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POPE PAUL VI'S IMPORTANCE FOR CATHOLIC BIBLICAL STUDIES

by Brian W. Harrison

Editorial note: With this issue, *Living Tradition* begins a series of articles by Fr. Harrison which we plan to publish successively over the next two or three years (interspersed, probably, with issues devoted to other topics). In their ensemble, these essays will constitute an in-depth study of the great importance of Pope Paul VI for modern Catholic biblical studies. They will take into account his own magisterial teaching in this area, his practical and administrative decisions, and his personal interventions during Vatican Council II, giving particular attention to the light Pope Paul's teaching sheds on the historical truth of the Gospels.

The special importance of this pontiff consists above all in the fact that he was, of course, the one who guided the greater part of the latest ecumenical council. He was the first and most important signatory of every one of its sixteen documents. And since he was the one Successor of the Apostles without whose signature none of them would have carried any binding magisterial force, his own understanding and application of those documents carries a special weight.

Unfortunately, this has too often been sadly neglected – and no more so than in the field of Scripture scholarship. During the half-century since the Council took place, we have heard constantly from biblical scholars themselves, as they have been more than ready to present to us at great length their own understanding of the Council's teaching on Sacred Scripture. But all too often this post-conciliar scholarship has been based on rationalistic versions of the 'historical-critical method' that fail to comply with the Council's own directives in the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, about the imperative need to interpret Sacred Scripture in the light of Sacred Tradition and the Church's magisterium. Pope Benedict XVI has repeatedly warned that this unhealthy tension between biblical scholarship and systematic theology needs to be overcome, and that in order for this to happen, the 'historical-critical' method itself must come under critical scrutiny. Fr. Harrison's research into the light shed by Paul VI's leadership and guidance in biblical matters – a light that can be seen as constituting an authoritative interpretation of the Council's teaching – will be an important contribution to the kind of criticism Pope Benedict is calling for, in the interests of that "hermeneutic of continuity" in interpreting the Council that he has emphasized since the beginning of his pontificate. This series of articles will be based on Fr. Harrison's thesis for the degree of Doctor of Sacred Theology, which was awarded to him *summa cum laude* in 1997 by Rome's Pontifical Athenaeum (now University) of the Holy Cross.

1. Lights and Shadows in Post-Conciliar Biblical Studies

(a) The Dialectic Between Faith and Reason in Recent Exegesis

It would seem fair to say that at a distance of half a century since Vatican Council II, Catholic biblical scholarship finds itself in a relatively quiet, but nonetheless tense, situation.

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On the one hand, the scholarly publication and diffusion of specialized exegetical studies and hermeneutical explorations of various kinds continues calmly from day to day and from year to year. The hundredth and fiftieth anniversaries respectively of two great biblical encyclicals, Leo XIII's *Providentissimus Deus* and Pius XII's *Divino afflante Spiritu*, were marked in April 1993 by a serene allocution of John Paul II,¹ in which, among other things, the Holy Father publicly received and praised the report prepared for that occasion by the Pontifical Biblical Commission. More recently, we have seen in 2010 the promulgation by Pope Benedict XVI of the Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, following the 2008 Synod of Bishops dedicated to the theme of 'the Word of God'. These papal documents express a considerable degree of satisfaction with, and appreciation for, modern Catholic Scripture studies. And there is now not too much in the way of vehement argument or mordant polemic to be found in the principal recognized journals devoted to biblical science, or in books by prominent exegetes. Unlike the field of moral theology, for instance, where the Roman Pontiffs and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith have issued since the Council a number of strongly worded interventions in the face of widespread division and dissent among Catholic moralists, the field of Scripture study, at least on the surface, seems to show relatively smooth and undisturbed contours. There seems to be a widespread consensus among the Church's most prominent biblical scholars that today's Catholic flock can graze peacefully on the green pastures of Scripture under the guidance of shepherds who now have a better and more scientific understanding of the Bible than ever, as a result of the post-conciliar renewal in this area.

Furthermore, at the 1985 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops, convoked by John Paul II in order to assess the state of the Church twenty years after the Council's conclusion, a number of the shepherds themselves, especially from 'mission' and 'third world' areas, commented positively about their post-conciliar experience of the developing role of Scripture in the Church. They reported greater interest, wider diffusion, improved translations, and better knowledge of the Scriptures as a result of initiatives undertaken in response to Vatican II.²

On the other hand, not all of the Church's pastors are agreed that recent developments in biblical exegesis are entirely satisfactory. Since the 1980s in particular, prominent churchmen have been questioning some aspects or results of what has come to be called the 'historical-critical method.'³ At the 1985 Synod, Cardinal William Baum, then Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education, devoted his entire report to a message of serious warning. In spite of the "most valuable assistance" (*validissimo aiuto*) provided by the Pontifical Biblical Institute and the Pontifical Biblical Commission, the Cardinal affirmed, the concrete situation is one in which *Dei Verbum's* teaching on Scripture has not been understood and applied correctly.⁴

¹ John Paul II, Allocution to mark centenary of *Providentissimus Deus* and 50th anniversary of *Divini afflante Spiritu*, 23 April 1993 (AAS 86 [1994] 232-243; *EB* 1239-1258).

² Cf. G. Caprile, *Il Sinodo dei Vescovi: seconda assemblea generale straordinaria: 24 novembre – 8 dicembre 1985* (Rome: *La Civiltà Cattolica*, 1986). Caprile paraphrases the reports to this effect from episcopal representatives of Peru (p. 116); the Malabar rite Metropolitan from India (p. 146); the Antilles (p. 147); Vietnam (pp. 158-159); Brazil (p. 168); Burundi (p. 183); Venezuela (p. 209); Bangladesh (p. 232); the Dominican Republic (p. 244); El Salvador (p. 255); Mali (p. 257); Cuba (p. 270); Gabon (p. 272); Egypt (p. 286); Uganda (p. 291); and a further report from Brazil by Cardinal Aloysius Lorscheider (p. 317).

