

Week 1: January 19, 2011  
THE 612  
Joseph Hollcraft M. A.

**I. Tension before Vatican II:** The gap between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith was widening over the course of the twentieth century. With the rapid increase of the removal of faith from the conscious of the Christian community (this goes back to William Ockham who sought to remove faith from the faith/reason equation long ago--reflect), the divine quality of the “biblia sacra” was being lost to an over-emphasis on the historical-critical method. Jesus had been reduced to a political failure and/or a meek prophet who accepted every truth but ultimately failed in his mission to bring peace to the world. Over time, “*the figure of Christ was becoming increasingly blurred...and the reconstructions of Christ we were no more than photographs of their authors*” (PBXVI). Essentially, the Christ of Scripture was no longer as relevant as the historical Jesus.

A. Vatican II had set out to revitalize biblical scholarship by anchoring the interpretation of the divine text in the hermeneutic of faith and re-engage the people of God in the centrality of Sacred Scripture as a book that is not just a story about a man in history, but the Son of God that has shaped history. Consequently, there was a grass roots movement coming out of Vatican II that would lead to a renewal in biblical scholarship in light of the Son of God made flesh. This great truth would ultimately emerge as the paradigm into a proper interpretation of Scripture.

1. That is to say, just as Christ was both human and divine so is the Word of God (Scripture) both human and divine. Thus, we interpret Scripture in light of the **letter**, which is very real history detailing very real subject matter (cf. below on the literal sense), and the **spirit**, which “*pertains to the words which have matured over the course of faith-history*” (PBXVI). Reading the Holy Bible as **letter** and **spirit** is to read the biblical text in light of the four senses (cf. below on the senses).

\*\*\* A General Outline Based Upon Dei Verbum

**II. Divine Revelation Itself.** God reveals his goodness and wisdom so that we might come to know the mystery of his will and have access to the Father. Divine sonship and sharers of divine nature is the end goal of all revelation (2 Peter 1:4). Paul contends that our knowledge can rise to knowledge of God’s power and divinity by reflecting upon the created world (cf. Rom.1.20). In order for us to properly understand how God reveals himself, we must first consider the manner in which reason serves faith and vice versa. See ***Word of the Week*** on **Revelation** and **Wisdom**.

**A. Faith and Reason:** “*Two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of Truth*” (John Paul II). Reason must always set itself upon some sort of faith. The rationale of Science (Scientia L.: meaning “*knowledge of order and beauty*”) concludes this in its fiduciary principle—all science is faith-based. What does Science mean by this?

1. Reason (Science) places its trust from a previous experiment that is built upon a previous set of credentials that is built upon a series of journal, etc...faith is necessary if reason (science) is to exist. So why are science and religion opposed? Simply, we have replaced faith with experience and concluded that there is a higher authority in experience as opposed to faith...although, as we have now seen, all science is tied to some aspect of trust.

a. Logic is an instrument of reason. What is logic? As defined by Dr. Hahn in Reasons to Believe: “*Logic is simply a reflection of how the mind structures its thought, which is itself a reflection of the structure of*

reality” (Hahn, 19). If a person wishes to disprove logic, the individual runs into a wall because they have to do so in a logical manner.

b. Logic allows us to move from the material to immaterial and visible to the invisible...ultimately from faith to reason and reason back to faith.

This is characteristically human.

1. Proof of the immaterial can lead one to conclude that God is just an “impersonal force”. God is more than magnets, engines, and telescopes (these things are a means to an end). God is relationship and we can discern this because we are a reflection and image of him (Gn.1:26)--in relationship with one another.

2. Letters represent sounds, which in turn become words representing things all around us. We are mathematicians from adolescence and yet they produce immaterial things. Scientists who want to disprove God use numbers all the time!

**B. Economy of Revelation** is realized by words and deeds: a marriage made in heaven! The words, for their part, proclaim the works, which ultimately bring to light the mystery they contain (DV, I, 2).

1. Christ is the Word, who proclaims his works and reveals himself who is mystery. He is the sum total of revelation (DV, I, 2).

a. God provides men with constant evidence of himself in created realities. Furthermore, after the fall, God gave man hope, with the promise of salvation (cf. Gn.3.15); and he has never ceased in taking care of his family. “*God writes the world like men writes stories, to convey truth and love*”--Hahn

2. Consider the covenants made with Abraham, Moses, and David. These covenants are ratified by the one definitive covenant in Christ. These are the essential stages of revelation

a. To understand “*The divine program and economy for the salvation of humanity*” (Irenaeus) it is necessary to note the special characteristics of his covenants with the biblical heroes (this diagram will resurface throughout the course—cf. created timeline). There is an intrinsic unity!

*3-fold covenant*

<u>Adam-Gen 2.23</u>	<u>Noah-Gen. 9.13</u>	<u>Abraham-Gn. 15</u>	<u>Moses-Ex.20</u>	<u>David-2 Sam.7.10</u>
<u>Christ-Mk</u>	<u>marital</u>	<u>household</u>	<u>tribal</u>	<u>Gn. 17 national</u>
<u>kingdom (rules nations)</u>	<u>Universal</u>	<u>Marriage</u>	<u>Rainbow</u>	<u>Circumcision Gn. 22</u>
<u>Passover</u>	<u>Throne</u>	<u>Baptism/Eucharist</u>		

**C. Man’s response to God.** To paraphrase St. Augustine from his rudimentary work on catechesis: “*The Church wants the whole world to hear the summons to salvation, so that through the hearing of Sacred Scripture we might come to believe, through belief we may hope, and through hope we may come to love.*” This is the ultimate progression of the theological virtues realized in light of Sacred Scripture. Moreover, it is the standard for compliance to revelation captured in one simple sentence.

