic theology at the university and editor of the *American Ecclesiastical Review*.

Fenton had already become the watchdog of orthodoxy by challenging the position of John Courtney Murray, S.J., on church-state relations and religious liberty. He thus set the stage for a revival of the drama at the turn of the century when Americanism and historical criticism were intertwined. The plot remained identical; only the names of the characters were changed. This time, however, the progressive camp included many prominent Jesuits.

Murray, professor of theology at Woodstock College, first broached the question of religious liberty and the American separation of church and state in *Theological Studies* in 1943, the same year as *Divino afflante Spiritu*. By 1948 he had won the support of Archbishop Samuel Stritch of Chicago and Archbishop John T. McNicholas, O.P., of Cincinnati, who had overcome their initial hesitation to accept the development of doctrine on church-state relations from Leo XIII to Pius XII. But Murray won only the enmity of Fenton, who wrote that Murray was simply reviving Americanism, which the Holy See had formally condemned in an "infallible" pronouncement. Fenton, moreover, had the powerful Roman support of Alfredo Ottaviani, named a cardinal and secretary of the Holy Office in 1953. By the summer of 1955 Murray ceased writing on religious liberty.⁶⁴ While Murray was subjected to attack, biblical studies seemed untouched, but only for the moment.

By 1957 the CBA began to address the neuralgic problem of the relationship between inspiration and authorship so central to the disputes at the beginning of the century. At the annual meeting, Roderick A. F. MacKenzie, S.J., of Regis College in Toronto, devoted his presidential address to inspiration. "Instead of 'the inspired author' of a given book or pericope or phrase," he said, "we should accustom ourselves to speak of 'the inspired authors.'"⁶⁵ The charism of inspiration should, therefore, be considered not individually but collectively, for "theologically, the viewpoint from which the work of the various part-authors must be

⁶⁴ On Murray see Donald E. Pelotte, S.S.S., *John Courtney Murray: Theologian in Conflict* (New York: Paulist, 1976) 3-73; for Murray's relationship with the Americanist tradition, see 141-85. See also my *The Vatican and the American Hierarchy* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1985) 349-53, 368-81.

⁶⁵ R. A. F. MacKenzie, S.J., "Some Problems in the Field of Inspiration," *CBQ* 20 (1958) 7.

examined is that of the completed canonical book."⁶⁶ MacKenzie had, therefore, reintroduced one of the controversial issues of the turn of the century.

A year later David Stanley, S.J., also of Regis College, published an article, "Balaam's Ass, or a Problem in New Testament Hermeneutics." It drew the distinction between the *Sitz im Leben* of the events and sayings of Jesus and the *Sitz im Evangelium*, which "has endowed it [the "setting in life"] with a theological dimension which, to say the least, was not immediately evident in its original form and setting."⁶⁷

Stanley had chosen the provocative title of his article to explain that the story of Balaam's ass had been included in Numbers in order to instruct its readers "upon a point of OT doctrine of first-rate importance"—the "theological principle that God can, and does, make use of His creation, animate and inanimate, rational and irrational, as Bearers of His Word of salvation to men."⁶⁸ The evangelists had employed this same theological "principle which they found in the OT writers in order to express the revelation of the Word Incarnate." Only at Pentecost would the apostolic community receive the full revelation of "Christ's divinity and the personality of the Spirit," but "still Jesus' public ministry had served as introduction to the meaning of the Pentecostal revelation." The purpose of the Gospels, he concluded, was "not primarily 'historical' (in our sense), but a *theological interpretation*."⁶⁹ Stanley's balanced efforts to distinguish between the inerrancy of the Gospels and historical truth in the modern sense drew strong criticism. To some, his argument that the apostles fully recognized the divinity of Christ only at Pentecost impugned any historical value of the Gospels. American biblical scholarship had now matured, but it would face increasing opposition.

In 1958 Siegman resigned as editor of the *CBQ* in order to take a sabbatical from the university and obtain his licentiate in Scripture from the Pontifical Biblical Institute. Roland E. Murphy, O.Carm., became the new editor. He would steer the *CBQ* through the storms building up against biblical scholarship, for the Church, too, was entering a period of transition. In October Pius XII died. His successor, John XXIII, gave little sign of encouraging the biblical scholarship initiated by Pius. Even before Pius XII's death, there were the first rumblings from Rome. In February 1958 the Congregation of Seminaries and Universities declared

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 8.