³ In the English language the best-known protest has probably been Msgr. George A. Kelly's book *The New Biblical Theorists: Raymond E. Brown and Beyond* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Servant Books, 1983). Kelly, one of New York's best-known priests, is director emeritus of the Institute for Advanced Studies in Catholic Doctrine at St. John's University, New York and was a founding member of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars. The late Hans Urs von Balthasar commented: "Msgr. Kelly's book appears to me, by its basic intention as by the richness of its documentation, to be a contribution of the first order to guarantee the honesty of a Catholic historico-critical method. Such a method can come forth only at the interior of the essential ecclesial faith, which already confesses the convergent whole of the New Testament" (back dust-jacket cover of Kelly's book). In 1987 a sharp and well-publicized controversy erupted in the pages of *New Blackfriars*, the journal of the Dominicans of Oxford University, after the Wykeham Professor of Logic at Oxford, Michael Dummett, called in question the coherence of the position of many Scripture scholars whose hermeneutical methods' premises, he maintained, logically undermine the articles of faith which they profess to believe as Catholics: cf. M. Dummett, "A Remarkable Consensus" (*New Blackfriars* 68 [October 1987] 557-566). During the following year, *New Blackfriars* published a series of articles by Dummett and his critics arising from his original intervention.

⁴ "Today we find a new problem arising: that of establishing the limits of historical-critical exegesis. Often scientific exegesis is accused of being closed in on itself, of becoming autonomous and alienated from the faith. There is a rupture between Bible and Church, between Scripture and Tradition. The work of exegetes is often purely critical, dealing with the origin of the text rather than being open to the task of penetrating its deeper meaning. In the name of science, many exegetes no longer wish to interpret Scripture in the light of faith, and the end result is that doubt is cast on essential truths of faith such as the divinity of Christ and his virginal conception in the womb of Mary, the salvific and redeeming value of Christ's death, the reality of his Resurrection and of his institution of the Church.

"The results of this so-called scientific exegesis are being diffused in seminaries, [theological] faculties and universities, and even among the faithful, also by means of catechesis and sometimes even in preaching. *Dei Verbum* recommended scientific exegesis, but within the bounds of the faith, since the historical-scientific method alone is not sufficient in this field. For that reason the Council insisted on the unity of Scripture and Tradition (nos. 9-10), requiring that Scripture be read and explained *in eodem Spiritu quo scripta est* (no. 12). Insisting on the unity of the entire

Cardinal Baum's concerns were evidently shared by not a few of the other Synod Fathers. Indeed, the Synod's *Final Report* included a short but significant warning in its section "*Verbum Dei*," which received an almost unanimous positive vote from the assembled Fathers.⁵ After affirming that the conciliar Constitution *Dei Verbum* had been "unduly neglected" (*nimis neglecta*), the Synod report continued:

In the case of this Constitution too it is necessary to avoid selective readings. Above all, the exegesis of the original sense of Sacred Scripture, which is strongly recommended by the Council (cf. DV 12) cannot be separated from the living Tradition of the Church (cf. DV 9), nor from the authentic interpretation of the ecclesiastical magisterium (cf. DV 10).⁶

Two years later, another authoritative statement was made on the post-conciliar state of Catholic biblical scholarship. Speaking in New York, the then Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and President of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, spoke openly of a "crisis of the historical-critical method today,"⁷ resulting from the attempt to 'dissect' biblical texts in the quest for their most original components:

Underneath the existing sources, that is to say, the biblical books themselves, we are supposed to find more original sources, which in turn become the criteria for interpretation. No one can really be surprised that this procedure leads to the sprouting of ever more numerous hypotheses until finally they turn into a jungle of contradictions. In the end, one no longer learns what the text says, but what it should have said, and by which component parts this can be traced back through the text.⁸

The prelate destined to become the next Successor of Peter went on to suggest that the way to overcome this confused situation will only be found in a process of self-criticism on the part of the historical method – a process which will relativize the supposed 'scientific certitude' of its results:

In order to arrive at a real solution, we must get beyond disputes over details and press on to the foundations. What we need might be called a criticism of criticism . . . a self-criticism of the historical method which can expand to an analysis of historical reason itself, in continuity with and in development of the famous critique of reason by Immanuel Kant. . . . [This] self-critique of historical method would have to begin, it seems, by reading its conclusions in a diachronic manner so that the appearance of a quasi-clinical scientific certainty is avoided. It has been this appearance of certainty which has caused its conclusions to be accepted so far and wide.⁹

One could add that this illusion of scientific certainty, which lends an undeserved lustre to theses which in reality are mere hypotheses (and indeed, untestable hypotheses), is a fundamental reason for the recent decline in that 'ecclesial' reading of the Scriptures which remains perennially necessary, as the Fathers of the 1985 Synod insisted. For once the

Bible in the light of the Church's living Tradition and the analogy of faith, the Constitution laid down the norms of a theological and ecclesial exegesis – an exegesis which would support and deepen faith.

"One of the fruits of this Synod should be that Bishops take note of the present state of affairs, in order to promote the knowledge and acceptance of what has proved to be one of the fundamental documents of the Council, perhaps the most important of all. . . . It is suggested that in the preparation of theological manuals for use in the formation of future priests, a clear exposition be given of the Council's doctrine and of the Church's rich patrimony based on the Fathers and Doctors, in fidelity to the orientations of *Dei Verbum*, especially in what concerns the relation between Scripture, Tradition and Magisterium" (G. Caprile, *op. cit.*, 204-205). This is my translation of Caprile's paraphrase of Cardinal Baum's address: the original text was not made public.

⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 404.

⁶ "*Etiam pro hac Constitutione necessarium est partialem lectionem evitare. Præcipue exegesis sensus originalis S. Scripturæ, quæ a Concilio enixe commendatur (cf. DV 12) non potest separari a viva Traditione Ecclesiæ (cf. DV 9) neque ab authentica interpretatione magisterii Ecclesiæ (cf. DV 10)*" (Second Extraordinary Synod of Bishops, *Relatio Finalis*, Part II, Section B [a] 1). This judgement was confirmed shortly after the Extraordinary Synod by Pope John Paul II in his allocution of 7 April 1986 to the World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate: "The Final Report of the Synod stated that the Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum* had been 'too neglected' in the twenty years following the Council, and that it deserved a more profound consideration and implementation. May I suggest . . . that you can be of special assistance in efforts aimed at responding to this challenge" (AAS 78 [1986] 1217).

⁷ J. Ratzinger, "Foundations and Approaches of Biblical Exegesis" (*Origins: NC documentary service* [Feb. 11 1988] 593). This address was later published in amplified form in Italian as "L'interpretazione biblica in conflitto," in I. de la Potterie (ed.), *L'esegesi cristiana oggi* (Casale Monferrato: Edizioni Piemme, 1991) 93-125.

⁸ *ibid.*, 595.

⁹ *ibid.*, 596.

premise is accepted that ‘historical-critical’ exegesis yields scientific certainty (or near-certainty), then how can ‘mere’ Tradition – whether in the form of Creeds, magisterial pronouncements, or the consensus of the Fathers – offer it any resistance? Does not ‘science,’ more or less by definition, outclass, defeat, and replace any other pretended path to knowledge?

