

SERIPANDO'S EXEGETICAL WORKS

1. Manuscripts and Edited Works

As we said in the last Chapter, Seripando wrote commentaries on Six Pauline epistles, namely on those to the Romans, Galatians, Corinthians and Thessalonians. He has, besides, written a *Glossa* on the Romans.

Of these, the first two (on the Rom. and Gal.) together with, the 67 *Quaestiones* on the Gal., were dedicated by the author to Cardinal Cervini. However, the Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians was edited separately at Venice, in 1567. At Antwerp, it was edited together with the "Quaestiones" in 1569. All the three parts dedicated to Cervini were edited in one volume of 539 quarto pages, at Naples, in 1601, by Felix Lavarino. This edition contained also a life of Seripando by Felix Milensius. The whole volume is dedicated by the editor to Cervini's nephew Cardinal Robert Bellarmine.

The other four commentaries still remain in Manuscripts, prepared by Seripando's own hand. All the four are bound in one volume of 118 oblong 4^o folios, and are preserved in the National Library of Naples. The *Glossa* is kept in the "Biblioteca Trivulziana" of Milan.

2. The Dates of Composition

When did Seripando actually prepare the Biblical commentaries? This question cannot be answered with equal certainty. The dates of the commentaries on the Romans and Galatians as also those of the "*Quaestiones*" and *Glossa* are a matter of conjecture, where as those of the other four, are exactly available from the Manuscripts themselves.

2.1. Commentaries on the Romans and the Galatians

We know for certain that Seripando had finished his commentaries on the Romans and Galatians before the beginning of the Council of Trent, from Seripando's dedicatory letter of these works to Cardinal Cervini.¹ Hence, the Manuscripts were ready before December 13, 1545. Can we trace their origin to a still earlier date?

There are, indeed, reasons that lead us to believe that these commentaries were produced as early as 1539. As may be gathered from last Chapter, Seripando was a man who could feel with

¹Seripando: In *D. Pauli ad Rom. et Gal. ... Commentaria*, p. 3.

Platonists, humanists and scholastics alike. He himself was all these. As for scholasticism, he appreciated it much, and did encourage its study in the monasteries of his Order;² but, for all that, he had no undue admiration for it, because, abounding, on the one hand, in endless distinctions and terminologies and lacking, on the other, in the niceties of classical literature, scholasticism could serve only for the class-room; it could hardly be appealing to the ordinary intellect. It was useless to harp on the reasons that justified the scholastic method, or to multiply testimonies from Fathers in proof of the dogmas, in an atmosphere where Bible and nothing but Bible, except perhaps some Platonists like Augustine, could succeed to get a willing ear. Could Seripando bring any profit to souls by his preaching, if he did not adapt his words to the needs of the time?

To add to this, in 1538, the Giberti group requested Seripando to give an exact statement of the Augustinian doctrine on justification, and in January 1539, it became Seripando's bounden duty to know exactly the Lutheran doctrine and its discrepancies from the doctrine of St. Augustine and of St. Paul, so as to be able to pass judgement on those of his brethren who were suspected of Lutheran heresy.

A man of Seripando's calibre could hardly think of coping with the situation, without a minute study of St. Augustine anti-pelagian works and of the Epistles of St. Paul which abounded in the doctrine of faith and justification, namely those to the Romans and Galatians. Thus the years 1538-39 were for Seripando a period of profound study of these two Epistles. In fact, in 1539, he exchanged letters with Flaminio of the Giberti group, and began his labours to stem the tide of Lutheran inroads on his order.³ It is but natural to think that this was the period when Seripando produced his commentaries on the Romans and Galatians.

But a study of the development of Seripando's ideas on justification from this turning point up to 1543, as has been made by H. Jedin,⁴ side by side with the study of these commentaries, would make us abandon this hypothesis. For these commentaries contain the most mature ideas of Seripando on justification, to which

²Jedin: *Papal Legate*, 286 # 2.

³Jedin: *Papal Legate*, p. 223 # 2.

⁴Jedin: *Papal Legate*, pp. 76-101.

