

# INTRODUCTION

## CARDINAL SERIPANDO: AN EXEGETE AND BIBLICAL THEOLOGIAN

## CHAPTER 1 OUR CHOICE

### 1. The Author We Have Chosen: Seripando

#### 1.1. A Great Theologian

The name of Seripando is closely knitted with the history of the Council of Trent in which he, laboured, with all his might, to make it clear that the Council did not intend to condemn everything that was taught by the heretics, but only those points in their doctrine which were in open conflict with genuine Catholic faith. From the very beginning of the Council, the Fathers were convinced of Seripando's ability to handle complicated questions in theology. When discussions began on the vital question of justification, Cardinal Cervini, the second presiding Legate (afterwards Pope, Marcellus II), singled out Seripando as the competent man to draw up a new draft of the decree, after having set aside as unacceptable, the one that had been prepared by the official committee of theologians. When Seripando appeared at Trent, for the second time (as the second presiding Legate), the first president Mantua, so completely relied on him in the handling of theological problems, that he simply cancelled a conference of theologians appointed for January 126, 1563, when he learned that Seripando could not be present.

#### 1.2. A Good Critic of Exegetical Works

Seripando's sympathy for the erring, and his respect for whatever was good and estimable in his adversaries, urged him to study their writings well, before entering on discussions with them or passing judgment on their opinions. He obtained permission from Clement VII to read the works of the heretics whose opinions he had to deal with in his sermons and talks. Afterwards, Paul III famous for his keen foresight and acute judgment of human talents gave a command to Seripando to read all the books of the heretics and be prepared for the Great Council which was to put an end to the lamentable confusions in the dogmatic field. Cardinal Cervini took great pleasure in conversing with Seripando especially on the marvellous influence exerted by heretics through their exegetical works, on the minds of the people. The Cardinal admired so much the wisdom

contained in the critical observations made by the Augustinian General, that he requested him to consign them to writing, for the benefit of posterity.

In the Council of Trent Seripando was chosen to be a member of the committee appointed to study the abuses of the Bible and their remedies. Students of the council know with what foresight he insisted on the necessity of encouraging the study of the original texts of the Bible, and how much he tried to get the decree: "*Insuper*," mollified a little.

### 1.3. An Exegete and Biblical Theologian

Though as a young theologian, Seripando valued scholastic methods, and could easily cope with any of his contemporaries in that respect, he was not slow to perceive the need of his time, - a time in which people had begun to feel a kind of hatred for scholastic theology which seemingly indulged in useless dialectics and unending terminologies which were unintelligible to the ordinary man. Consequently Seripando threw himself heart and soul to the study of Holy Scripture in order to encounter the adversaries with their own weapons, namely Bible exegesis, and Biblical theology. He left in writing commentaries on six Pauline Epistles and 67 *Quaestiones* on the Epistle to the Galatians.

## 2. The Importance of Our Study

### 2.1. A Help to Theologians

Serious students of Seripandian theology, find it a tedious task to fish out Seripando's exact mind on certain points from the mess of conciliar treatises and discussions. These discussions and treatises being intended to defend Seripando's own convictions and the convictions of those whose cause he had to advocate, against the attacks of the theologians of different schools, were naturally one-sided. They even created suspicion regarding Seripando's orthodoxy, in some of the Fathers of the council. For an impartial judgement, therefore, theologians have to turn to some work where Seripando gives a calm exposition of his mind. Such a calm exposition we can justly expect to find in the exegetical works of Seripando, because in writing them, he was unperturbed by preoccupations of meeting the arguments of other Catholic schools which were not in agreement with his own views.

### 2.2. An Opportune Study

The study of the exegetical works of Seripando seems to be most opportune at a time as ours, when the dissenting churches are taking serious measures to search out and narrow down the differences as far as possible, so as to hasten the realization of Christ's prayer: "That all may be one." For, here is a theologian who did his level best to understand the mind of his dissenting brethren. Here is a Scripturist, who took in hand the exegetical works, with the dissenters' own oft-repeated ideal: "to make clearer the mind of Paul", showed them where and how they went astray from that ideal, and fought fearlessly for what was right in their doctrine, in the council of Trent even at the risk of falling into suspicion, as regards his own orthodoxy, and yet remained a genuine Catholic and an eminent theologian. Here is a man who burned with zeal for church reform, even as his confrere Luther did, and firmly stood for it, in the Council, at the risk of being misunderstood by the Pope who had created him Cardinal,<sup>1</sup> and yet, always kept the golden mean, so that at his death, the Archbishop of Corinth wrote that, for the future of the council, Seripando's death was more tragic than the death of the First President Mantua.<sup>2</sup>

The exegetical works of this theologian, Scripturist and reformer, which invite the special attention of the exegetes and theologians of both catholic and protestant camps, have not been scientifically studied up to this day, not to say that some of them still remain inedited. That exegetes and theologians may not be, any longer, deprived of the benefits of such a study, has been our sincere wish, in undertaking this work. After the following chapters on the life and exegetical works of Seripando, we examine, in Part I, the nature of his exegesis and in Part II the nature of his biblical theology.

<sup>1</sup>Cfr. C.T. II, 431, 11-18; V. 496, note 1. Pius IV misunderstood Seripando's attitude in the question of the Bishops' residence, to such an extent, that in his bitterness, he said: "*Poenitet me hominem fecisse*"; the Pope said that he would pay 50,000 ducats if he could revoke Seripando's promotion. *Documentos ineditos* IX, 209, quoted by Jedin, *Papal Legate*. p. 610, § 3.

<sup>2</sup>Jedin: *Papal Legate*. p. 702 § 1. Cfr. also C.T. VIII, 463 note 1.