John Paul II, in his allocution on biblical studies of 23 April 1993, returned to this theme, insisting that while historical-critical studies are necessary,¹⁰ they are not in themselves sufficient for a true and complete understanding of Scripture:

Docility to the Holy Spirit produces and reinforces another attitude needed for the correct orientation of exegesis: fidelity to the Church. The Catholic exegete does not entertain the individualist illusion leading to the belief that one can better understand the biblical texts outside the community of believers. The contrary is true, for these texts have not been given to individual researchers “to satisfy their curiosity or provide them with subjects for study and research” (Divino afflante Spiritu: EB, n. 566); they have been entrusted to the community of believers, to the Church of Christ, in order to nourish faith and guide the life of charity. Respect for this purpose conditions the validity of the interpretation. Providentissimus Deus recalled this basic truth and observed that, far from hampering biblical research, respect for this fact fosters its authentic progress (cf. EB, nn. 108-109).

Being faithful to the Church, in fact, means resolutely finding one’s place in the mainstream of the great Tradition that, under the guidance of the Magisterium, assured of the Holy Spirit’s special assistance, has recognized the canonical writings as the word addressed by God to his people and has never ceased meditating on them and discovering their inexhaustible riches.¹¹

(a) Neglected Areas in Recent Biblical Scholarship

Another precision should be made at this point. It is probably true to say that the most controversial area of biblical interpretation today – the area in which the tension between traditional ecclesial interpretation and certain ‘scientific’ interpretations becomes most acute – is that which involves the four Gospels. As Cardinal Baum’s intervention at the Extraordinary Synod made clear, it is a certain type of criticism of the Gospels which is the chief occasion of concern amongst a growing number of Church leaders, since it is precisely the wrong interpretation of these most fundamental books which, as the Cardinal warned, “ends . . . by calling in question essential truths of faith, such as the divinity of Christ and his virginal conception in the womb of Mary, the salvific and redeeming value of Christ’s death, the reality of his Resurrection and of his institution of the Church.”¹²

Yet, in spite of this centrality of the Gospels, few biblical scholars have in recent years attempted to make any specific applications to this field of the general dogmatic principles that the Scriptures are divinely inspired and that the Church’s magisterium is their authentic interpreter. Fifteen years after Vatican Council II the exegete José María Casciaro made an observation which to a considerable extent remains true fifty years after the Council: “We can clearly see that in the Catholic exegetical output following Vatican II there has been an extensive and incisive penetration into various aspects of the critical study of the Gospels, together with an *impasse* regarding the elucidation of the hermeneutical requirements deriving from the dogma that Scripture is divinely inspired.”¹³

¹⁰ Cf. AAS 86 (1994) 236-238 (sections 7-8 of discourse).

¹¹ “La docilité à l’Esprit Saint produit et renforce une autre disposition, nécessaire pour la juste orientation de l’exégèse: la fidélité à l’Église. L’exégète catholique ne nourrit pas l’illusion individualiste qui porte à croire que en dehors de la communauté des croyants on peut mieux comprendre les textes bibliques. C’est le contraire qui est vrai, car les textes n’ont pas été donnés aux chercheurs individuels ‘pour la satisfaction de leur curiosité ou pour leur fournir des sujets d’étude et de recherche’ (Divino afflante Spiritu, EB 566); ils ont été confiés à l’Église du Christ, pour nourrir la foi et guider la vie de charité. Le respect de cette finalité conditionne la validité de l’interprétation. Providentissimus Deus a rappelé cette vérité fondamentale et a observé que, loin de gêner la recherche biblique, le respect de cette donnée en favorise l’authentique progrès (cf. EB 108-109).

“Être fidèle à l’Église, cela signifie en effet, se situer résolument dans le courant de la grande Tradition qui, sous la conduite du Magistère, assuré d’une assistance spéciale de l’Esprit Saint, a reconnu les écrits canoniques comme parole adressée par Dieu à son peuple et n’a jamais cessé de les méditer et d’en découvrir les inépuisables richesses” (*ibid.*, 239). The above English translation is that given on pp. 16-17 of the Vatican booklet containing this allocution and the Pontifical Biblical Commission’s document: *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1993).

¹² “finisce . . . per mettere in dubbio verità di fede essenziali, quali la divinità di Cristo, il concepimento verginale di Maria, il valore salvifico e redentore della morte di Cristo, la realtà della risurrezione, l’istituzione della Chiesa da parte di Cristo” (G. Caprile, *op. cit.*, 204).

¹³ “. . . podemos constatar en la producción exegética católica tras el Vaticano II una extensa y aguda penetración en varios aspectos del estudio crítico de los Evangelios, al mismo tiempo que un *impasse* en el desarrollo de las exigencias hermenéuticas derivadas del dogma de la inspiración

Casciari went on to point out that since 1970 there have been three directions in Catholic thought about the Gospels. The first has been a continuation of trends set in motion by Rudolf Bultmann, which tend to dissociate faith and history; the second has been a series of studies which have restored a more serious awareness of “the historical density of the different Gospel passages.”¹⁴ The third, says Casciari, is: “that which studies more deeply the implications, theologically considered, of the dogma of the Bible’s divine inspiration in its relation to the kind of truth recorded in the sacred books; this last orientation, the most important of all, is nonetheless that which has received the least attention from contemporary exegetes.”¹⁵

Indeed, says Casciari, this neglect is particularly evident in regard to the exigencies of biblical inspiration in their implications for the historicity of the Gospels:

Regarding the third orientation – the deeper study of what we must believe about the historicity of the Gospels as a consequence of their character as divinely inspired writings – the research offered by us Catholic exegetes, sad to say, would have to be considered very sporadic and inadequate. Indeed, it seems as if we feel inhibited from touching this theme.

If we pass from general theological reflection about the truth of Sacred Scripture to the specific embodiment of that truth in the Gospels, we find a real impasse in the exegetical literature since Vatican Council II.¹⁶

A considerable number of commentaries on Vatican II’s Constitution on Divine Revelation have been written since the Council. But what of the “commentary” – explicit or implicit – provided in the ordinary Magisterium of the Successor of Peter? This most important source for arriving at an authentic interpretation of the Council’s teaching on Scripture seems to have been almost completely neglected by scholars. Although there has in recent years been a wealth of papal teaching bearing directly or indirectly on the study and use of Scripture, this is rarely referred to in contemporary books and journals on biblical matters.