⁶⁷ David M. Stanley, "Balaam's Ass, or a Problem in New Testament Hermeneutics," *CBQ* 20 (1958) 50.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* 54.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 55.

that Robert-Feuillet's *Introduction à la Bible* was unsuitable for use in seminaries, although both the Holy Office and the Biblical Commission refused to pronounce on the work. Behind the move was Antonino Romeo, professor at the Lateran seminary and a consultant to the congregation, who wanted to promote his own book.⁷⁰ Romeo became an archopponent of biblical scholarship in Rome in a battle that had its American counterpart. This was the Roman context within which John XXIII startled the theological world by summoning a council on January 25, 1959.

Just as John XXIII was calling the council, the first of a series of attacks on biblical scholarship appeared in the *American Ecclesiastical Review*. To a query about biblical scholarship undermining the "historical value" of Scripture, Francis Connell, C.S.S.R., answered that it was "pathetic to meet a Catholic scholar so busy with his studies that he limits his prayers to the minimum. An occasional hour before the Blessed Sacrament will help him more in his studies than many hours of painstaking research."⁷¹ Six months later Fenton charged that those who denied that the Gospels were historical documents fell under the condemnation of the magisterium, particularly the Holy Office's syllabus of 1907, *Lamentabili*, and *Pascendi*. Pius X, he asserted, had explained the "binding force" of those documents in *Praestantia Scripturae sacrae* and declared that whoever contradicted either incurred "*ipso facto* the censure" of excommunication. The pope had further stated that those who disagreed with the decisions of the Biblical Commission incurred "the note of disobedience and of *temeritas* and consequently are guilty of serious sin."⁷² Completely absent from Fenton's catalogue of magisterial pronouncements, however, was any reference to either *Divino afflante Spiritu* or the Biblical Commission's letter to Cardinal E. C. Suhard of Paris in 1948 encouraging Catholic scholars to use "sane criticism" in examining the sources and development of the Pentateuch.

In December 1958 Fenton had received a powerful ally in the person of Archbishop Egidio Vagnozzi, the new apostolic delegate. But Vagnozzi ran into difficulty, and biblical scholars themselves found a more powerful, yet unlikely, ally. In January 1960 the Paulist Press had begun publication of the Pamphlet Bible Series, to which CBA members were contributing. The series had Cardinal Francis Spellman's imprimatur,

⁷⁰ Archives of the Catholic Biblical Association, Siegman to Hartman, Rome, Nov. 16, 1958.

⁷¹ Francis J. Connell, C.S.S.R., "Answers to Questions," *American Ecclesiastical Review* 140 (1959) 36.

⁷² Joseph C. Fenton, "The Case for Traditional Apologetics," *American Ecclesiastical Review* 141 (1959) 411.

which Vagnozzi now asked him to withdraw. Instead, Spellman consulted Paulist officials and his own advisers on the new biblical scholarship. He then wrote Vagnozzi refusing to withdraw his imprimatur and announcing that the series would continue.⁷³

By the summer of 1961 the friction between Fenton and Vagnozzi on the one hand and biblical scholars on the other had reached fever pitch. While the *American Ecclesiastical Review* continued to attack biblical scholars, Vagnozzi himself took to the stage at Marquette University. He catalogued all the movements that he saw undermining the life of "the Catholic intellectual," from new theological developments to the discussion of a vernacular liturgy. But he reserved some of his sharpest comments for biblical scholarship. He was concerned with the "dispute amongst Catholic scholars concerning the idea of history as applied to both the Old and New Testaments." Pius XII, he acknowledged, had requested "that exegetes . . . diligently investigate the 'literary meaning' of the Sacred Text." While admitting he had no prerogative to say whether "recent efforts to give us this literary meaning are in consonance with the teaching of the Church," he did think exegetes should not "insist on presenting as definitive truth—to be accepted by all right-thinking people—theories and opinions which can receive the definitive stamp of truthfulness only from the 'magisterium' of the Church."⁷⁴