1. By faith, man completely submits his intellect and will. With his whole being, man gives his assent of faith to God. Man’s response to God is good theology: “faith seeking understanding”. So Sacred Scripture calls the human response to God, the author of all revelation, “the obedience of faith” (cf. Rom.1.5; 16.26)...the loved seeking the lover...the child seeking out how he is a reflection of his father’s face!

a. See *Word of the Week* on Faith.

2. To obey in faith is to submit freely to the word of God that has been heard, because God, who is Truth itself, guarantees its truth. Both Abraham and the Blessed Virgin Mary are models of this heroic yes.

a. St. Paul tells us that the obedience of faith brings about a greater holiness. In addition, holiness is the mover and shaker in our contemporary culture.

**III. Sacred Scripture.** All of Sacred Scripture is but one book, a book of God's covenant love for his people. This book is the Word, which is Christ (cf. Jn.1.1) and all Scripture is fulfilled in Christ (CCC 101-102).

A. Inspiration and Truth of Sacred Scripture. Sacred Scriptures contain the Word of God and, because they are inspired, they are truly the Word of God. God is the author of Sacred Scripture because he inspired its human authors, he acts in them and by means of them. He thus gives assurance that their writings teach without error his saving truth (DV, 11)...cf wow on ***Inspired by God***

1. God's word is objective truth, for it created the world and its hosts and breathed inspiration into Scripture (cf. Ps.33.6). So Scripture's authority is an extension of Christ's own authority. "*Just as Christ is fully human and divine so Scripture is fully human and divine.*"--Hahn

B. Interpretation of Sacred Scripture. Interpretation of the inspired Scripture must be attentive above all to what God wants to share through the sacred authors for our salvation. What comes from the Spirit is not fully understood except by the Spirit's action. There is a kind of historical structure of faith. In this manner of speaking, the Church considers both history and spirit, as it's mode of interpreting Sacred Scripture.

1. We call these the Literal sense and Spiritual Sense, the latter being divided into the allegorical, moral, and anagogical. These senses of Scripture communicate the richness of the text. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI: "*The internal unity of the Bible as a rule of interpretation, Christ as the meeting point of all the OT pathways*". In principle, this is how one goes about to a clear understanding of the NT and its spiritual sense. There are three modes of the spiritual sense.

a. Literal Sense: Intent of the author. Meaning conveyed by the word of Scripture through cultural and historical contexts. All other senses are based on the literal. Not more important but it is a matter of priority by sequence.

b. Spiritual Sense: Unity of God's plan speaking about the realities of the events as being signs. You have to ask the question: "Did God intend to mean this?" The spiritual sense is interpreting Scripture in the context of the Paschal mystery, bringing into view the spiritual depth of the historical event.

1. ***Allegorical (typological)***: Christ significant/paschal mystery. Things of the old law signifying things of the new law in persons, places, things and institutions (cf. 1 Peter 3.14; Rom.5.14). Jesus and the Sacred Scripture of Israel appear as indivisible. The mission of Christ in the New Testament corresponds directly to the prophetic thrust of the Old Testament--Christ's mission links the two The Old and New!

a. cf. wow on ***Typology***.

2. ***Moral***: instruction to act with justice...wisdom. Types of what we ought to do. Along with the allegorical, there are times when the New Testament text itself is a moral exegesis of the Old Testament.

**3. Anagogical:** this word comes from the Gk. **Anagoge**, which literally means “*future*.” Viewing realities with eternal significance. The Church is the heavenly Jerusalem.

**2. The Authority of Mystery and the Hermeneutic of Faith.** There is a modern crisis of faith, because we do not understand the need to consider mystery and the role of the Church as mother. In the words of JPII: “The only thing we are really called to tolerate is mystery”--JPII ...cf. wow on *mystery*.

1. As noted in the opening, the problem with today’s science is that we read Scripture with an absence of a proper working hermeneutic. We have modernized how to research. God has revealed himself in history and Scriptures has been the vehicle that communicates this revelation. It is then necessary to consider the key historical context and literary form to grasp its full meaning.

a. We do not remove the original “habitat” from any research...consider any professional zoologist (context), or the artist’s painting from its intended destination (intent). There is a problem with “I don’t interpret it that way.”

2. Hermeneutic of Faith. To study a religious text and to not consider its religious meaning has failed. In addition, the failure to consider the rise and development in Sacred Scriptures through the practices of the Church’s liturgy proves the use of Scriptures as a dead artifact...faith itself is a science in that it is a legitimate source of inquiry and knowledge.

a. This in turn opens the door to how the literal sense opens the door to the spiritual sense. Because when you apply a proper construct of research faith is seen for what it is--that mysterious yes that transcends all realities. There needs to be attentiveness to the history of spiritual realities verses the history of just an objective idea (see notes below on the senses).

\*\*\*we will spend more time with the hermeneutic of faith next week