Indeed, scarcely anything so far has been published so far about Paul VI’s contribution to Scripture studies, or about his role in implementing the prescriptions of Vatican Council II for biblical renewal in the Church. A search through all the volumes of the Pontifical Biblical Institute’s annual *Elenchus* of publications relating to Scripture has revealed no books and only three journal articles dedicated expressly to this theme. One of the articles is on Pope Paul’s use of Scripture in his Encyclical Letter *Mysterium fidei*;¹⁷ in another, published in the first issue of *Biblica* after the Pontiff’s death, the Rector of the Pontifical Biblical Institute gave an appreciation of Paul VI’s encouragement to biblical scholars which consisted mainly in excerpts from the Pope’s principal allocutions on Scripture,¹⁸ and the third, a

divina de la Escritura” (“El Acceso a Jesús y la Historicidad de los Evangelios,” *Scripta Theologica* 12/3 [1980] 930).

¹⁴ “la densidad histórica de los diversos pasajes evangélicos” (*ibid.*, 934).

¹⁵ “. . . se orienta a profundizar en las exigencias, teológicamente consideradas, del dogma de la inspiración divina de la Biblia respecto de la naturaleza de la verdad consignada en los libros sagrados; esta última orientación, la más importante, es, sin embargo, la menos trabajada por los exégetas actuales” (*ibid.*). One of the relatively few biblical scholars who was giving some serious attention to this question when Casciari wrote was F. Dreyfus: cf. his essays “Exégèse en Sorbonne, exégèse en Église” (*Revue biblique* 82 [1975] 321-359) and “L’actualisation de l’Écriture: III. La place de la Tradition” (*Revue Biblique* 86 [1979] 321-384). For some more recent writings on this subject, cf. H. Fernández Mora, “La Palabra de Dios en la Iglesia” (*Cuestiones Teológicas Medellín* 47 [1990] 117-165); J. Jensen, “Beyond the literal sense: the interpretation of Scripture in the Catechism [of the Catholic Church]” (*The Living Light* 29 [1992/4] 50-60); McGovern, T., “Magisterium, Scripture and Catholic exegetes” (*Homiletic & Pastoral Review* 91 [1990] 10, 11-19); M.A. Tábet, “Verso una fundamentazione dell’esegesi cattolica” (*Annales Theologici* 6 [1992] 367-389); H. de Villefranche, *La Bible sur le terrain: écriture, tradition, magistère* (Paris: Mame, 1992); T. Vojnovic, “Ecclesia coram S. Scriptura in tempore hodierno” (*Bogoslovska Smotra* 61 [1991] 186-204 [Croatian]; 205-213 [English]).

¹⁶ “De la tercera orientación, dirigida a profundizar las exigencias de historicidad de los Evangelios derivados de su naturaleza de escritos divinamente inspirados, los exégetas católicos ofrecemos una investigación que, con todo dolor, hemos de estimar muy pobre y escasa. Es más, parece como si nos inhibiésemos del tema. . . .

“Si pasamos de la reflexión teológica general sobre la veracidad de la Sagrada Escritura a su concreción a los Evangelios, nos encontramos con un verdadero impasse de la literatura exegética después del Concilio Vaticano II” (*ibid.*, 936-937). Since Casciari wrote this, one well-publicized work in English which attempts to fill this gap to some extent is R.E. Brown, *Biblical Exegesis and Church Doctrine* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1985). However, the present writer finds Brown’s argumentation unconvincing and has criticized, as an example, his attempt on pp. 66-69 of that book to show that Catholic doctrine regarding biblical inspiration and interpretation is in harmony with the thesis that the Infancy Narratives of Matthew and Luke are non-historical in character: cf. B.W. Harrison, “The Encyclical *Spiritus Paraclitus* in its Historical Context,” *Faith & Reason* 23/1 (Spring, 1997) 84-86.

¹⁷ F. Spadafora, “La S. Scrittura nella Enciclica ‘Mysterium fidei’” (*Divinitas* 10 [1966] 349-361). In spite of the title, very little of this article actually comments on the use of Scripture by Paul VI in the Encyclical.

¹⁸ Cf. M. Gilbert, S.J., “Paul VI: In Memoriam” (*Biblica* 59 [1978] 453-462). This article was republished in *Notiziario* 10 (Brescia: Istituto Paolo VI, 1985) 100-106.

commentary on the Pope's 1974 address to the Pontifical Biblical Commission, is in Polish¹⁹ (a language of which this writer has no knowledge). Even more barren were the results of a computer search carried out by the present writer of those books, theses, and booklets held in all the major Roman ecclesiastical libraries in which the name of Pope Paul VI appeared in the cataloguing details: of more than two hundred such works, not one was dedicated to a study of this Pontiff's biblical magisterium, even though practically every other important aspect of his teaching has now received some scholarly attention.

2. Purpose of the Present Study

Having briefly surveyed the general state of Catholic biblical scholarship in its wider ecclesial context – that is, including the views of leading pastors in the Church as well as of exegetes themselves – we are now in a position to explain the specific purpose of the present series of *Living Tradition* articles. While they manifestly have to do with modern biblical studies, their formal object is not to contribute to such studies from the usual standpoint of specialized exegesis or hermeneutics – for the present writer has no pretensions to expertise in these areas. Rather, it sets out to consider what has been taught about such matters, during and immediately after Vatican Council II, by the Magisterium of the Catholic Church in the person of Pope Paul VI. To use then-Cardinal Ratzinger's words, we will not be concerned with the “details” arising from a reading of this or that passage or book of Scripture. Rather, our study will seek to understand more adequately one of the two main ‘roots’ of the Church's comprehension of her sacred Writings: that which springs from faith rather than unaided human reason.

This study can thus be seen as an attempt to pay heed to the call issued by the Extraordinary Synod, and confirmed by John Paul II²⁰ and Benedict XVI, for biblical scholars to give greater attention to the *authentica interpretatio magisterii Ecclesiae*, and to compensate to some extent for neglect in this area by surveying the teaching of Pope Paul VI on scriptural topics, as this can be gleaned from his various allocutions, exhortations, encyclicals and other documents, as well as from certain practical decisions and projects and his personal interventions during Vatican Council II in the redaction of the Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*. The fact that this Pontiff was the first and most irreplaceable signatory of *Dei Verbum* surely adds further weight to his own subsequent teaching on biblical matters, insofar as such teaching constitutes a key source for understanding and applying the Council's scriptural doctrine. That is, Paul VI's teaching in this area can be seen as a kind of authentic interpretation of a document which has been construed in various ways – sometimes in conflict with each other – by post-conciliar exegetes and theologians. Nevertheless, we shall not embark upon any full-scale commentary on *Dei Verbum* as such, since many commentaries have already been written on this conciliar Constitution.