The American battle for the Bible merely reflected the build-up in Rome against the Pontifical Biblical Institute—a story told at the time in the pages of *TS*.⁷⁵ Kept abreast of the controversy through Ernest Vogt, S.J., rector of the institute, Roland Murphy offered the support of the *CBQ*. Vogt suggested, instead, that since the Roman situation was quiet, the *CBQ* simply publish a clarification of the dispute and that Murphy distribute the documents on the controversy to members of the CBA.⁷⁶

In the midst of the temporary lull in the Roman storm, the Holy Office issued a *monitum* on the study of Scripture. It began with praise for biblical scholarship, but warned that "judgments and opinions are being spread in many countries which gravely imperil the exact historical and objective truth of Holy Scripture, not only in the case of the Old Testament, as Pope Pius XII had cause to lament in '*Humani Generis*',

⁷³ Interview with Myles Bourke, March 9, 1983.

⁷⁴ Archbishop Egidio Vagnozzi, "Thoughts on the Catholic Intellectual," *American Ecclesiastical Review* 145 (1961) 74–75.

⁷⁵ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "A Recent Roman Scriptural Controversy," *TS* 22 (1961) 426–44.

⁷⁶ This story is given at greater length in my *American Catholic Biblical Scholarship: A History from the Early Republic to Vatican II* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989) 291–93.

but also in the case of the New Testament, involving even the words and events of the life of Christ." Biblical scholars, therefore, were to treat the Sacred Books "with the prudence and respect demanded by a subject of such great importance and . . . that they should keep before them at all times the doctrine of the Fathers and their way of thinking together with the *magisterium* of the Church, so that the consciences of the Faithful be not troubled nor the truths of Faith damaged."⁷⁷ This *monitum* now gave rise to a new controversy over its interpretation.

The *monitum* and the increased attacks on biblical scholars provided the backdrop for one of the most dramatic meetings in the history of the CBA. John L. McKenzie proposed a resolution—"a Declaration against Defamation"—repudiating the attacks made in the *American Ecclesiastical Review*. Patrick W. Skehan of the Catholic University had, in fact, unsuccessfully attempted to have the resolution emanate from the executive committee of the CBA. Skehan and McKenzie were ready with a list of the offensive articles—including the text of Vagnozzi's Marquette speech. The CBA overwhelmingly passed the resolution, but the *CBQ* published only a vague reference to it. Vagnozzi had first tried, unsuccessfully, to have Roland Murphy suppress the resolution, but then Archbishop Patrick O'Boyle of Washington, who gave the imprimatur for the *CBQ*, demanded that specific mention of the *American Ecclesiastical Review* be deleted. Word of the specific target of the resolution got out only when Fenton and the writers of the offending articles protested to the American hierarchy.⁷⁸

The CBA's battle with Fenton and Vagnozzi now took its first casualty. Shortly after the 1961 meeting, Siegman suffered a heart attack. While he was recuperating in the spring of 1962, William J. McDonald, the rector of the university, notified Siegman's provincial superior that the university had hired a permanent replacement for him. The School of Sacred Theology adopted a protest resolution in support of Siegman, passed by a vote of 18 to 2. The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences unanimously adopted a similar resolution. Siegman's case came to public attention only a year later in the aftermath of McDonald's ban on Godfrey Diekmann, Hans Küng, John Courtney Murray, and Gustave Weigel from speaking on the public platform at the university. At that time McDonald continued to allege that Siegman had been dismissed only because of his health, but he acknowledged that he had first gained approval from Vagnozzi and the Congregation of Seminaries and Universities.⁷⁹ Simultaneously with Siegman's dismissal came the prohibi-

⁷⁷ *CBQ* 23 (1961) 465.

⁷⁸ Fogarty, *Catholic Biblical Scholarship* 298–310.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* 311–16.

tion in Rome of Stanislaus Lyonnet, S.J., and Max Zerwick, S.J., from teaching at the Biblical Institute in Rome. On the eve of the council, biblical scholars were decidedly on the defensive.