Seripando could not have attained, according to Jedin, before 1542-43.⁵

Hence, it is more reasonable to conclude that Seripando, in spite of the fact that he had made a profound study of these epistles and made use of the knowledge derived from it, in the fulfilment of his duties from the year 1539, did not think his ideas sufficiently evolved, so as to be put in writing, and that, for this reason, he postponed the writing of the Commentaries on these Epistles to a later date; contenting himself with a *Glossa* on the Romans, in which he omitted Chapters 2, 7 and 16.

A comparative study of all the exegetical works: the *Glossa* and the six Commentaries that came from Seripando's pen, can confirm us in this conclusion. The Commentaries on the Romans and Galatians are, in all respects, more perfect than those on the other four epistles and these, in their turn, are more perfect than the *Glossa*.

Thus, while we know, for certain, that the date of the completion of the Commentaries on the Romans and Galatians was at the latest, December 13, 1545, we have no certainty as to the exact date on which, in fact, Seripando finished them. All the same, we have sufficient reasons to believe that they were not produced before the year 1541. Hence we can safely believe that these works came from Seripando's pen between the years 1541 and 1545. The *Glossa* seems to have been Seripando's first exegetical work, done in 1539 or there about.

2.2. Commentaries on the Corinthians and the Thessalonians

The date of the Commentaries on the Epistles to the Corinthians and Thessalonians are evident from the manuscripts themselves. These commentaries were written in Seripando's own hand, during his journey through France, Spain and Portugal for the visitation of the order from 1540 to 1542.

Seripando finished his Commentary on the first Epistle to the Corinthians on December 20, 1540, that is three days after his arrival, at the monastery of Bordeaux.⁶ He had to remain there seven days more, to put things in order. The absorbing work of settling quarrels and establishing peace was not a hindrance to Seripando's

⁵Jedin: *Papal Legate*, pp. 92 # 4-101.

⁶Jedin: *Papal Legate*, p. 145 # 2.

exegetical work. Most probable, he found the one helpful to the other. The Epistles to the Corinthians and Thessalonians contain matter which is helpful to one who wishes to act as an angel of peace in the spirit of St. Paul.

The work on the second Epistle to the Corinthians was over on February 1, 1541. Seripando was then at Toulouse where he had to set right a very serious conflict.⁷ He finished his commentary just on the day on which all his attention was, probable, to be concentrated on the formulation of important reform decrees for that monastery. The decrees were published on February 2. The deep meaning of the concluding words of the Epistle he was commenting might have put Seripando in the right spirit, to do the important work of the morrow.

As Seripando continued his journey, he took up the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, and finished his exegesis of it, in the Augustinian house near Barcelona, where he had to busy himself, for two weeks, with plans for establishing peace and order in the community.⁸ The finishing touch to the epistle was given on March 9, 1541. On May 6, 1541, while he was in the monastery at Valencia, Seripando completed his commentary on the second epistle to the Thessalonians.

Thus, Seripando finished these Commentaries one after the other, within a comparatively short period. The second Epistle to the Corinthians took him only 50 days. The first and second Epistles to the Thessalonians were commented on, within 38 and 58 days respectively. The first Corinthians too was interpreted in the same circumstances, so he might have spent on it more or less 60 days. Thus, in about seven months, in which Seripando had crowded programmes and serious problems to encounter with, he did the work of commenting on these four epistles.

2.3. Quaestiones

Now there arises the problem of Seripando's "67 *Quaestiones*." When did he undertake that work? It is certain that he began it, after his commentary on the Galatians because he gives us a hint at it, in his dedicatory letter to Cervini⁹ and he makes references to his commentary on the Gal. in the *Quaestiones*. It is likewise, certain

⁷Jedin: *Papal Legate*, p. 145 # 2.

⁸Jedin: *Papal Legate*, p. 148 # 3.

⁹Seripando: In *D. Pauli Epistolas ad Rom. et Gal. Comm.*, p. 10.

that he finished it, before the opening of the Council because, from the opening of the Council to the day on which he offered this work, together with the Commentaries on the Rom. and Gal., to Cervini, he had little time left for such a work.