As well as considering Pope Paul's pronouncements of a more general nature about the use and interpretation of Scripture, we shall give particular attention to his teaching on the Gospels. By this it is not meant that a comprehensive attempt will be made to consider everything this Pope said about these fundamental documents of the Christian faith, for that would require an entire book devoted exclusively to that topic. Rather, our more limited objective will be to bring to light and study those papal statements on the Gospels which have to do with the origins and historical reliability of these four canonical books. Such statements include both explicit and implicit teaching on these themes. The former consists of those relatively few interventions in which the Pope spoke *ex professo* about modern biblical studies regarding the composition and historicity of this or that Gospel, or of certain sections of one or more Gospels. The latter consists of those much more frequent papal references to particular Gospel verses or passages wherein the context and/or content of the Pope's observations clearly imply that he assumes a definite position regarding the historical reliability of the text(s) in question.

In relation to the Gospels, what was said above about our treatment of *Dei Verbum* applies equally to the other principal magisterial document of Paul VI's pontificate dealing with biblical studies, the Instruction *Sancta Mater Ecclesia* on the Historical Truth of the Gospels issued by the Pontifical Biblical Commission with papal approval on 21 April 1964. While it will be necessary to refer to Pope Paul's own comments on this document and to summarize its content briefly, no detailed study of its teaching will be made, since this is ground which has already been covered by many other scholars.

¹⁹ J. Chmiel, “Pawel VI o zadaniach współczesnej egzegezy biblijnej” (*Ruch Biblijny i Liturgiczny* 27 [1974] 265-271).

²⁰ cf. above, n. 6.

Our choice of the Pope's teaching on the Gospels for special attention is based on several aspects of the present biblical *status quaestionis*: first, as we have already noted, the question of the Gospels' origins and historicity continues to be the most vigorously debated area of modern Scriptural studies; secondly, this question has an obvious and fundamental importance, which has been reflected in the fact that Vatican Council II devoted practically all of its teaching about the Gospels to the questions of their formation and their historical value; and finally, because a serious lacuna exists in this area in post-conciliar biblical studies, as J.M. Casciaro has pointed out.²¹

Since the first step in filling the serious gap spoken of by Casciaro will be to know just what the magisterium has been saying about the historicity of the Gospels since Vatican II, this will be our special concern in studying the teaching of Pope Paul VI. That is, we will not attempt to evaluate the precise dogmatic value or binding status of this day-to-day exercise of the ordinary magisterium, or to assess the extent to which exegetes may (or may not) feel themselves free to dissent from this kind of teaching. We shall be concerned more to provide information than to engage in controversy. All Catholic students of Scripture will surely agree that it is at least important to know what the Roman Pontiff has been teaching on such an important matter. A clear knowledge of how the Pope of Vatican II and *Dei Verbum* has himself understood and applied the Council's teaching on Scripture in general, and the historicity of the Gospels in particular, will therefore be a useful contribution, we hope, to that "deeper understanding" of Vatican II which the Extraordinary Synod of 1985 called for.

While our main purpose is thus to promote a better understanding of Scripture by examining the teaching of the Successor of Peter who guided and implemented Vatican Council II, a secondary objective is that of adding to the growing body of studies focusing attention on the person of Pope Paul VI and his role in recent Church history, especially in the light of recent calls for the introduction of the cause for his beatification. As we noted earlier, a good deal has now been written about most aspects of this Pontiff's life, ministry and teaching, but very little attention has been given to his historically important efforts to promote the more ample diffusion and sound interpretation of Sacred Scripture in the epoch-making years since Vatican II. Building up a more comprehensive and thematic picture of his teaching on Scripture will, it is hoped, contribute to a better knowledge of him as a man, and as a Church leader at a time of great challenge, change, difficulty and opportunity for Catholicism. In short, we hope to present a theological study which also helps in some way toward the elucidation of a recent chapter in Church history.

3. Sources Used: Location and Classification

Since the object of the present series of essays is precisely to discover and appreciate what Pope Paul VI himself taught and decided about the use and study of Scripture in the Church, the original documents of his personal magisterium, as published in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* and the annual *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI* ("Teachings of Paul VI") will constitute by far the greater part of the sources used. Some reference is also made of magisterial documents before and after Paul VI's pontificate, as well as to those of Vatican Council II, so as to set his teaching in its historical context. Further primary sources used are two unpublished letters of 1965 studied by the author in the archives of Vatican Council II, and a number of discourses and articles composed by Giovanni Battista Montini before his election to the papacy, published in recent years by the *Istituto Paolo VI* of Brescia. These are cited in order to shed further light on the future Pope's approach to biblical questions.

(a) The Relative Authority of Different Kinds of Papal Documents

In a study of this nature, an important question to be considered is the relative gravity, or degree of authority, of the different kinds of papal pronouncements which constitute our main sources. As we said above, no attempt will be made to assess the precise binding force of any particular statement, but some general criteria for evaluating the relative weight of different kinds of statements will be helpful.

Since Paul VI made no *ex cathedra* statements on scriptural matters, the relevant general guidance on this matter from Vatican Council II is found in §25 of *Lumen Gentium*. A religious assent of mind and will is required to the Roman Pontiff's ordinary teaching:

²¹ Cf. above, section 1(b).

This loyal submission of intellect and will must be given, in a special way, to the authentic teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff, even when he does not speak *ex cathedra* in such wise, indeed, that his supreme teaching authority be acknowledged with respect, and that one sincerely adhere to decisions made by him, conformably with his manifest mind and intention, which is made known principally either by the character of the documents in question, or by the frequency with which a doctrine is proposed, or by the manner in which the doctrine is formulated.²²

The three factors in the last clause are the key ones for our purpose: the Pope can manifest his mind and will “by the nature of the documents,” by “the frequent reiteration of a certain doctrine,” or by the language he chooses for expressing it.