When the council opened, Barnabas Ahern, C.P., a distinguished American biblical scholar, was present as a *peritus*, but so was Fenton. Most Americans focused their attention on the emerging schema on ecumenism with its statements on the Jews and religious liberty. But biblical scholars were alarmed at the schema on the "Sources of Revelation." The product of Cardinal Ottaviani's Theological Commission, it made Scripture and tradition separate sources of revelation. Far removed from Tübingen or Kenrick, it exemplified the confusion that had developed over the previous century between doctrine and theology. As Joseph Ratzinger commented, this schema "amounted to a canonization of Roman school theology." While recognizing that various "schools" had existed in the past, the advocates of the "Roman school" failed to see "that Catholic theology has remained alive, that new 'schools' and conflicts have formed within it and that these new groups and their questions are also legitimate forms of Catholic theological work."⁸⁰

The bishops themselves were dissatisfied with the schema, but failed to muster the number of votes to reject it. On November 21, 1962, however, John XXIII intervened to order the schema withdrawn and resubmitted to a special commission presided over jointly by Ottaviani and Cardinal Augustin Bea, S.J., former rector of the Biblical Institute. For the moment the progressives had finally won a hearing from the pope.

In retrospect, John's withdrawal of the initial schema was a turning point for the council and scholarship in general. In April 1963 Spellman had Murray named a *peritus* of the council—Murray, to use his term, had been "disinvited" from the first session by Ottaviani and Vagnozzi.⁸¹ The same spring Roderick A. F. MacKenzie was appointed rector of the Biblical Institute. Meanwhile John XXIII died in June. Scholars, in general, waited to see where the new pope, Paul VI, would stand on the council. When the council reconvened in the fall of 1963, the schema on revelation was not yet ready for discussion. At the end of the session, however, Fenton retreated from the council to become a pastor.⁸² The tide had turned. In April 1964 the Biblical Commission issued an instruction on the historical truth of the Gospels calling for exegetes to use

⁸⁰ Joseph Ratzinger, "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation: Origin and Background," in Herbert Vorgrimler, ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II* 3 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969) 159–60.

⁸¹ Pelotte, *Murray* 77.

⁸² *Ibid.* 87.

methods reminiscent of Stanley's controversial proposals of 1958.⁸³ It would influence the final draft of the schema on revelation, on which the bishops voted in the fourth session.

On November 18, 1965, the bishops voted 2,115 to 27 to approve the Constitution on Divine Revelation. Encouraging the methods of historical criticism that the conservatives found so abhorrent, the constitution was a radical departure from the first schema. On the transmission of revelation, it declared that "Sacred tradition and sacred Scripture make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God, which is entrusted to the Church." It belonged to "the living teaching office of the Church alone," however, to give "an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of tradition."⁸⁴ The council had returned tradition to the more dynamic meaning it had before Vatican I. Ratzinger noted that "it is not difficult . . . to recognize the pen of Y. Congar in the text and to see behind it the influence of the Catholic Tübingen school of the nineteenth century with, in particular, its dynamic and organic idea of tradition."⁸⁵ That "idea of tradition" was, of course, the one that Francis Kenrick had expressed.

Since the questions of religious liberty and historical criticism had arisen together in the 1890s and again in the 1950s, it was only appropriate that they should be answered together during the same session of Vatican II. On December 7 the bishops voted their approval for the Declaration on Religious Liberty. The final declaration treated not only church-state relations, as Murray had been emphasizing, but also the theology of the person.⁸⁶ It is probably not accidental that some passages resemble the Constitution on Divine Revelation in its teaching about revelation, for Pierre Benoit, O.P., was on the committee that drafted the final version of each. Taken together, the two documents present a theology of faith and revelation, of God's freedom to communicate Himself and of the human being's freedom to respond. It is a theology not of the subjectivism that the Holy See feared with Americanism and Modernism, but of personalism.

Vatican II was an important moment in the history of biblical scholarship and theology in general. To deal with Scripture and tradition, the council, in fact, reverted to an older theology. To accept historical criticism, it had to adopt a theology radically different from the Thomism that arose in the 19th century and dominated seminary education. In

⁸³ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., *A Christological Catechism* (New York: Paulist, 1982) 131-40.

⁸⁴ See *Dei verbum*, no. 2, in Flannery, *Vatican Council II* 755-56.

⁸⁵ Ratzinger, "Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelations" 3:184.

⁸⁶ See *Dignitatis humanae personae*, in Flannery, *Vatican Council II* 806-7.

some ways, then, the council represented a development not so much of doctrine as of theology. The new theology vindicated those American biblical scholars, from Poels and Gigot to Siegman, who were regarded as suspect. To remain alive, however, theology must develop and enrich the Church as the custodian of the entire Word of God. Vatican II was an important moment in the Church's history, but it was only a moment.

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