It may be further asked whether Seripando began these "*Quaestiones*," immediately after his Commentary on the Galatians or after some interval. It is clearly stated that he intended to take up this work after his Commentary.¹⁰ It was intended in order to avoid long digressions in the Commentary. So, probable, he might have begun it immediately after the Commentary, in as much as it was conceived as a supplement to, or as some "*Excursus*" of his exegetical work. All the same, it seems more probable that Seripando postponed the commencement of this work to a later date, so as to be equipped with all possible data in dealing with the heretics. In the exegetical work, he was always careful to avoid discussions with heretics, because, there he wanted to occupy himself exclusively with St. Paul's words, so as not to lose the Pauline trend of thought. In the "*Quaestiones*" on the other hand, he takes care to state the view of the heretics with clarity and precision and to show the exact place where they began to misinterpret Paul. That means much reading of the heretical books and mature thinking on them. For this he got more facilities, on his return, after the visitation of the Order, when probably he got also the special command from Paul III to read all the works of the heretics for getting himself prepared for the Council. Hence we will not be far from the truth if we conclude that the work of the "*Quaestiones*" was done by Seripando after 1542, not, however, immediately after 1542, but after the considerable period, say one year and a half which was required for the production of the Commentaries on the Rom. and Gal. and for the studying of the books of heretics.

3. Date of Revision

By order of Paul III, Seripando reached Trent for the Council on May 19, 1545; but the Council actually began only on December 13. So too, in 1561, Seripando reached Trent on April 14, but the General Congregation was convened only on Jan. 15, 1562. During this second period of waiting, Seripando reviewed most of his

¹⁰Seripando: In *D. Pauli Epistolas ad Rom. et Gal. Comm.*, p. 52.

theological writings and his sermons on the "Our Father."¹¹ There is a hint at a similar work Seripando had undertaken, during his first period of waiting.

In spite of the clear statement that the work of exegesis of the first Corinthians was over on December 20, 1540, and that on the second Corinthians, on February 1, 1541, we see, in the margin of the second page of the 23rd folio of the Manuscript, that is, in the margin of the Commentary on the 12th Chapter of the first Corinthians, the following remark: *CONCILIUM INCHOATUR*; and in the margin of the commentary on the last words of the second Corinthians, the date: "29 November 1548." The probable explanation is this: Seripando began revising this Manuscript, towards the end of the waiting period at Trent. When he had reached the second page of the 23rd folio, the Council, at last, began, and he manifested his great joy at that long expected event, on that page. The man of well-planned work did not leave off the Manuscript altogether, when his service was required in the Conciliar matters. He devoted some of his spare moments to continue the revision of the Manuscript. But his spare moments were very few, as we gather from elsewhere, so that it took him almost three years to reach the end of the second Corinthians. Signs of a well-made revision are evident in the body as well as in the margin of these Commentaries. Additional explanations are given to several parts of the commentaries, in the two fresh folios that are left between the commentaries on the Corinthians and those on the Thessalonians.

With what work did Seripando occupy himself in the first part of this waiting period? Most probable, he was preparing his Manuscripts of the commentaries on the Romans and Galatians, together with that of the "*Quaestiones*," so as to present them to Cardinal Cervini. The subject of his conversations with Cervini towards the end of the waiting period, seems to suggest this thought. Seripando says that, during their friendly conversation, Cervini used to ask him about his opinion on the Commentaries written by heretics.¹² Cervini seems to have opened the topic because, in those days, Seripando had been busying himself with the work of exegesis on the Romans and Galatians, and had manifested his intention of dedicating his work to Cervini. It is but natural that Seripando might

¹¹Cfr. Jedin: *Papal Legate*, p. 572 # 3.