With regard to the first of these three indications or criteria – the relative importance of various kinds of papal documents – there is no simple or self-evident method of classification which suggests itself for the purpose of the present study. Of the magisterial documents promulgated during Paul VI’s pontificate, the two most significant in regard to Sacred Scripture were the Pontifical Biblical Commission’s Instruction *Sancta Mater Ecclesia* on the historical truth of the Gospels, issued in 1964, and the conciliar Constitution *Dei Verbum* of the following year. However, as was explained above in section (b), the scope of this thesis is not to study these two documents in a complete or comprehensive manner, but rather, to examine the personal and individual magisterium of Paul VI on Scriptural topics – both for its intrinsic value and for its usefulness as a guide to the correct interpretation and application of the two documents just mentioned.²³

The personal papal interventions which we shall study consist of several types of relevant documents:

- (a) one Apostolic Letter *Motu Proprio* on a specifically Scriptural matter (*Sedula cura*, of 27 June 1971);
- (b) other public papal pronouncements, of at least as much intrinsic weight or gravity as a *Motu Proprio*,²⁴ which do not deal principally and specifically with Scriptural topics, but which nonetheless include some teaching (explicit or implicit) on such matters;
- (c) two unpublished letters of 1965 to the Theological Commission of Vatican Council II, conveying the Pope’s wishes regarding the redaction of several passages concerning Sacred Scripture in the schema on Divine Revelation, and a letter of 1969, published only unofficially, in which Paul VI approved the new revised Lectionary for use in the celebration of Mass in the Roman rite;²⁵
- (d) allocutions on Scripture delivered to audiences consisting wholly or largely of scholars specializing in biblical exegesis;
- (e) allocutions on Scripture of a more general or pastoral nature, addressed to audiences consisting mainly of non-specialists in biblical exegesis;
- (f) other allocutions to non-specialists in biblical exegesis, devoted principally to topics other than Scriptural studies as such, but which also include some teaching (explicit or implicit) on such matters.

(b) A Simplified Classification

Since it is appropriate to give some recognition in this study to the differences in gravity and authority among pronouncements of these various grades, a simplified classification has been adopted for the purposes of this thesis: Pope

²² “*Hoc vero religiosum voluntatis et intellectus obsequium singulari ratione præstandum est Romani Pontificis authentico magisterio etiam cum non ex cathedra loquitur; ita nempe ut magisterium eius supremum reverenter agnoscatur, et sententia ab eo prolata sincere adhæreatur, iuxta mentem et voluntatem manifestatam ipsius, quæ se prodit præcipue sive indole documentorum, sive ex frequenti propositione eiusdem doctrinæ, sive ex dicendi ratione*” (AAS 57 [1965] 30). The English translation used above is that of the Flannery edition (p. 379).

²³ For the same reason, little attention will be given in this thesis to documents promulgated by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith during Paul VI’s pontificate.

²⁴ These include for the most part Encyclical Letters, Apostolic Constitutions, Apostolic Epistles, Apostolic Exhortations, and allocutions of a particularly solemn and historic character (for instance, at the inauguration of the pontificate, or those addressed to sessions of the ecumenical council). According to the ranking used annually in the Index of AAS, a *Motu Proprio* is in fact the lowest category of those documents which bear the Pontiff’s personal signature and are known by their first two or three words in Latin.

²⁵ One other unpublished source has been used in this thesis, but it is a secondary source rather than a primary one: a letter to the present writer of 29 March 1996 from Cardinal Franz König, in which His Eminence shares his personal memories of certain events of the year 1964 involving decisions of Paul VI.

Paul's statements in categories (a) to (d) above are considered under the heading of "major" interventions, while those in categories (e) and (f) are treated as "other" interventions.²⁶

There is of course an inevitable element of arbitrariness in this classification, since there is no clear or universally recognized dividing line between what kinds of papal statements are "major" and what kinds are not. Nevertheless, as an approximate guideline – one which we shall follow in this thesis – it can be said that those documents which in the *Acta Apostolicæ Sedis* are published in Latin, bearing the Pope's signature, and which are normally referred to by their first two or three words, are in most cases generally regarded as being more authoritative papal interventions than those which lack those characteristics. Paul VI issued only one such document on specifically biblical matters – that which we designated above as category (a), the *Motu Proprio* by which Pope Paul reorganized the Pontifical Biblical Commission so as to bring it under the direct authority of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

What has just been said refers only to the degree of 'intrinsic' weight or importance attaching to the respective types of papal intervention, i.e., that importance which can be deduced from their formal characteristics alone (style, type of document, format, choice of language, etc.), while prescindng from their material content – that is, from the many and varied subjects treated and what is said about them. The latter factors – subject-matter and specific teaching – will render each papal intervention more or less important according to 'extrinsic' criteria, notably, the varying interests and points of view of the different individuals and groups who study it. This is why, in the present study, we will include among the "major" interventions of Pope Paul some of his statements – principally those in categories (c) and (d) of the above list – which do not exhibit those formal features (papal signature, use of Latin, etc.) which we have indicated as being typical of the "more authoritative" papal interventions.²⁷ Given our present interest and frame of reference, we have accorded these interventions "major" status simply because of the importance of their specific content in relation to Catholic biblical studies. A brief word about each of these two categories will help to explain this classification more clearly.

The unpublished (or not officially published) letters constituting category (c) have been considered as interventions of "major" importance on the part of Pope Paul, because the first two significantly influenced the formulation of an ecumenical council's teaching on vital points of Catholic doctrine concerning Sacred Scripture, while the last letter – implementing one of the major modifications to the Liturgy called for by the Council – authorized a far greater selection of biblical readings for use in the celebration of Mass than had ever previously been available in almost two millennia of Church history. Unfortunately, the original texts of the two unpublished letters (of 24 September and 18 October 1965 respectively) cannot be cited, since these documents from the archives of Vatican Council II have not yet been made generally accessible to scholars. By kind permission of Msgr. Vincenzo Carbone, the official of the Holy See who has charge of these historic documents, the present writer was able to study both original letters in the offices of the Vatican II archives in early 1989. While the cataloguing details and original text (in Italian and Latin respectively) may not be reproduced in this thesis, permission has been granted for the publication of an English translation of the relevant parts of these letters.

In regard to the papal allocutions constituting our category (d), the audiences to which they were originally addressed, including as they did many of the Catholic Church's leading experts in biblical exegesis and hermeneutics, and the relative length and/or density of the pontifical teaching contained in them, mark these allocutions out as being of greater authority, from the viewpoint of Catholic Scripture scholarship, than the shorter, less academic, and more general discourses which we have placed in categories (e) and (f) above. The latter were directed to audiences consisting either of non-specialists in Scripture, or of those whose biblical specialty was less doctrinal or interpretative, and more pastoral or merely technical: people, that is, who were more concerned with the divulgation or modern translation of Scripture rather than with the more difficult, more critical and more controversial questions relating to its correct understanding and application. The "major" allocutions of Paul VI on specifically Scriptural themes – that is, our category (d) – were nine in number, and can conveniently be grouped as follows:²⁸

²⁶ Expressions such as "minor," "secondary," or "lesser" have been avoided as terms to stand in contrast with "major," since they might seem to carry slightly dismissive or pejorative overtones. After all, any official teaching or governing act of the Successor of Peter merits serious attention from the Catholic faithful.

²⁷ Indeed, two of Paul VI's interventions which we are classifying as "major," namely, his allocutions of 1966 and 1968 to the *Associazione Biblica Italiana*, were never even published in the *Acta Apostolicæ Sedis*. This, however, was apparently an editorial oversight, since the majority of the Pope's allocutions in that biennial series – those of 1964, 1970 and 1972 – did indeed appear in the *AAS* (cf. Bibliography, part I, section B: 2a.1). One address of Paul VI to the A.B.I., that of 22 September 1976, is not treated in this thesis as a "major" intervention, because of its extreme brevity. It too was published only in the *Insegnamenti* and not in the *AAS*.

²⁸ Cf. Bibliography, part B, section 2a.1.

1. An address to a plenary session of the Pontifical Biblical Commission of 14 March 1974.²⁹ This was arguably the most important of Paul VI's scriptural allocutions, given the fact that it was the only one he addressed to the universal Church's most authoritative and trusted body of biblical experts.

2-6. A series of five addresses given every two years from 1964 until 1972 on the occasion of the biennial *Settimana Biblica* ("Biblical Week") devoted to various scholarly exegetical themes, and organized by the *Associazione Biblica Italiana*.³⁰

7. An allocution to an international congress on Old Testament studies organized by the Pontifical Biblical Institute. This was delivered on 19 April 1968.³¹

8. An allocution on the theological and exegetical aspects of Jesus' Resurrection, given on 4 April 1970 to the participants in an international symposium on that topic.³²

9. An allocution of 28 June 1974 to an international conference on Assyriology organized jointly by the University of Rome and Pontifical Biblical Institute.

Finally, we have already remarked that the biblical teaching of Vatican Council II in general (as distinct from those specific conciliar texts in the redaction of which Paul VI intervened personally) is not included within the main object of this study; nevertheless, it would seem negligent if, while studying what the Pope said personally about certain specific biblical passages, we overlooked the conciliar statements about those same passages. The promulgated conciliar documents, after all, are those of the Pope before they are those of the other conciliar Fathers. The procedure adopted, therefore, has been to make a brief mention of such texts from the Council documents under the heading of "major" statements, but to refrain from any detailed commentary on them. In the bibliography these Vatican II documents have been listed in the order of their importance from our present standpoint.

Our "major" categories (a) to (d) are thus based on a combination of 'material' and 'formal' criteria: what the Pope said and how he chose to say it. The 55 personal interventions of Paul VI which we will include within these four categories³³ can reasonably be seen as embodying most of the main things he believed needed to be taught and practised in the biblical field. At the same time, we must keep in mind all the while that none of these interventions was "major" in the sense of the three encyclicals on Scripture which Popes have issued in the course of the last century: *Providentissimus Deus*, *Spiritus Paraclitus*, and *Divino afflante Spiritu*.

If we turn to what we are calling the "other" (less authoritative) interventions of Pope Paul VI – our categories (e) and (f) in the above list – we find a wide variety of pronouncements: letters, homilies, talks at Wednesday general audiences, other allocutions, and so on. Within these categories there are also differences in intrinsic solemnity and importance. For example, a brief message at a Sunday Angelus for the pilgrims in St Peter's Square is clearly of less authority than a Christmas allocution to the College of Cardinals, wherein the Pontiff customarily gives his considered reflections regarding the whole state of the Church over the past year. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this present study it would not seem very practical or useful to attempt an excessively minute differentiation between various grades of these interventions. Here, however, the other two evaluative criteria specified in *Lumen gentium* §25 will become equally or more important: the frequency with which the Pope affirms a certain teaching, and the kind of language (more or less emphatic and solemn) in which he expresses himself.

(c) Paul VI's Emphasis on the General Audience Allocutions

It is worth noting at this point that the Wednesday general audiences have a value that is sometimes underestimated. They constitute some of the relatively few occasions in which recent popes have had a completely "free hand," so to speak. Their subject-matter is not dictated by the nature of the occasion, and such audiences have therefore

²⁹ AAS 66 (1974) 235-241.

³⁰ AAS 56 (1964) 936-938; *Ins.* 1966, 413-418; *Ins.* 1968, 491-496; AAS 62 (1970) 615-619; AAS 64 (1972) 634-637. A much briefer allocution was given to the 1976 *Settimana Biblica* at the end of a Wednesday general audience: cf. *Ins.* 1976, 729-730. In 1974, when Pope Paul's heavy schedule did not permit him to give his usual audience to the participants in the *Settimana Biblica*, he had the Secretary of State, Cardinal Jean Villot, send a brief letter on his behalf, dated 25 September 1974, to Father Giovanni Canfora, President of the A.B.I., giving the Pope's blessing for the conference and expressing his satisfaction at the theme chosen: the christological hymn in Colossians 1: 15-20. While this letter, not being formally part of the Pope's magisterium, did not appear in either AAS or the *Insegnamenti*, it was reproduced in *Rivista Biblica* 22 (1974) 281-283.

³¹ AAS 60 (1968) 262-265.

³² AAS 62 (1970) 220-224.

³³ Cf. Bibliography, part B, section 2a in its entirety.

been an opportunity for Peter's successors to say, stress, and repeat whatever they feel is important to bring to the attention of the Church at large at any given time.