¹²Seripando: In *D. Pauli Epistolas ad Rom. et Gal. Comm.*, p. 1, 2.

have revealed his intention of offering the work to the Cardinal, after a successful completion of it, and not before. In fact, the conversation of which Seripando speaks, took place, towards the end of the long waiting period of 7 months. For, Seripando says that, soon, the Council began, and his services were required for the Conciliar affairs, so that he could hardly find sufficient time to write down what the cardinal had requested him, during that conversation.¹³ Moreover, in the dedicatory letter of the two Commentaries and the "*Quaestiones*," which he formulated, as soon as he got sufficient free time, after the opening of the Council, we are given the indication that the preparation of the Commentaries was then, a thing of the past. However, after the dedication and before the death of Seripando he made another revision of the Commentaries and *Quaestiones*.

From what has been said, we can reasonably conclude that the final touches to and the fair copies of the commentaries on Romans and Galatians and of the "*Quaestiones*" namely the works dedicated to Cervini, were made, during the first waiting period at Trent (i.e., from May 19, 1545 to December 1545) and that the work of the revision of the manuscript of the Commentaries on the other four Epistles, was begun towards the end of this waiting period and continued slowly but steadily, during the busy days of the Council and after. The works dedicated to Cervini were again retouched, before 1563 and a new copy was made. With these ideas concerning the dates and the circumstances that produced these Commentaries, we shall start on examining them under the double aspect, as we proposed above.

¹³Seripando: In *D. Pauli Epistolas ad Rom. et Gal. Comm.*, p. 3.

APPENDIX

Other Works of Seripando

Printed Works:

1. *Novae Constitutiones Ordinis* etc. – Venice, 1549; Roma 1553.
2. *Hieronymi Seripandi Archiepiscopi Salernitani Oratio in funere Caroli V. Imp. Max., habita Neapoli VI Kal. Martii MDLIX.*
3. *Prediche del Re. Mo Mons. Girolamo Seripando, Arcivescovo di Salerno, che fu poi cardinale e Legate al concilio di Trento, sopra il Simbolo degli Apostoli.* Venice, MDLXVII, Roma, 1586; Salerno, 1586.
4. *De Arte Orandi seu Expositio Symboli Apostolorum*, Lovanio 1689.

Manuscripts:

1. *Carteggio di Seripando*: Ms. Bibl. Naz. Nap. XIII Aa 47-65. 19 volumes in 4. Contents: Miscellaneous, v.g. As 62 contains poems in Greek, Latin, Italian.
2. *Diarium*: (from 1513 to 1562). Naz. Nap. VIII f. 42 (published by Calenzio + Merkle)
3. *Introito ed esito* (account book of the first years of Generalship). Ms. Bil. Naz. Nap. VI, D. 12.

Sermons:

1. *Conciones*: Naz. Nap. VIII A. 3.
2. *Prediche sopra il simbolo degli Apostoli*: Naz. Nap. VIII a. 13.
3. *Sylva Rerum*: Points for preaching. Naz. Nap. VIII, Aaa. 21-2.
4. *Prediche Volgari XIC sul Pater Noster* (for children) in two copies. Bibl. Naz. Nap. XII Aa 44,44.
5. *Prediche XV sul Simbolo degli Apostoli*. Bibl. Naz. Nap. XIII Aa. 45.

Theological Works:

1. *Trattato sulla Giustificazione, con lettere del Flaminio, del Card. Contarini del Seripando sulla grazia e il libero arbitrio*: Bibl. Naz. Nap. XIII, Aa. 23.

2. *De Justificatione; De Duplici Justitia; De Traditionibus; De Libris S. Scripturae; De Peccato Originali; Pro dictis a Polo; Collectis de Libris Sanctis; De articulis 17 propositis.* Ms. Bibl. Naz. Nap. XII D. 12, 13 cfr. C.T.R. XII, nn. 94; 95; 102; 68; 62; 76; 77; 120.
3. *Opuscula Varia in tribus voluminibus.* Naz. Nap. VII, D. 14, 15, 16.
4. *Quaestiones de Natura Divina.* Naz. Nap. VIII E. 40.

Various Other Writings:

1. *Farrago gestorum in Concilio Tridentino* vol. 3, IX A. 48-50.
2. *Documenti relative all Ambasceria.* XI, C. 47.