In the case of Paul VI, we have an interesting and revealing testimony in this matter from the late Cardinal Edouard Gagnon, who has recalled speaking with the Pontiff about the problem of doctrinal errors which were spreading throughout the Catholic world. Pope Paul, he said, spoke of his own well-known reluctance to issue specific condemnations or to impose disciplinary measures, and answered those who criticized him for this lenience by explaining that he had a different strategy – one in which his allocutions at the Wednesday audiences played an important role. As Cardinal Gagnon put it:

It was not fear or uncertainty which held him back, but rather, the clear awareness that just as one would strive in vain to cut off all the tentacles of a giant octopus, so would it be useless – as well as practically impossible – to try to condemn every single error. The appropriate action, rather, was to strike the head of the monster, to overcome error at its root; and that, for Paul VI, was possible only by means of tirelessly teaching the truth. “Even if in the first instance it is not welcomed, and perhaps not even listened to, that is no reason for ceasing to proclaim and teach it. . . .” And as an example of this duty to affirm the truth in season and out of season, the Pope spoke to me of his discourses during the [general] audiences: “There are those who advise me: ‘Holiness, don’t tire yourself too much with those allocutions. Basically, the people listening to you are distracted and pay little attention to what you are saying.’ But I always reply to the effect that while that may be correct – for people often do not appreciate hearing the truth – it is nonetheless necessary to keep affirming it. When the need for truth is reawakened among the People of God, they will have to know where to look for it and how to find it.”³⁴

This testimony is corroborated by that of Msgr. (later Bishop) John Magee, who acted as Pope Paul's personal secretary during his last years. He has recalled how the Pontiff dedicated the whole of every Tuesday morning to the personal preparation of the allocation he would deliver on the following day, using books which Magee would find for him in the Pope's personal library.³⁵ These testimonies of Cardinal Gagnon and Bishop Magee are of value for our study, since they show the importance that Paul VI himself attached to his general audiences as a teaching forum, as occasions for ‘making manifest his mind and will’ – not in this case by means of solemn documents, but by clear and frequent repetition, sometimes in more forceful language than he was wont to use in documents of a more formal character. The cumulative weight of teaching affirmed constantly, and at times very energetically, in these “lesser” papal interventions can thus constitute an important and authoritative aspect of the Church's magisterium, as *Lumen gentium* affirms. For this reason we shall not hesitate to cite in this thesis different interventions in which Paul VI made very much the same point: the repetition itself is relevant evidence from our present standpoint.

4. Method and Organization

The articles in this series will be divided into three successive parts, proceeding from more general to more specific considerations. Part I will consider Paul VI's overall perspective and his general program regarding the role and use of Sacred Scripture in the Church of Vatican Council II. First, in the next *Living Tradition* article, we shall review his practical decisions for bringing the treasury of the Scriptures more fully into the Church's liturgy. This will be followed by an essay on his pastoral directives encouraging the use of Scripture in other areas of Catholic life: personal formation, ecumenism, mission activity, moral theology and canon law. After that we shall examine in three articles Pope Paul's approach at the broadest or most comprehensive level to the thorny questions raised by modern biblical criticism. As we shall see, this was a somewhat complex and ambivalent approach, in which a large measure of confidence in what the

³⁴ “. . . non era timore o incertezza quel che lo frenava, era piuttosto la chiara consapevolezza che come sarebbe vano tentare di tagliare i tentacoli di una gigantesca piovra, così era inutile, oltre che praticamente impossibile, mettersi a condannare ogni singolo errore. Occorreva piuttosto affrontare la piovra alla testa, sconfiggere l'errore alla sua radice e ciò, per Papa Paolo VI, era possibile solo proponendo instancabilmente la verità. “Anche se immediatamente essa non sarà accolta, e forse nemmeno ascoltata, non bisogna cessare di proclamarla ed insegnarla. . . .” E come esempio di questo dovere di affermare sempre, in ogni circostanza, la verità, mi parlò dei suoi discorsi alle udienze: “C'è chi mi consiglia: Santità, non si affatichi troppo per questi discorsi. In fondo la gente che La ascolta è distratta, presta poca attenzione alle Sue parole. Ma io rispondo sempre che sì, forse è vero, la gente spesso non apprezza sempre le parole vere, ma nonostante questo occorre dirle. Quando nel popolo di Dio si risveglierà il bisogno della verità esso deve sapere dove cercarla, deve poterla trovare” (Interview with Cardinal Edouard Gagnon in *30 Giorni*, February 1989, 20).

³⁵ Cf. J. Magee, “La vita quotidiana di Paolo VI” (in AA. VV., *Paul VI et la modernité dans l'Eglise: Actes du colloque organisé par l'École française de Rome* [Rome: l'École française de Rome, 1984] 144-145).

Pope saw as positive aspects of modern biblical science – a confidence manifested both in public statements and in certain administrative decisions – coexisted in a certain tension with serious and frequently reiterated concerns regarding dangerous and unorthodox tendencies. Each of these polarities in his thought and action will be considered in turn.

The second part of our study will be a series of essays dealing with the Pope's teaching on certain fundamental principles which need to be upheld in order to maintain a soundly Catholic interpretation of Scripture, including those based on reason (the philosophical and hermeneutical underpinnings of exegesis), and those deriving from revelation: the divine inspiration and integral truth of Sacred Scripture and its intimate relation to Sacred Tradition and the Church's Magisterium. Particular attention will be given in this Part II to Pope Paul's interventions in the redaction of certain key passages of articles 11 and 9 respectively of *Dei Verbum*.

Finally, in Part III, we will present a number of essays surveying Paul VI's more specific teaching about the Gospels – the process of their formation, and above all their historical truth. This will serve to illustrate, by means of concrete examples, the way in which the Pontiff understood and applied to a number of key New Testament passages those interpretative principles laid down in the teaching of *Dei Verbum*, in the Pontifical Biblical Commission's 1964 Instruction on the Gospels, and in the personal magisterial interventions already studied in Part II. We will begin by considering Pope Paul's own position in relation to *Dei Verbum*'s teaching on the Gospels (article 19) and the P.B.C. Instruction, as well as an allocution which he dedicated to the origins of St. Mark's Gospel. Then we will examine in turn what Paul VI taught about two vitally important sections of the Gospels whose historical character has very frequently been called in question: the Infancy Narratives of Matthew and Luke and the Resurrection narratives which conclude all four Gospels. (Because of its close links to these narratives, Luke's account of the Ascension in Acts 1: 1-11 will also be included here.) After that we shall look at the Pope's teaching on several quite heterogeneous Gospel texts (or groups of texts) which, in spite of their differences in content, style and authorship, have in common the characteristic just mentioned in connection with the Infancy and Easter narratives: their historical reliability is frequently called in question, or even flatly denied, by influential currents within modern biblical scholarship. The texts in question are: the dialogue between Christ and Simon Peter in Matthew 16: 16-19; the accounts of Jesus' miracles and exorcisms in all four Gospels; and the lengthy 'farewell discourses' ascribed to our Lord at the Last Supper in Chapters 13-17 of St. John's Gospel. A concluding article will then seek to draw together and summarize the various aspects of Pope Paul's biblical teaching which will have been studied in this whole series of *Living Tradition* articles, and to present some general observations about their continuing relevance.
